

Date: 27th September 2019

Subject: GMFRS Programme for Change: Proposed Amendments to Outline Business Case
Following Analysis of Consultation

Report of: The Mayor, Andy Burnham and GMFRS Chief Fire Officer, Jim Wallace

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to highlight the proposed amendments to the OBC following review and analysis of the key consultation findings and considerations.

The report sets out:

- A summary of the improvements to the Service that have been made to date
- A high level overview of the consultation process and key findings
- Proposals for implementation (following refinement of OBC proposals to reflect consultation findings)
- Key activities underway to support the required leadership and culture change
- A summary of people impacts as a result of the proposed changes
- An overview of the financial implications and an updated efficiency profile
- Next steps and communications strategy

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority is requested to:

1. Note the contents of this report and consider the updated proposals for implementation prior to the Mayor making a final decision.
2. Recognise that the OBC consultation feedback has influenced the updated proposals contained in this report.

3. Note that the updated proposals for implementation will now form the basis of ongoing discussions with Trade Unions.

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Further to the consultation process, the Committee commends the development of the revised range of options set out in the OBC and acknowledges the progress made by the Mayor in his attempt to deliver transformational change within GMFRS. The Committee recognises the difficulties posed by the major uncertainties surrounding central government funding for fire and rescue services and reiterated that the various saving proposals around crewing levels and fire engine numbers remained wholly unacceptable. It was acknowledged that the raising of additional funds through an increase to the Fire and Rescue Service element of the Mayoral General Fund Precept would require further consideration as part of the budget consultation process.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

- Programme for Change: Outline Business Case
- Programme for Change: Consultation Report

TRACKING/PROCESS		
Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution		Yes (Mayoral Decision)
EXEMPTION FROM CALL IN		
Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?		No
GM Transport Committee	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	
N/A	Corporate Issues & Reform Overview & Scrutiny Committee considered the consultation process for the Pfc Outline Business Case on 17 September 2019	

BACKGROUND

The Programme for Change (PfC) Outline Business Case (OBC) sets out a programme of transformation for Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS), laying the foundations for a stronger Fire and Rescue Service that is focused on keeping communities safe and delivering a sustainable, affordable, frontline first emergency service.

Following a period of consultation, the proposals set out within the OBC have been updated to reflect feedback and comments from staff, representative bodies and the public.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF UPDATED PROPOSALS

Following the close of consultation, changes to OBC proposals were considered, resulting in a number of updated proposals for implementation, which are summarised below:

- a. Retaining current crewing levels and maintaining firefighter numbers at or above May 2017 levels for this financial year;
- b. Retaining an additional 11 specialist prevention staff to support complex cases and address safeguarding concerns;
- c. Allowing more time for the transition of prevention activity to ensure firefighters are adequately trained and equipped;
- d. Developing alternative delivery models for volunteering and cadets;
- e. Retaining Prince's Trust, reducing the number of teams from seven to five, whilst allowing more time to develop future options;
- f. Developing an improved delivery model for Protection including continued efforts on High Rise, Grenfell implications and improving fire safety within the Private Rented Sector.
- g. Undertaking a limited restructure of administration activity initially, allowing more time for the development of a centrally managed delivery model.
- h. Recommendation that the capital schemes as set out in the OBC are incorporated into the Service's Capital Programme.
- i. Ongoing investment in stations, including welfare facilities.

IMPROVEMENTS TO DATE

Firefighters sit at the heart of these proposals, and will be supported by a Fire and Rescue Service which has a culture of trust, respect and accountability, together with improved working conditions, modern facilities and better training and equipment.

Firefighter's views have been taken on board and as a result, a number of immediate improvements have been made to address some of the most common concerns.

- **Firefighters said they were not being heard**, staff have been engaged throughout and a frontline first focus adopted;
- **Firefighters said there were too many vacancies**, recruitment has been accelerated to reduce the current number of frontline operational vacancies;

- **Firefighters said the shift system did not support a work life balance**, new rostering arrangements have been put in place based on a 2-2-4 shift pattern to improve firefighter work/life balance;
- **Firefighters said roster reserves were not family friendly**, roster reserves have been removed, meaning firefighters have a clearer, family-friendly working pattern and know in advance which shift patterns they are working and which station they will be based at;
- **Firefighters said there was no leave flexibility**, a new policy has been put into place to allow firefighters to select their own annual leave creating greater flexibility;
- **Firefighters said some fire station facilities were unacceptable**, a number of fire stations have been refurbished to improve facilities, in particular facilities for female firefighters.

CONSULTATION PROCESS AND KEY FINDINGS

1. Ongoing engagement and feedback has been fundamental to refining the updated proposals for implementation. A comprehensive engagement approach was undertaken both before, during and after consultation, including a wide range of meetings and workshops with staff, regular engagement with Trade Unions, and full public consultation, as well as input and feedback from scrutiny committee.
2. Following the publication of the OBC on 11th March 2019, a twelve-week period of consultation commenced to gather feedback on the proposals outlined in the OBC.
3. In parallel with the formal consultation, a series of workshops were held with staff and key stakeholders across GMFRS to explore the OBC proposals and the implications of implementation in more detail, as well as considering any feedback/alternative proposals being put forward through consultation.
4. The consultation considered three main audiences:
 - **Public consultation with local residents, groups and organisations:**
People unconnected to the organisation were encouraged to respond to specific areas relating to our statutory duties. Any comments received outside of these areas were still captured and considered as part of the wider consultation.
 - **Staff engagement with an internal audience:**
Staff were encouraged to comment on any part of the OBC and were provided with multiple methods to respond. These activities were non-statutory.
 - **Consultation with Trade Unions:**
Formal consultation with representative bodies took place throughout the process, allowing them to discuss and subsequently comment on any areas of the OBC.
5. The main areas of concern raised by the public related to the reduction in the number of fire engines, with reference to the emerging risks of protracted moorland fires, high rise buildings, future developments and the threat of terrorism.
6. The proposed station mergers in Manchester, Bolton and Stockport were not a major area of concern for any specific group of respondent.

7. The main areas of concern raised by staff included crewing levels on fire engines and increasing the role of the firefighter to include greater Place Based and partnership working. Firefighters also raised that they do not feel that they have the skills, training or expertise to deliver this work, as well as the potential conflict with operational duties – with the potential to negatively impact on both operational incidents and training.

UPDATED PROPOSALS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

8. A commitment was made from the outset to listen to people, and where appropriate, reflect consultation feedback by amending the OBC proposals. Feedback and comments have been taken on board and a high level summary of the key changes proposed are set out below:

Crewing Fire Engines with Four

9. Whilst the OBC recommendation to crew with four firefighters on fire engines remains an achievable option, it was recognised that there is resistance to this proposal from the public, staff and trade unions. Therefore, following the Mayor's recent communication to MPs, it is proposed that current crewing levels and firefighter numbers are maintained at or above May 2017 levels (1121 firefighters) for this financial year.
10. Whilst the commitment is to maintain 1121 firefighters until April 2020, the establishment planning forecast indicates that the actual number of firefighters by this date will be 1176 (due to the current recruitment and retirement profile). Therefore, supported by overtime arrangements and the short-term use of reserves, current crewing arrangements can be maintained at 5:4:4 and 50 fire engines to allow more time for discussions with the Fire Brigades Union about the number of fire engines available and the crewing levels that can realistically be achieved. The long-term viability of this arrangement, however, is dependent on future funding settlements from central government.

Prevention

11. A number of concerns were raised throughout the consultation period in relation to the practicability of delivery within the proposed timelines. Further concerns were raised with regards to the capacity and ability of 'on call' firefighters to undertake some of the more complex prevention work, as well as some of the tasks associated with alternative curriculum youth engagement work.
12. An alternative approach has been developed to mitigate some of the risks of a reduced prevention and youth engagement function, which involves the realignment of some of the roles within the OBC from other workstreams. This approach, which can be achieved without any impact on the overall efficiency savings, will enable the appropriate levels of resource to oversee the long term coordination and support of these functions. This will

further support the transition phase and skills transfer, allowing firefighters more scope to undertake a wider responsibility in these areas.

13. In summary, having listened to feedback, the key changes to prevention proposals are:

- Retaining a small number of specialist prevention staff to support complex cases and address safeguarding concerns;
- Allowing more time for the transition of prevention activity to ensure firefighters are adequately trained and equipped;
- Developing alternative delivery models for volunteering and cadets.

Prince's Trust

14. Supported by direct discussion with the Mayor, consultation responses to the OBC in respect of Prince's Trust delivery resulted in alternative proposals to the Mayor, which are recommended for further reflection.

15. In summary, the key changes to Prince's Trust proposals focus on interim arrangements for delivery of the programme, reducing the number of teams from seven to five, whilst allowing more time to develop future options.

Protection

16. Activity undertaken during the 'exploring the impacts' phase has identified an improved delivery model for Protection including continued concentrated efforts on High Rise, Grenfell implications and improving fire safety within the Private Rented Sector. These changes can be achieved within the same financial parameters.

Enabling Services (Administration)

17. To mitigate against the risk of delayed implementation, a limited restructure will be undertaken in year 1 (2019/20) and a number of posts will remain vacant in order to achieve cost savings in the interim. This will allow more time for the development of a new delivery model for year 2 (2020/21) based on centrally managed area teams with clear accountability to borough management.

18. It is recommended that all other proposals set out within the OBC are implemented as planned.

LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE

19. Firefighters sit at the heart of these proposals, and for them to be effective the Service will need to embed a culture of trust, respect and accountability. This is why it is recommended that the leadership and culture programme of work is progressed as planned within in the OBC and work has commenced to prepare the Service and its leaders for change and to build a supportive and inclusive environment.

20. Significant key activities that are shaping the strategic delivery plan include;
- Adoption of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Leadership Framework
 - Launch of GMFRS Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) Strategy
 - Enhanced staff engagement, utilising Best Companies and Stonewall surveys
 - Improved staff communication

PEOPLE IMPACTS

21. With regard to support staff people impact, options have been explored to reduce the number of staff anticipated to be at risk. The updated proposals result in Year One savings (2019/20) being largely achievable through effective vacancy management.
22. Positive discussions continue with Unison to ensure the future headcount reduction can be achieved via voluntary severance/early retirement.
23. To put this in to context, the post-consultation analysis in respect of Voluntary Severance / Voluntary Early Retirement (VS/VER) is much improved, with the number of posts at risk reduced from 113 to 60, as summarised in the table below:

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Total
OBC (<i>proposed FTE reduction</i>)	85	28		113*
Post Consultation Refinement	5 (plus 48 vacancies)	55 (proposed FTE reduction subject to detailed design)		60 (plus 48 vacancies, totalling 108 posts)

*Note: headcount figures are based on an administrator's average salary.

24. There remains the potential for impact on firefighter numbers and an associated financial impact as a result of any delay to the introduction of crewing fire engines with four.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

25. The OBC sets out a range of options to deliver savings for GMFRS, alongside investment required to deliver transformational change. The outcomes from the programme affect the GMFRS Revenue Budget for 2019/20 and onwards. At the time of budget setting, reserves were used to underpin the budget until the proposals are approved and can be implemented. The 2019/20 revenue budget approved the use of £3.5m from reserves to support the revenue budget.
26. For 2020/21 there are major uncertainties regarding Government funding and particularly whether the £5.7m of Fire pension grant continues. The Home Office received a settlement of £12.9bn for 2020/21 representing a 6.1% real terms increase on

2019/20. Decisions on funding for fire and rescue from the Home office will be made as part of the allocations process that will now follow the Spending Round. This will include consideration of the fire pensions grant, National Resilience grants, ESN and other Home Office fire funding streams.

27. Confirmation on the above is expected as part of the Local Government Settlement due in December 2019. At this stage based on the uncertainties set out above, there may be a requirement in 2020/21 to utilise reserves and / or increase precept to meet any shortfall. The outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review and formula funding review will influence the budget position in 2021/22.

28. In the area of Protection, an additional £10m per annum will be provided by MHCLG to help improve building inspection capabilities and to support the work of the new Protection Board chaired by NFCC. Funding allocations for each fire and rescue service will be published as part of the Provisional Local Government Settlement later this year.

29. The Spending Review for Fire and Rescue confirms the following:

- a. Settlement funding assessment will be increased by inflation
- b. Decisions on the council tax precept will be subject to a consultation due to be launched shortly

NEXT STEPS AND COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

30. In order to ensure appropriate delivery arrangements are in place to implement agreed proposals, work has been undertaken to effectively prepare for implementation. . This activity will now progress into the detailed design and implementation stages.

31. To complement the detailed design and implementation phase, a comprehensive programme of communications and engagement activity across GMFRS will take place. The Trade Union forums will continue to meet on a regular basis.

32. The Communications and Engagement Team will keep colleagues informed of progress and decisions made through a number of different channels, such as the intranet, GMCA newsletters and organising face to face sessions between senior leaders and GMFRS colleagues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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