

GREATER MANCHESTER POLICE, FIRE & CRIME PANEL

Date: 10th November 2022

Subject: Establishing a Greater Manchester Strategic Water Safety Partnership

Report of: ACFO Leon Parkes, Director of Prevention and Protection

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to seek support to establish a **Greater Manchester Strategic Water Safety Partnership**. The 'Partnership' would oversee a pan Greater Manchester response, to the prevention of drowning and other water related deaths.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To support the implementation of a Greater Manchester Strategic Water Safety Partnership and development of a Greater Manchester Water Safety Strategy and accompanying action plan.
2. To note the proposal to establish a permanent part-time Chair for the Partnership, initially for a period of 12 months, to establish the partnership, develop the strategy and action plan and to establish local partnership links, supported by a full-time coordinator role.
3. To note the Services intention to liaise with all GM Community Safety Partnerships to discuss options available to kick start the partnership proposal.

CONTACT OFFICERS:

ACFO Leon Parkes - parkesl@manchesterfire.gov.uk

Billy Fenwick, Head of Prevention - FenwickW@manchesterfire.gov.uk

Equalities Impact, Carbon, and Sustainability Assessment:

N/A

Risk Management

Subject to obtaining support to progress, the introduction of a GM water safety partnership with associated resourcing will respond to the risks set out within the paper.

Legal Considerations

N/A

Financial Consequences - Capital

N/A

Financial Consequences - Revenue

To be discussed with relevant community safety partnerships.

Number of attachments included in the report: 0

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

- The Fire Plan 2021-25
- ROSPA review of the Manchester water safety partnership

TRACKING/PROCESS		
Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution		No
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
TfGMC	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	
N/A	N/A	

BACKGROUND

1. Each year there are a significant number of preventable drownings across the United Kingdom.
2. To put the scale of the issue into context, the National Water Safety Forum reported figures for 2021 which identified 182 water related deaths in England. Within Greater Manchester (GM) there were 26 water related deaths, which places GM in the top five Counties for water related deaths. To place this figure in context, there were 11 deaths from fire in GM in the same period.
3. There are various stakeholders actively involved in water safety prevention activities, including the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, National Water Safety Forum, National Fire Chiefs Council and various locally driven partnerships.
4. The National Water Safety Forum are reporting that accidental drownings involving young males continues to increase and this is mirrored within the Greater Manchester area, the majority of drowning deaths occurring in males aged 17-24 years.
5. Given this alarming trend it is crucial that key stakeholders across Greater Manchester come together, to develop a **Greater Manchester Strategic Water Safety Partnership**, which can effectively deliver a water safety strategy, and provide a more coordinated approach to water safety prevention activities across the city region.

CURRENT POSITION

6. Within Greater Manchester there is only one established local partnership which is the Manchester water safety partnership. Whilst the partnership is well established and making a difference, the priorities for the partnership are locally driven and it does not operate within a sphere supported by a wider water safety strategy.
7. A review of the Manchester partnership undertaken by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) recognised the great work of the partnership. However, the review suggested *‘Leaders across the City and the Combined Authority should define further the executive reporting route(s) and political oversight of the partnership and its work’*.
8. The Mayors Fire Plan 2021-25 contains a strategic commitment to convene a Greater Manchester summit on water safety, to explore opportunities to reduce the risks through infrastructure initiatives and campaigns.
9. A National Water Safety Forum is a well-established body that brings together a range of stakeholders with the specific aim of preventing and reducing drowning across the United Kingdom. The Forum launched a ten-year strategy in 2016 and continues to drive national campaigns to raise the profile of drowning and key messaging.
10. Recognising the need for action around this topic, the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Prevention Committee has broadened its prevention priorities to include water safety, which now provides a mandate for all Fire and Rescue Services to increase

their contribution to water safety and campaigning in addition to fire prevention activities.

11. Within Greater Manchester there is a timely opportunity to develop an overarching strategy, which aligns to the key strands of the National Water Safety Forum work plan and better coordinate local partnership activities across Greater Manchester.

THE SCALE OF THE CHALLENGE

12. Although the number of water related fatalities is in itself a concern, the number of water related incidents is equally as concerning. Each of these incidents represents a time whereby, an individual/s had the potential to suffer injury or a loss of life. It is for this reason that we must grasp the opportunity to put in place measures to proactively deal with the increasing number of water related incidents and do more to ensure the safety of our communities.

Borough	2021	2022	Total
Bolton	19	10	29
Bury	15	8	23
Manchester	30	26	56
Oldham	7	3	10
Rochdale	24	10	34
Salford	31	24	55
Stockport	19	8	27
Tameside	9	5	14
Trafford	20	7	27
Wigan	28	27	55
OTB	6		6
Total	208	128	336

PROPOSAL

13. In recognition of the ongoing challenges faced across Greater Manchester, the need for a more coordinated and resourced approach to preventable drownings has never been more important.
14. It is proposed that consideration be given to establishing a Greater Manchester Strategic Water Safety Partnership, to develop and deliver a Greater Manchester Water Safety Strategy as well as providing overarching governance, political oversight and provide strategic direction to localities.
15. The benefits of establishing a Greater Manchester Strategic Water Safety Partnership are vast, however, in broad terms it will bring together key people from across the City region to drive the components of the GM Water Safety Strategy and ensure improved,

coordinated and targeted work is driven locally through existing Community Safety Partnership (CSP) or other locally established models.

16. The Partnership will be an opportunity to identify and apply best practice from across the boroughs; co-ordinate campaigns to achieve greater impact; leverage economies of scale regarding the procurement of infrastructure and research; increase the opportunities to bid for any available grants by doing so on a GM scale; ensure there is a consistent drive across all boroughs to improve water safety and prevent water safety incidents.
17. The Partnership will consider the recommendations identified by ROSPA, and provide a more coherent position, in responding to the ongoing challenges associated with open water sites across the Greater Manchester footprint.
18. Last year there were more water deaths in GM than deaths to fire. The climate emergency is expected to drive hotter, drier summers increasing the likelihood of more people entering the water and therefore the number of water deaths.
19. The importance of amplifying the water safety prevention agenda has never been greater and the case for change is compelling.
20. In supporting the development of an overarching GM partnership, it is incumbent on us all stakeholders to provide the necessary support, to ensure that the partnership can thrive from the outset and deliver a high quality and highly effective mechanism for driving the water safety agenda across GM.
21. It is recommended that a part time permanent chair is appointed to establish the partnership, develop local links and develop and implement the strategy. This position would initially be required for a period of 12 months when the arrangements can be reviewed.
22. In addition to the GM water safety partnership chair role, it is proposed that we create a new full-time GM Water Safety Officer aligned to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. Their responsibility would be to co-ordinate the work of the GM partnership; produce and oversee the delivery of the GM strategy; produce campaigns; help co-ordinate research and infrastructure installment; identify and apply for available grants; consider the possibility of holistic solutions such as wild swimming events and training on how to swim safely in open water etc.
23. The Service will be seeking discussions with local CSP chairs to explore options available to gain traction following delivery of the recent Greater Manchester Water Safety summit.

WATER SAFETY SUMMIT

24. The Water Safety Summit was delivered on 30th September. It was attended by the Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester and a range of stakeholders and partner agencies with responsibility or supportive role to promote water safety through Prevention work.

25. The summit consisted of a number of guest speakers who offered insight and information into National, Regional and Local water risks and strategy for prevention. The summit delivered workshops to develop what a Strategic water safety partnership would achieve and how it would be delivered, and to develop the content and aims of a water strategy.
26. The outcomes of the summit were contributions from stakeholders and key partners to enable the initiation of a water safety strategic partnership.
27. GMFRS Head of Prevention and GMCA colleagues will progress the workshop contributions to enable next steps in support of this paper and the development of a water strategy.

CONCLUSION

28. This paper sets out a robust case for the development of a strategic water safety partnership for Greater Manchester, that can provide overarching support to localities and ensure consistency in messaging and approach to what is clearly a developing risk.
29. The paper was presented to the steering group meeting on the 25th October and was well received.