

Greater Manchester Police, Fire & Crime Panel

Date: 11th June 2024

Subject: GMFRS Efficiency and Productivity Plan 2024-25

Report of: ACFO Carlos Meakin / Andrea Heffernan Director of Corporate Support

Report Author: Sarah Scoales, Head of Service Excellence

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report provides details of Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service's (GMFRS) progress in meeting national productivity and efficiency targets for the 2021/22-2024/25 Spending Review period, and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) / Local Government Association (LGA) proposals for fire and rescue services to secure 2% non-pay efficiencies and a 3% productivity increase in the same period.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Members of the Panel are asked to note the contents of this paper and the full report provided at Appendix 1.

CONTACT OFFICERS:

DCFO Ben Norman – ben.norman@manchesterfire.gov.uk

ACFO Carlos Meakin – meakinc@manchesterfire.gov.uk

Andrea Heffernan, Director of Corporate Support –
andrea.heffernan@manchesterfire.gov.uk

Sarah Scoales, Head of Service Excellence – scoales@manchesterfire.gov.uk

Equalities Impact, Carbon, and Sustainability Assessment:

N/A

Risk Management

N/A

Legal Considerations

N/A

Financial Consequences - Capital

See Appendix 1

Financial Consequences - Revenue

See Appendix 1

Number of attachments included in the report:

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

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

INTRODUCTION

1. The NFCC and LGA have proposed that across fire and rescue services (FRSs) in England, the sector could create 2% of non-pay efficiencies and to increase productivity by 3% in the period 2021/22 to 2024/25.
2. The Fire Minister requested detail around these plans, and how the individual fire and rescue authorities (FRA) plans will align with the national productivity and efficiency targets that have been set for the 2021/22-2024/25 Spending Review period.
3. The GMFRS Efficiency & Productivity Plan 2024/25, provided at Appendix 1, outlines our strategies to streamline processes, optimise resources, and improve productivity through the use of new technologies and investments in its workforce. The plan aims to ensure that the Service remains flexible, modern, and resilient and can meet the evolving needs of the communities we serve.
4. GMFRS is committed to delivering efficiencies and improvements without compromising our prevention, protection, and response services, even in the face of financial uncertainty. The ultimate goal of the plan is to provide the best possible value to the city-region.
5. Our Annual Delivery Plans outlines the improvement program for the upcoming year and how the Service will respond to risks to keep communities safe. Meanwhile, the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) outlines the Service's financial position, including the revenue targets, capital investments, and funding requirements.

FINANCIAL POSITION

6. GMFRS has a long-standing track record in delivering efficiency savings through a range of initiatives, including fire cover reviews, crewing arrangements, use of procurement to deliver savings, service reviews, management of ill-health retirement, predating our latest Efficiency Plan.
7. Since 2010 we have delivered almost £50 million of annual savings from various efficiency plans, including the Efficiency Plan for 2016-2019 and our 'Programme for Change' in 2019/20.
8. In December 2022, the Chancellor announced a one-year settlement for FRSs, which included a 6.5% increase in core spending power and flexibility on council tax precept for stand-alone FRSs.

9. The Service's government funding has increased by just over 3% from the previous year, which is lower than the pay and non-pay inflation pressures faced.
10. The precept of FRS functions in Greater Manchester has been increased by £5.00 in a Band D Council Tax Precept for 2024/25 to maintain levels of service delivery and continue the journey of improvement. Precept income has been included in the MTFP to ensure frontline fire cover is maintained.
11. The MTFP to 2026/27 has been updated to reflect pay and price inflation, cost pressures, and agreed savings, including a 6.5% increase in core spending power for FRSs.

ACTIVITIES TO-DATE

12. The GMFRS Improvement Programme launched in 2021 continues to build efficiencies across the organisation, with several key areas of focus, and include:
13. Successes in our recent inspection undertaken by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) with them acknowledging our continues progress and highlighting a number of innovative and positive practice, resulting in 10 'Good' gradings and one 'Adequate' grading. We were graded as 'Good' in Making the FRS affordable now and in the future, and 'Good' in Making best use of resources.
14. Undertaken our Fire Cover and Special Appliance Review to ensure we have the right resources, in the right place, at the right time, with the right equipment and training. The proposals were consulted upon and the final approved recommendations are currently in the process of being implemented.
15. Working towards our carbon reduction targets as set out in the GMCA Sustainability Strategy, with a 13% reduction demonstrated over the last five years. HMICFRS also recognised the strategy as "Promising Practice" in effective carbon reduction and energy-use monitoring with an increased use of renewable energy.
16. An Estates Programme that continues to deliver improvements to the estates portfolio and reduce costs, with two new zero-carbon fire stations to be built, contributing to carbon and cost reductions.
17. Introduced a range of governance frameworks to provide a consistent and robust approach corporate governance, project management and evaluation. HMICFRS recognised this as 'Promising Practice' that has led to service improvement, including a more efficient and effective service for the public.

18. Collaborative working and shared premises with other emergency services partners provide opportunities for cost savings and efficiency gains. Procurement exercises are carried out in collaboration with other regional FRAs, GMP, and local authorities, with several examples demonstrated.
19. A range of key prevention initiatives including, the award winning Atlas Project delivered in partnership with Greater Manchester Probation Service, the Safe Drive Stay Alive which is a collaboration of all 999 services, Northern Care Alliance NHS Trust and the Safer Roads Greater Manchester partnership.

FUTURE PLANS

20. The attached report sets out our continued plans to improve efficiency and productivity through several initiatives.
21. Initiatives include a review of our non-operational estate to consider the requirements at these locations and future proposals, a facilities management and security review to reduce costs in these areas and streamlining fleet and logistics.
22. We will also be instigating a Capacity Project which will look at the volume of demands placed on our colleagues and teams, leading to the creation of a blueprint regarding how the Service can work more effectively and achieve greater productivity.
23. We are exploring how the investment in technology can assist with enhancing the Service and will include exploring how to automate equipment checks and inventories to improve data quality and assist with reducing administrative time; investing in crewing software solutions and digital equipment to support prevention activities.
24. We will be building on our Integrated Place-Based Working framework, through the introduction of a 'What Works Forum' which will enable the sharing of best practice, identification, and prioritisation of initiative to deliver best value and allow a streamlined and efficient collaborative approach.
25. The Service is also implementing the Organisational Learning Framework and a refreshed Service Delivery Governance structure to improve productivity.
26. We continue to set non-pay savings targets for future financial years, with a target of £0.450m to be delivered over the next 12 months.

OPERATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY

27. Our Strategic Assessment of Risk helps us identify and evaluate potential risks and develop the appropriate approach to manage them. This ensures we allocate the appropriate resources where they are needed most and prioritise our risk management efforts accordingly.
28. Effective emergency response requires resilience and measuring the percentage of crewed and available appliances helps deliver this. Over the last year, all 50 appliances were available 99.66% of the time, which is the second in England.
29. We are introducing a range of improvements that will assist in improving operational productivity, including:
- a. Changes to the Work Routine Planner to improve processes and remove duplication;
 - b. Introducing a digital asset management system (PaperTrail) to record testing and maintenance of operational equipment;
 - c. Procurement of a Planning, Performance & Projects system that will replace our current performance portal providing quick and easy access to key station and borough performance information;
 - d. Effectively utilising our volunteer cohort to support the delivery of key activities, particularly in areas struggling with capacity.
30. The Productivity Project initiated in 2022/23 assessed the level of productivity across our 41 fire stations and identified 12 recommendations to assist with supporting our proposals. Of these 12, five have been completed and the remaining seven are continuing to be progressed by Service Delivery teams.
31. Our Engaged Leaders sessions continue to promote candid dialogue to gather feedback for driving future improvements. We have had over 200 interactions with 40+ teams, identifying crewing and detachments for enhancement. Responding to this feedback, we are prioritising Gartan system upgrades and creating an action plan for improving productivity while maintaining high standards and quality in innovative ways.

NEXT STEPS

32. This Plan demonstrates our commitment to ensuring sustainable financial management and public value, whilst delivering an efficient and effective service to the communities of Greater Manchester. The Plan has been published on the GMFRS website and available via this link – [Efficiency and Productivity Plans - Greater Manchester Fire Rescue Service](#).

