

Greater Manchester Police, Fire & Crime Panel

Date: 23rd March 2023

Subject: State of Fire and Rescue report

Report of: DCFO Ben Norman

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PURPOSE OF REPORT

This paper provides an overview of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services' (HMICFRS) *State of Fire and Rescue* report and how Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue is responding to the findings.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Members are asked to:

- Note the contents of the report and provide any feedback.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:

- State of Fire and Rescue: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England - <https://www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/state-of-fire-and-rescue-annual-assessment-2022/>
- GMFRS Annual Delivery Report 2021-22 - <https://www.manchesterfire.gov.uk/fire-plan/annual-delivery-report/>
- GMFRS Annual Delivery Plan – draft included with this agenda

INTRODUCTION

1. His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services provides an annual report to the Secretary of State under section 28B of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. It contains his assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of fire and rescue services (FRS) in England during their second full round of inspections, which were carried out between February 2021 and August 2022.
2. The report draws on findings from inspections of FRS in England, to provide an overall view of the state of the fire and rescue sector.

REPORT'S FINDINGS - HEADLINES

3. Effectiveness

- a) Resources must be clearly allocated to risk.
- b) FRS need to develop robust risk-based inspection programmes that identify the highest risks in the built environment.
- c) Evaluation and quality control needs to improve.
- d) Prevention services still need to improve and linked to risks identified in the local risk plan.
- e) Some services aren't always meeting the availability or response standards they have set for themselves.
- f) Services aren't always up to date with their arrangements to respond to marauding terrorist attacks.
- g) Most services could do more to learn from their response work. They don't always have adequate debriefing systems in place to learn from incidents.

4. Efficiency

- a) Short-term funding settlements continue to make medium and longer-term planning difficult.
- b) Many services have capacity problems particularly regarding Protection. They are also relying too much on overtime.
- c) Services have scope to improve their productivity. This includes improving performance management arrangements; using firefighters for more prevention and protection work; more efficient use of technology. Medical response on behalf of the ambulance service (EMR) is also recommended – "This would be of enormous benefit to the public."

5. People

- a) Some services need to get better at promoting values and positive professional cultures.
- b) Some groups of staff are more likely to experience bullying and harassment.

- c) Services should do more to improve equality, diversity and inclusion.
- d) More equality data is needed to better understand the challenges the sector faces.
- e) Progression opportunities for staff are unequal.
- f) Some services are engaging with their staff and representative bodies, but others could do more.

CURRENT POSITION: GMFRS CONTEXT

6. The following section is a summary of some of the improvement projects GMFRS has undertaken, specifically those that address the findings in the *State of Fire and Rescue* report. An overview of all the improvements recently delivered can be found in the Annual Delivery Report (ADP) 2021-22.
(<https://www.manchesterfire.gov.uk/fire-plan/annual-delivery-report/>)
7. GMFRS allocates resources to the risks identified in its local risk plan, the Fire Plan. This is informed by the Service's Strategic Assessment of Risk process and report. The Service responds to changing risk through the assessment and consultation process within the Annual Delivery Plan.
8. GMFRS adopts a risk-based approach to service delivery.
 - Last year GMFRS launched a new online home fire safety tool that gives residents personalised advice to keep their home and family safe from fire. Hosted on the Service's website, the tool allows residents to complete a home fire safety check to help identify fire hazards and get advice on simple changes they can make to reduce risk. The tool tells residents if they are eligible for a Home Fire Safety Assessment visit from a firefighter or prevention advisor. This new approach allows GMFRS to free up resources to target those most vulnerable to fire.
 - GMFRS has reviewed and updated its Fire Safety Risk Based Inspection Programme to ensure it has an accurate risk profile for premises across Greater Manchester (GM) and allow it to effectively target resources at the highest risk buildings. As well as prioritising recruitment into specialist Protection roles, the Service has invested in fire safety and fire investigation training for fire safety teams and firefighters to help them recognise and respond to threats and equip incident commanders to identify the cause and origin of fires.
10. GMFRS periodically undertakes reviews of its fire cover arrangements to ensure resources are suitably placed and equipped to respond to emergencies. When planning any changes, GMFRS utilises modelling software allowing the assessment of the likely impact on performance. The outcomes are measured

using our planning standard – ‘To respond to all life risk incidents within 10 minutes from the receipt of the emergency call at NWFC on 80% of occasions’.

11. For a number of years GMFRS has consistently met its response standard of 7m 30s to reach life risk incidents. This makes us one of the fastest services in the country. To help maintain this standard, GMFRS has designed and trailed new training courses for drivers. All instructors have been signed off by NFCC and added to the national register. Negotiations are taking place with relevant teams and the Fire Brigade’s Union (FBU), ahead of final implementation. It is anticipated that new approaches will improve safety and response times.
12. In partnership with staff and the FBU, GMFRS designed and implemented a new terrorist response capability to mitigate the level of risk within the region. Every firefighter in GM is receiving enhanced training including exercises with Greater Manchester Police and North West Ambulance Service. Specialist equipment is being made available on all fire engines. This new capability will ensure GMFRS is ready to respond quickly and effectively should a terrorist attack occur anywhere in the region. It will also improve the Service’s response to non-terrorist incidents that require a mass casualty intervention. Following the implementation of this new capability, HMICFRS removed its cause of concern.
12. GMFRS introduced an Evaluation Framework in 2021. Relevant projects within the Service’s Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) are evaluated to understand and measure their outcomes and impacts. More recently, the Service’s Research and Evaluation Officer (REO) has been working with colleagues across GMFRS to evaluate ‘business as usual’ activities (i.e., those that are not within the ADP) to ensure evaluation is being applied consistently across the organisation.
13. Work is ongoing to provide more visibility to the evaluations being completed across the Service. An ‘Evaluation Portal’ has been developed that includes:
 - An evaluation register that lists activities across GMFRS, and will provide an ‘at a glance’ view of how each evaluation is progressing.
 - An evaluation library for all evaluation documentation and reports.
 - A recommendations log with findings from evaluations enabling GMFRS to track progress of recommended actions.
 - Guidance and training materials.
14. Operational Assurance Officers are mobilised to incidents that meet pre-agreed criteria. Their role is to support commanders and conduct incident evaluation. The findings are recorded on the active monitoring system (AMS) allowing data analysis and identification of emerging themes. In addition, debriefs take place after every incident. Depending on the nature of the incident further debriefing may also be conducted if criteria is met. The learning identified from evaluations and debriefs is recorded on the AMS system for further analysis. This leads to

actions to address learning or promote notable practice. Learning bulletins and the staff newsletter are used to share these with the organisation.

15. GMFRS has replaced the mobile data terminals (MDTs) in its fire engines and provided a second removable terminal. The new terminals give firefighters direct access to up-to-date risk information at an incident. They have a faster, clearer, and more responsive touch screen interface; more reliable hardware; newer satellite navigation software; and access to a range of apps providing vehicle schematics at road traffic collisions, and hazardous material information at chemical spills. They will also reduce paperwork by allowing crews to directly record information whilst conducting safety visits at homes and businesses.
16. As well as increasing the number of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Single Points of Contact across the Service, GMFRS has developed a refreshed Promotions Pathway Framework for operational staff. The Framework will help GMFRS better identify, develop and promote the best possible talent to management and leadership roles in a fair and inclusive way. It will place a greater emphasis on nurturing and supporting emerging talent, by providing access to tools and development resources that can be proactively used by anyone at any stage of their career.
17. Positive attraction work has continued across GM, targeting more diverse areas, with a specific focus on recruiting women and people from under represented groups into operational firefighter roles.
18. GMFRS has been recognised for its work to improve culture. The Service is now ranked 37th in the Stonewall Top 100 Workplace Equality Index. HMICFRS now grade GMFRS as 'Good' at looking after its people, a significant improvement from the previous inspection. The Service's apprenticeships programme has been rated by Ofsted as 'outstanding' for its approaches to personal development and behaviour and attitudes, as part of a 'good' overall rating.

NEXT STEPS

19. The following section is a summary of some of the improvement projects GMFRS is planning to undertake, specifically those that address the findings in the *State of Fire and Rescue* report. An overview of all the improvements GMFRS is planning to deliver are available in the draft Annual Delivery Plan 2023-24.

Allocating resources to risk

20. GMFRS is currently drafting proposals on the realignment of its resources to the region's changing risks. These proposals will increase the number of fire engines available; and locate fire engines where they are needed most. Once finalized, the

proposals will be brought to the Panel before being subject to a full internal and external consultation.

Evaluation and debriefs

21. The REO has been involved with the development of the Person Centred Fire Risk Assessment evaluation framework, which will be used to measure the impact of the Service's Home Fire Safety Assessments.

22. A new debrief policy has recently been produced to streamline and partly automate the process. The roll out of the new system and any policy changes will be supported with training and communications of the changes.

Technology

23. GMFRS is developing a new Prevention and Protection digital programme that will provide a single digital method for recording all activities. The Service is also scoping new prevention technologies to provide improved ways of delivering education, campaigns and messaging. This will potentially include virtual reality and digital boards.

Emergency Medical Response (EMR)

24. GMFRS will explore with staff, unions, the NFCC and the North West Ambulance Service the feasibility of introducing EMR. There are factors around national policy, evaluation, training, welfare support, pay, and role maps that will require careful consideration and agreement. The Panel will be updated with any developments.

Culture

25. GMFRS will implement the refreshed Firefighter Recruitment and Attraction Strategy (2023-2025).

26. GMFRS is adopting a 'Culture First' approach to ensure a positive and inclusive culture is embedded across the Service. It will be a priority in the Annual Delivery Plan for 2023/24 and there will be a new internal communications campaign to inform and inspire positive behaviours. GMFRS will:

- Establish a Culture First Programme Board that will manage and commission culture-related projects. The Board will be made up of staff from all levels of the Service and external expert representatives.
- Introduce a Culture First review of all key 'business as usual' activities to ensure culture is at the forefront of objectives and service delivery.
- Develop a Culture First 2023-2025 workplan for all staff.
- Procure and commission an external review team to act as a critical lens to our existing activities and emerging plans, leading to independent recommendations.