

# Greater Manchester Police, Fire & Crime Panel

Date: 12th June 2023

Subject: GMFRS Efficiency and Productivity Plan 2023-24

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

Report Author: Sarah Scoales, Head of Service Excellence

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## 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.

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## 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
<b>EXEMPTION FROM CALL IN</b>		
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 National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the Local Government Association (LGA) have proposed that across 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 and Productivity Plan 2023/24, 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 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 secured over £47 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 7.4% 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 2023/24 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 Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) to 2025/26 has been updated to reflect pay and price inflation, cost pressures, and agreed savings, including a 7.4% 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 included:
13. A new Sustainability Strategy launched across GMCA, which includes the installation of EV charging points and electric vehicles to reduce carbon emissions. The service has successfully bid for grant funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme and invested in solar photovoltaics to reduce carbon emissions and generate cost savings.
14. An Estates Programme has been delivered to improve the estates portfolio and reduce costs, with two new zero-carbon fire stations to be built, contributing to carbon and cost reductions.
15. The Contact Centre has made savings and improved processing through collaboration with SafeLincs. Safelincs, an online home fire safety assessment tool, has been introduced to create capacity for operational crews.
16. 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.
17. New high specification Mobile Data Terminals and Microsoft Teams provide operational support and permit hybrid working arrangements, respectively. The introduction of GovWifi simplifies and secures access to Wi-Fi at participating public sector locations.
18. The Service conducts Equality Impact Assessments and People Impact Assessments to ensure a balanced impact on operational performance and service to the public

## **FUTURE PLANS**

19. The attached report sets out our continued plans to improve efficiency and productivity through several initiatives.
20. Initiatives include a review of our fire cover arrangements with more cost-effective shift systems which introduce further day crewing stations and improve special appliance capabilities, as well as improving call handling arrangements, reviewing operational training provision and streamlining fleet and logistics.
21. The Service aims to enhance partnership working with other key services and drive continuous improvement through its Integrated Place-Based Working framework. The technology-related initiatives include developing a Prevention and Protection digital program, investing in mobile devices, exploring the use of technology for equipment and appliance checks to reduce the time this takes operational staff, and developing a digital platform for planning, performance, and project management.
22. The Service also plans to develop processes and governance and implement an Organizational Learning Framework and a refreshed Service Delivery Governance structure to improve productivity.
23. We continue to set non-pay savings targets for future financial years, with a target of £1.5m to be delivered across two financial years.
24. The Service also makes efforts to improve productivity across a range of areas, such as launching a new Sustainability Strategy across the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and investing in solar photovoltaics. Other areas in which the Service has made efforts to improve productivity include installing EV charging points, successfully bidding for grant funding to reduce carbon emissions, delivering an Estates Programme to create a fit-for-purpose portfolio, introducing audio-visual technology, and using collaborative procurement opportunities.
25. We also aim to reduce expense claims, increase flexibility, and manage air quality through the use of Microsoft Teams and GovWifi. Finally, we conduct Equality Impact Assessments and People Impact Assessments as part of our Service reviews to ensure that there is no disproportionate impact on operational performance or service to the public.

## OPERATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY

26. We conducted a project to determine the current operational activities across our 41 fire stations, to identify opportunities to improve operational productivity. The headlines from this activity, are:
- a. Station Routine activity, which covers handover, equipment testing and cleaning, was identified as an area to reduce to release capacity of operational crews. Moreover, the project found that reducing the Station Routine by 30 minutes would release 6,500 hours per year for proactive prevention and reactive public safety interventions.
  - b. Targeted approach to school visits will be introduced in 2023/24 focusing on years 2,3 and 8, moving away from the universal offer.
  - c. A total of 2,000 hours will be allocated to reactive productive work, which is work undertaken by operational crews at short notice in response to an unplanned event or developing situation.
  - d. A Heatwave Business Continuity Management (BCM) prevention plan will be introduced, which will deploy operational crews to known high-risk sites to carry out a short-notice prevention intervention.
  - e. Productivity will be measured across prevention activities in terms of hours used by crews or the number of activities completed within a reporting period.
  - f. We plan to train all frontline crews to attain a Level 2 Fire Safety qualification. This will equip them with the basic knowledge to undertake fire safety checks and capture risk information to inform the Strategic Assessment of Risk, Risk Based Inspection Programme, and Operational Intelligence.
  - g. Provide better support for businesses by giving advice and identifying risks that need further investigation, resulting in better community protection.
  - h. Fire safety checks will be conducted following incidents, responses to emerging risks, and operational intelligence gathering in a flexible way. Due to the two-year training plan, fire safety checks will commence in 2024.
  - i. We expect to gather current risk information for at least 1,000 premises per year and provide fire safety advice to at least half of these, with the plan to increase incrementally each year.
  - j. The Volunteering Strategy will focus on seven key areas aims to maximise the potential of volunteering and enhance services delivered to the communities.
27. 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.
28. The Plan has been published on the GMFRS website and can be found alongside our Annual Delivery Plans via this link - [ADP 2023-2024 - Greater Manchester Fire Rescue Service](#).