

Greater Manchester Police, Fire & Crime Panel

Date: 20th November 2023

Subject: GMFRS Fire Cover Review – Consultation Activities & Outcomes

Report of: DCFO Ben Norman

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the Fire Cover Review 2023, the approach to the consultation and key headlines. It details the proposals selected for implemented based on the feedback received during the consultation process.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Members are asked to:

- Note the contents of the report and the supporting Consultation Report on the Fire Cover and Special Appliance Reviews found at Appendix A.
- Support the implementation of the below proposals following the consideration of the consultation feedback:

GMFRS will:

- ✓ Introduce one additional wholetime fire appliance at Manchester Central fire station.
- ✓ Implement Enhanced Rescue Station proposals at Leigh and Ashton fire stations.
- ✓ Implement all Special Appliance proposals.
- ✓ Invest £340K in Prevention and Protection.

GMFRS will not:

- ✗ Implement Day Crewing Arrangements at Sale fire station.
 - ✗ Implement Day Crewing Arrangements at Offerton fire station.
 - ✗ Introduce one additional wholetime fire appliance at Moss Side fire station.
- Note the Mayoral Decision Notice found at Appendix B

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Equalities Impact, Carbon, and Sustainability Assessment:

N/A

Risk Management

N/A

Legal Considerations

N/A

Financial Consequences - Capital

N/A

Financial Consequences - Revenue

N/A

Number of attachments included in the report:

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

[Fire Cover and Special Appliance Reviews Consultation \(gmconsult.org\)](http://gmconsult.org)

[Fire Cover Review 2023 - Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service](#)

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	

BACKGROUND

1. The 2018 Fire and Rescue National Framework for England places a statutory responsibility on GMFRS, and all fire services, to ensure we identify and assess the risks facing our communities and constantly evolve to respond to these effectively.
2. Our community risk management planning activities help us to understand the risks facing our communities and how we can safely and effectively address them. As part of this process we produce an annual Strategic Assessment of Risk (SAoR) and PESTLE document, that assess changes in population, infrastructure, legislation and identify potential emerging risks to the Service.
3. Every four years we undertake a Fire Cover Review (FCR) to ensure our fire cover remains as effective as possible. This activity assesses our current fire cover arrangements ensuring we have the appropriate level of resources available to respond to fires and other emergencies and clarifies the impact of any potential / proposed changes.
4. By conducting these reviews periodically, we can identify areas of potential risk and adjust our resource allocation to ensure we are able to respond to emergencies as effectively and efficiently as possible.

FIRE COVER REVIEW - PROPOSALS

5. Our annual SAoR and PESTLE underpin the development of our Fire Plan and Annual Delivery Plans. These plans and supporting strategies set out how we respond to the risks across Greater Manchester and keep our communities safe.
6. Our Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24 detailed our intention to consult with staff, partners and the public on proposals to make changes to our fire cover, allowing us to increase our capacity and capability and ensure we invest our resources in areas of the highest need.
7. The proposals set out in our Fire Cover Review were based on extensive data and insight, and we believe are the best way for us to build a stronger, more resilient fire and rescue service while maintaining the highest levels of safety and lowest levels of risk as we protect our communities, work together and save lives.

8. The proposals that have been consulted upon are detailed below:
- Implement Day Crewing Arrangements at Sale fire station.
 - Implement Day Crewing Arrangements at Offerton fire station.
 - Introduce one additional wholetime fire appliance at Manchester Central fire station.
 - Introduce one additional wholetime fire appliance at Moss Side fire station.
 - Implement Enhanced Rescue Station proposals at Leigh and Ashton fire stations.
 - Implement all Special Appliance proposals.
 - Invest £340K in Prevention and Protection.

CONSULTATION

9. There is no legal requirement for us to consult on the proposed changes. GMFRS was nevertheless committed to do so, recognising that effective engagement with our staff, residents and partners leads to better decision-making, improved trust and confidence and further enhanced professional judgement.
10. The non-statutory consultation process commenced internally on the 8th May, and externally on the 5th June, concluding on the 24th July 2023. The consultation process aimed to gain an understanding of the views of the staff, residents, trade unions and partners of Greater Manchester on our fire cover proposals and our special appliance review.
11. The consultation sought views on a number of proposed changes, which included extending day crewing arrangements to two additional stations, a new operating model and staffing structure for Enhanced Rescue Stations and increasing the fleet with two new fire engines. There was also the opportunity to feedback about the special appliance cover review as well which included changing locations for our turntable ladder enhancing Water Incident Units and improving Wildfire capability.

CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES

12. For internal engagement (initially from Monday 8 May to Monday 5 June, but then continuing throughout the subsequent external engagement period), managers from across the Service held 140 sessions with their watches or teams. Each manager provided feedback about the main issues raised in these discussions and any questions that had been asked.

13. During the external engagement period (Monday 5 June to Monday 24 July), 830 people responded to an online survey, leaving a total of 1,100 comments about the proposals.
14. Opportunities were also provided for people to respond in-person. Public events were held in the areas most directly covered by the proposals Offerton in Stockport, and Sale and Partington in Trafford. A total of 180 people attended these three events.
15. Senior GMFRS officers also attended Council Scrutiny meetings in both Stockport and Trafford, where they outlined the proposals to local Councillors and took questions about the potential local impacts.
16. Feedback on the proposals was also received from a number of key stakeholders, either through the online survey or separate letters / emails to our service. This included submissions from the Fire Brigades Union, Trafford and Stockport Councils and their individual councillors, and local MPs.
17. Two petitions were also received which, combined, had signatures from 2,043 people.

CONSULTATION HEADLINES

18. The headline feedback from this internal and external engagement is that:
19. The proposals to move to “day crewing” in Sale and Offerton fire stations are strongly opposed by local residents and their representatives. This opposition is driven largely by concerns and fears for safety, including for older and more vulnerable residents and in response to local risks and developments.
20. The day crewing proposals are also opposed by many GMFRS staff and the Fire Brigades Union. Safety concerns shared with residents are also added to by questions over the deliverability of the proposed staffing model.
21. There is support for the addition of two new fire engines (or appliances) for the city region to be located in Manchester – but this support turns to opposition when it comes at the cost of a move to day crewing in other areas. Many respondents spoke of “robbing Peter to pay Paul” and feelings of unfairness of reducing cover in one part of Greater Manchester to increase cover in another.
22. The Enhanced Rescue Unit proposal received mixed reviews from both the public and staff. While the broader range of incident response provided was often welcomed, there were questions about the cover levels provided, identified locations of the units and deliverability of the staffing model.

23. There was significantly less feedback on the Special Appliance Review than on the other proposals. There was broad support for the proposals outlined, but with some limited localised opposition – predominantly from staff – from some areas where appliances are proposed to be moved elsewhere.
24. Consulting on the Fire Cover Review proposals as a single combined package has complicated analysis of how people feel about each of the proposals individually. Where there is opposition to the Enhanced Rescue Station, additional fire engine and Special Appliance proposals, accompanying free text comments often (but not always) link this back to the individual's opposition to the day crewing proposals.
25. Overall there is recognition that GMFRS is facing a difficult challenge in achieving its aims within the resources available to it. A number of responses spoke of the proposals being driven by financial pressures, while enthusiasm for the two additional appliances was tempered by a belief that this was not 'new' cover but replacing resources previously removed. People called for GMFRS and the Mayor to seek additional funding to keep communities safe, rather than changing current service levels to deliver within what is currently affordable.
26. The full consultation report can be found at Appendix A.

FIRE COVER REVIEW DECISIONS

27. GMFRS is a service that recognises the importance of listening to communities and its people, taking their thoughts and attitudes into consideration when developing future plans.
28. The detailed feedback from the consultation, alongside the service's data modelling and professional insight, has been considered and utilised to refine the original proposals. Following this a revised plan has been determined that will see a reduced number of the proposals being recommended for implementation, whilst still creating a more efficient and effective use of resources while considering and protecting residents' and partners' feelings of safety and wellbeing.
29. The below sets out the final recommendations on the proposals consulted upon:
GMFRS will:
 - ✓ Introduce one additional wholetime fire appliance at Manchester Central fire station.
 - ✓ Implement Enhanced Rescue Station proposals at Leigh and Ashton fire stations.
 - ✓ Implement all Special Appliance proposals.
 - ✓ Invest £340K in Prevention and Protection.

GMFRS will not:

- ✘ Implement Day Crewing Arrangements at Sale fire station.
- ✘ Implement Day Crewing Arrangements at Offerton fire station.
- ✘ Introduce one additional wholetime fire appliance at Moss Side fire station.

30. The formal Mayoral Decision Notice capturing the above final proposals to be implemented and supporting rationale can be found at Appendix B.

NEXT STEPS

31. To obtain formal approval of the decision notice by the Mayor to commence the implementation of the final agreed Fire Cover Review and Special Appliance Review proposals.

32. Following the approval of the decision notice by the Mayor, a statement will be published on the external website informing the public of the outcome of the consultation process and the proposals we are planning to implement.

33. Implementation of the approved proposals set out in the Mayoral Decision Notice will be managed as one of our Priority Improvement Projects. This project will be formally monitored and scrutinised through our Governance Framework, with regular progress reporting via Improvement Board and Deputy Mayor's Fire Executive meetings.