

**Status of Report:** *Public*

**Meeting:** **Combined Fire Authority**

**Date:** **29 July 2020**

**Subject:** **Service update during Covid-19**

**Report by:** **The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer**

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**For:** **Information Only**

### **Purpose**

1. This report provides the Combined Fire Authority with an update on the activities and actions undertaken by the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service since February 2020, including its response to the Coronavirus pandemic. This summary would normally have been reported at the scheduled meeting of the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) in June 2020 and the Corporate Governance Committee (CGC) in July 2020, which were cancelled due to Covid-19.

### **Recommendation**

2. It is recommended that the Committee notes the update on service delivery and the Service's response to the Coronavirus pandemic

### **Executive Summary**

3. This report provides a summary of the activities and actions undertaken by officers of Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service during early 2020. These activities would normally have been reported to the scheduled CFA and CGC meetings in June and July 2020, which were cancelled due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The report is not comprehensive due to the changing priorities during the pandemic. It also includes details of the Service's response to Covid-19.

### **Background**

4. The Corporate Governance Committee and the Combined Fire Authority receive reports on the performance of the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS). Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown from March 2020, the following meetings were postponed:
  - Corporate Governance Committee on 15 July 2020.
  - Combined Fire Authority on 17 June 2020.

5. This report provides a summary of activity rather than a comprehensive report due to the changing priorities during the current pandemic.

#### Covid-19 response

6. The Service has responded very well in the face of the challenges posed by Covid-19. Officers have worked very hard to ensure that the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) remains available to communities in all emergency response areas and in other areas of the business (albeit delivered very differently).
7. In addition to the above, LFRS has delivered its service and added resources to support partners across the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) area through its membership of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF). This includes:
  - i. Supporting the East Midlands Ambulance Service by allocating 12 staff members to assist them in ensuring delivery of Critical Patient Care has continued and by allowing them to maintain a high level of emergency response;
  - ii. The delivery of controlled drug prescriptions to those individuals who are unable to otherwise obtain this critical life supporting medication;
  - iii. The collection and delivery of prescriptions to vulnerable members of the community;
  - iv. Through the LRF, offered an accommodation base at Southern Fire Station to the military emergency planners, supporting them with resources and storage facilities for the provision of LLR-wide PPE;
  - v. The provision of the storage and delivery hub of vital PPE for the care and health sector for the whole LLR area;
  - vi. The option to undertake the full PPE delivery and distribution chain in the unlikely event that military planners are withdrawn from LLR;
  - vii. Whilst thankfully not required, LFRS was working with the coroner in the case of excess deaths to support the movement of bodies across LLR;
  - viii. Volunteers from staff have been providing specialist PPE face-fitting services to care and health workers;
  - ix. Co-ordinating access for key workers to emergency accommodation to ensure they could continue to work and not risk passing Covid-19 to their families and cohabitants;

- x. Chairing a sub-group from the LRF Strategic Co-ordinating Group to ensure all Blue Light and Criminal Justice services were able to function and continue to deliver their services to the community;
  - xi. Working towards delivering training to care homes regarding infection control;
  - xii. Using the Head Quarters at Birstall to train, brief and establish the Birstall Park and ride Covid-19 testing site;
  - xiii. Eastern Fire Station obtaining materials and creating a “mini factory” for the production of vital PPE for the health and social care sector. This was recognised nationally and allowed the national tri-partite agreement to be updated which was followed across the country.
8. The challenges have seen the service innovate. Changes include the following:
- i. Allowing those staff who can, to work from home;
  - ii. For those staff who couldn't work from home, or for those with individual circumstances and who needed to do so, to come to work. To implement social distancing, hand washing and safe working practices;
  - iii. Overcoming significant supply chain issues with crucial cleaning materials for Breathing Apparatus. This was taken to national level ensuring this success was replicated across the country;
  - iv. Continuing to contact vulnerable members of the community over the phone (over 800 safety checks completed) to deliver safety advice and assist with residents' concerns for all areas not just fire;
  - v. Innovation by the Learning and Development team, in using virtual classrooms and virtual reality to become recognised as national and international best practice, pushing the continued improvements in training and learning in a Covid-19-safe way. Undoubtedly this will continue and will deliver significant efficiencies moving forward;
  - vi. Use of technology to ensure business meetings have continued whilst ensuring staff remain safe and operate within Covid-19 guidelines.

### Covid-19 Staff Wellbeing

9. Staff welfare has always been paramount throughout the pandemic. This is demonstrated by:
- i. Monitoring of staff absences throughout the lockdown period, ensuring contact was made and support offered to all those absent, irrespective of cause – Covid-19 or other sickness;

- ii. High levels of communication and support offered for mental health and wellbeing, recognising that Covid-19 has presented unique challenges to staff for many reasons and in many different ways;
- iii. Testing for staff or their relatives who believed they may have Covid-19, or for those self-isolating to allow them to return to work;
- iv. Allocation of additional duties to those staff who have been most affected by Covid-19 (for example, self-employed on-call staff who would not have been earning a wage);
- v. Regular communication across the service to update staff on advice, the current situation and how it was affecting service delivery.

#### Covid-19 Partner engagement

10. The Service has remained connected to other partners throughout the pandemic by being involved in many forums to ensure it was ready, willing and able to respond in a correct and joined up way. This includes involvement in:
  - i. Strategic Coordination group (LRF);
  - ii. Tactical Coordination Group (LRF);
  - iii. National Fire Chiefs Council– national calls;
  - iv. National Fire Chiefs Council – Regional meetings;
  - v. Three meetings each week of the Senior Management Team, including the Fire Brigades Union;
  - vi. Weekly VLOG updates across the service;
  - vii. Weekly updates in Service Matters (staff magazine);
  - viii. Chaired (by the ACFO) the Blue Light and Criminal Justice Cell (LRF);
  - ix. Recovery Coordination Group (LRF).

11. The delivery of a Fire and Rescue Service to the community has continued with the exceptional commitment from all staff.

#### Covid-19 Grants and additional funding (new grants)

12. As part of the Government's response to the pandemic, additional funding was made available to Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service. This funding was received in two parts and totals approx. £981,000. The Service continues to monitor and report on costs on a weekly basis to the National Fire Chiefs Council and Home Office.

13. The Government has also released additional funding for the fire sector to support Fire Protection work. This was one-off funding and was distributed by the National Fire Chiefs Council. The funding totals £271,000 and will be used to enhance capacity and capability in this work area.

#### Our Plan 2020-2024 and Annual Report/Statement of Assurance 2019-2020.

14. Our Plan is the Corporate and Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) for 2020-24 and contains the 2020-24 IRMP proposals recently approved for implementation by the CFA. The plan has been approved by the Senior Management Team and published on the LFRS website.
15. The Annual Report/Statement of Assurance for 2019-20 has also been approved by the Senior Management Team and uploaded onto the LFRS website. The report presents a range of key deliverables, data and information regarding the levels of performance that have been achieved during the previous year across the Service.
16. The publication of the IRMP and the Annual Statement of Assurance are statutory requirements required in accordance with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.

#### After the Incident Survey - Results 2019-2020

17. The results of the improved After the Incident survey have recently been received. Working in conjunction with Leicestershire County Council, feedback covering a wider range of incidents is now available as is the ability to view the responses much quicker than previously. For the period April 2019 to March 2020, 208 survey responses were received, with 100% of respondents expressing overall satisfaction with the service they received from LFRS.

#### Service Development Programme

18. The Service Development Programme currently has 17 projects at various stages of implementation. This includes:
  - i. Four new fire engines have recently been made operationally available;
  - ii. The sizing exercise for all uniformed staff for the new Fire kit (PPE) has recently started, for delivery in early 2021;
  - iii. The Contingency Response Arrangements with Securitas are being finalised;
  - iv. Roll-out of the de-mountable tablet devices to stations to provide better information to crews on the way to and from incidents. Provided new digital radios to improve ground communications at incidents;

- v. Continuation of the upgrade to ICT systems, including the introduction of a GDPR-compliant vulnerable persons' module to the risk management system and have initiated projects to improve the Occupational Health system, the core HR system, FireWatch and the method of capturing and managing operational competence.

Performance Monitoring following the changes prompted by the member's workshop.

- 19. The performance reporting process to members has been improved following the Reporting Workshop attended by some CFA members in 2019. From the start of this financial year, performance is now reported against a more comprehensive set of key performance indications and a greater level of trend analysis has been included to assist staff in making decisions. The performance report has been well received by the Service's Tactical Management Team and will be presented to the next Corporate Governance Committee in September.

**Report Implications/Impact**

- 20. Legal (including crime and disorder)

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

- 21. Financial (including value for money, benefits and efficiencies)

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

- 22. Risk (including corporate and operational, health and safety and any impact on the continuity of service delivery)

There are no risk implications arising from this report.

- 23. Staff, Service Users and Stakeholders (including the Equality Impact Assessment)

There are no impacts on staff, service users and stakeholders arising from this report.

- 24. Environmental

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

- 25. Impact upon Our Plan Objective

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on the deliverables within Our Plan. The full extent of these are still not known as the pandemic is still affecting some areas of the Service. Some areas have seen a positive impact such as, increased On-Call availability, decreased attendance times and multi-agency working. However, in some other areas, work has had to be delivered in

different or new ways and in some cases ceased, such as face-to-face community safety and school visits.

## **Background Papers**

Integrated Risk Management Plan –

<https://leics-fire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/our-plan-2020-2024.pdf>

Annual Report/Statement of Assurance 2019-20 –

<https://leics-fire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/annual-report-and-statememnt-of-assurance-2019-2020.pdf>

## **Officer to Contact**

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