



Title	Chief Fire Officer Report – Adult and Social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committee
Chief Fire Officer suite of Services	Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service, Trading Standards, Civil Protection and Coroners Services.
Date	26 th August 2020
Purpose of Report	To provide a strategic update on issues and key areas of service provision, opportunities and challenges

Fire and Rescue

HMICFRS Inspection Update

Following the full Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS) HMICFRS report publication on 17th December 2019, HMICFRS have published the national State of Fire & Rescue 2019 along with the Public Perceptions of Fire and Rescue Services 2019 report.

The reports can be accessed at: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/state-of-fire-and-rescue-2019-double-page.pdf>

The Service continues to consider the report findings alongside the outcome of the GFRS HMICFRS Inspection Report to develop an appropriate Improvement Plan.

GFRS have been informed that a virtual inspection, which is COVID specific, will commence on the 9th November 2020 and will last for two weeks. The staff survey in relation to this has been circulated and staff are currently completing it.

Improvement Board

GFRS have a total of one hundred and twenty four actions following the audits that were carried out and published last year. To ensure robust monitoring and support can be provided, an Improvement Board (IB) was established in December 2019. For each audit action there is a Ratification Report that records the evidence and progress that has been made. Once an Area Lead is confident that the action has been fully addressed, the completed Ratification Report is put forward to the IB Panel for verification. If the IB is satisfied that the audit action has been fully met, this will then be forwarded to Audit for their approval.

At present, fifty-seven (46%) have been approved by the IB Panel and forwarded on to Audit. Twenty-six (21%) are currently awaiting further input or work from other departments within GCC.

As a deliberately developing and learning organisation, reviews are undertaken following each IB Meeting. As a result and over the last three months, an effective and more collaborative working relationship has been established between GFRS and the Audit Risk Assurance (ARA) Team. Regular meetings have been carried out and future ones scheduled. Training for all ARA members, with the use of the Improvement Board Tracker and Evidence Folders, has taken place and access to this information has been made available. ARA Team members are now invited to attend each IB meeting and have the opportunity to ask questions / support or challenge Area Leads where they deem appropriate. The main reason for this is to ensure transparency and add another level of quality assurance in an effort to collaboratively support the efficient progress of the improvement journey.

Business Planning

The one-year extension to the current IRMP 2018 – 21 has been approved. A workshop is planned for the 7th September 2020 to develop this, along with the three year IRMP for 2022 – 2025.

The Community Safety Annual Plan 2020 – 2021 is currently being finalised in consultation with Team Leads. The Corporate Risk Register for GFRS has had a complete and thorough review and is now a working document.

The Improvement Board themes that relate to HR are progressing well, this continues to support all other areas of the Improvement Board.

The Portfolio Management Office (PMO) is progressing well to plan the work of the Service for the coming months and years in relation to its projects, tasks and business as usual activity. The PMO will inform the Community Safety Annual Plan and has become a standing item at SLT.

The draft Improvement Plan, which incorporates the HMICFRS gap analysis, review of internal audit work and Cultural Development Plan is making good progress. Themes are already identifiable and these will form the basis of improvement linked to the PMO.

Community Safety Team

Firefighters are continuing to operate in a broader role to assist our communities. The driving and crewing of ambulances on behalf of South West Ambulance Service has continued. The Service has agreed to extend this provision further, which will now run until 26th August 2020. We are currently working through a request from South West Ambulance Service to move to Phase 2 in project, which will see our Firefighters working alongside a Paramedic, rather than an Emergency Care Assistant. This difference will enable the crews to be mobilised to higher acuity calls, thus offering a higher level of clinical care.

The first phase of our recruitment campaign was completed during week commencing 8th June with sixteen members of our on call staff being successful in gaining full time positions with Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service. The second phase is due to start later in the summer, which will see us recruit from the public.

Trading Standards

As restrictions are lifted and more businesses are permitted to open, the demand on the Service, specifically in relation to the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No 2) (England) Regulations 2020, reduces and we are looking to resume some of our more usual enforcement activities. A review of the demand on the Service shows that since 23rd March, almost 25% of the issues raised with Trading Standards (TS) were COVID related.

Service Risk Assessments have been drawn up and approved, including a COVID-19 Risk Assessment. This serves to mitigate disease risk whilst we resume lower risk visits, focussing on those that can be carried out in the open air. Please note: the Food Standards Agency permission to suspend inspections during the COVID-19 pandemic remained in place for food retail premises but is being removed from the 17th July. The national expectation on the Service is that we will resume inspections to premises producing food or animal feed from 17th July. Both virtual and physical inspection methods will be required.

Whilst the level of scam reporting has remained constant throughout the COVID-19 period, with the team continuing with reassurance calls via telephone, the number of rogue traders (doorstep crime) reports have tripled since travel restrictions were removed. On average, there were 0.65/day when travel restrictions were in place and have increased on average to 1.8/day since 1st June. This supports the need for TS officers to resume physical visits and inspections for high-risk scenarios.

The temporary suspension of Magistrates' and Crown Courts remains a concern. As previously identified, the backlog of cases is likely to have a disproportionate effect on TS capacity due to the frequency investigating officers will be removed from front line duties to attend court. Additionally, there is the risk that delays will result in larger investigation costs incurred by GCC and smaller penalties on conviction as cases appear 'stale'.

Coroners Services

The Coroner Service is continuing to run its entire core functions from the Coroner Court at Barnwood, Gloucester, albeit with minimal staff on site at any one time. Essential staff are working from home and are able to take death reports and forward these to the Senior Coroner. Autopsies and body receipt/release are also continuing within the mortuary with enhanced PPE as directed by professional bodies. The Senior Coroner has relaxed expectations on internal examination to help ease pressures on staff and duty pathologists. All inquest activity was suspended in March and, following a risk assessment visit from GCC AMPS on the 10th June, the Senior Coroner has considered those cases where public/witnesses need to attend and the Service continues to pursue the use of electronic methods of achieving this.

The Service has also received guidance from the Chief Coroner Office regarding these public hearings. This guidance states that the Coroner Service should now be moving towards routinely hearing inquests again, but also highlights the importance of Coroners and their Local Authorities working together to ensure public hearings are managed in a safe manner. There are still no dates arranged locally for the larger inquests or those where juries are required as a slowly 'start small' approach is employed.

Civil Protection Team

Operational Response – CPT continue to respond to COVID-19, supporting the GCC Public Health Team to write the Local Outbreak Management Response Plan and are assisting to facilitate exercise 'Spanish Oak', the virtual-live exercise to test the plan. The additional resource provides much needed capacity and resilience within the team and, in the longer-term, staffing for the CPT Duty Officer Rota to enable a 24/7 point of contact and response that is being currently undertaken by just two staff. New staff are due to commence the Duty Officer rota in August 2020. CPT are also linking in with the multi-agency COVID-19 Community Resilience Cell to look at building on the current increased interest in volunteering and potentially recruiting current COVID-19 volunteers to the Gloucestershire Emergency Support Team (GEST) scheme in the future.

Service Level Agreements - Publica Group (Cotswold DC, Forest of Dean DC and West Oxfordshire DC), Cheltenham and Gloucester City have now all signed the twelve-month variation of the contract to extend Service Level Agreements, with Tewkesbury giving verbal agreement, pending sign-off. Work programmes with the districts, as per the SLA's, have restarted and a meeting with the District Emergency Planning Liaison Officers was held to discuss reception centre arrangements and operation requirements to adhere to COVID-19 restrictions.

Business Continuity Management - Additional staff in the team has enabled a dedicated Civil Protection Officer to drive the BCM Improvement Programme. The BCM Improvement Programme has re-started and a meeting of the BCM Assurance Board (BCMAB) has been set for early August to cement the Improvement Project Plan, policy & framework and group membership.

GCC Response Teams - GCC's emergency response structure and arrangements will be reviewed and consulted on because of the lessons learned from the council's COVID-19 response. Additional staff resources within CPT has allowed for increased engagement and an extensive training programme to be implemented across all levels of response including response teams, Executive On Call Officers and Elected Members.

Executive Decision Making by an Officer with Delegated Powers

Vehicle Disposals

Report end