



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	9 th March 2021
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

The National State of Fire & Rescue 2020 report is expected by the end of February 2021 and the findings of this will be inserted into the Improvement Plan, which, in turn, will be embedded into the PMO. Our progress against our Improvement Plan in relation to Business Fire Safety and Culture was reviewed by HMICFRS in December as a desktop study and this will be followed by a virtual re-inspection in February 2021. Documents have been collected in advance of a week of interviews with key staff that commenced on 22 February 2021. An analysis of capacity to continue to deliver on all improvements across the Service is being undertaken as part of the recent structural review.

HMICFRS will continue their normal inspection programme with a full inspection for GFRS expected in September 2021. The CFO will be contacted nearer the inspection to discuss how it can be completed in the least disruptive way, being cognisant of changing COVID restrictions. For the time being, we are continuing to prepare for this second full inspection.

Improvement Board

GFRS have a total of 118 audit recommendations (equating to 124 Board 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, 101 actions have been implemented, seven are in progress and 16 are awaiting feedback.

As a deliberately developing and learning organisation, reviews are undertaken following each IB Meeting. As a result and over the last eight 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 further 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, add another level of quality assurance and in an effort to collaboratively support the efficient progress of the improvement journey.

Business Planning

The Community Safety Directorate contribution to the draft GCC Annual Governance Statement 2020 – 2021 has been written and will seek approval at SLT on 24 February 2021 and Director sign off before being returned to GCC by 31 March 2021.

The Community Safety Annual Plan 2021 – 2022 is being developed and a draft will seek approval at SLT on 24 February 2021. Team plans are also on target to be approved by SLT on 24 March 2021.

The development of the 2022-2025 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) is progressing. A four week pre-draft consultation began on 15 February with an eight week detailed consultation planned later in 2021. A fourth SLT Workshop to discuss the possible content of the detailed proposals is scheduled on 2nd March, with a follow up session planned on 12th March. In addition, KPI and LPI workshops are planned for 5th March 2021.

The team have concluded all Improvement Board activities for which they had responsibility.

Community Safety Team

The mutual aid request, which involved the crewing of ambulances to assist SWASft through the initial onset of the COVID-19 period, came to an end on 31st August 2020.

Further to additional pressures, we agreed to support for another four months, commencing 1st November 2020 and, as a result of a further request from SWASft, formal confirmation has been provided of GFRS' continued support in respect of an extension of the provision of FRS mutual aid until w/c Monday 7th April 2021.

During the period 1st Nov 20 – 11th Jan 21, GFRS provided 174 shifts and attended 637 incidents as part of an ambulance crew, some 1485 mobilisations since the commencement of the mutual aid agreement.

Since the start of the pandemic, GFRS have made 3861 individual deliveries of PPE to various settings in the County, which equates to 8.5 million pieces of PPE. Over 200 care home staff have requested and received IPC/PPE training as part of the second wave response.

Our recruitment campaign for wholetime firefighters is well underway. The original planned Positive Action had to be amended to a virtual approach due to the current lockdown restrictions. The advert was released mid January 2021, with new firefighters expected to be crewing fire appliances in Spring/Summer 2021.

Trading Standards

All non-critical face-to-face work, including inspections, remain suspended with staff working from home where possible. The continued suspension of activities has created a backlog in pre-planned inspections in relation to food safety and animal feed, the latter being funded inspections. Officers are conducting 'virtual' inspections by internet and telephone where feasible to do so. We remain hopeful that lockdown restrictions will be lifted in time to complete the planned work. However, if restrictions are not eased at the next review and animal feed inspections cannot be completed, the funding awarded to the Service in 2021/22 will be lower than forecast to reflect the work not completed.

If restrictions are not eased following the late February lockdown review, the current suspension of inspection work will be reassessed taking into account any change in risk profile due to falling infection rates and levels of vaccination in the County.

The Service continues to work closely with Public Health and District Councils Environmental Health colleagues under the various pieces of COVID legislation. 11% of the contact with the Service by business or public has been Coronavirus related which has taken priority over other core areas of work. At the end of 2020/21 Q3, demand on the Service was nearly 18% higher than at the same period in 2019/20, again reflecting the extra demand on the Service, largely as a direct consequence of the Coronavirus pandemic.

The demand placed on Service resources responding to Coronavirus related work means there is no capacity to proactively search and advise businesses, especially small sole traders, who may not have taken on their additional responsibilities following EU Exit.

Coroners Services

The Coroners Service is continuing to run its entire core functions from the Coroners Court at Barnwood, Gloucester. Essential staff are working from home whenever possible, whilst continuing to take death reports and forward these to the Senior Coroner. Autopsies and body receipt/releases are also continuing within the mortuary, with enhanced PPE as directed by professional bodies.

The Senior Coroner has relaxed expectations on internal examinations to help ease pressures on staff and duty pathologists. All members of the team have now received their first vaccination.

Inquests are also continuing to operate from Barnwood during the new lockdown although these have minimal public attendance and the service are working with the GCC ICT department to investigate electronic means for allowing more people to virtually attend these hearings.

Civil Protection Team

The Civil Protection Team (CPT) continues to support the response to C-19 including attending C-19 Tactical Response Group and Community Safety Directorate Silver recovery meetings. We also support the newly established C-19 Risk Management Group as required (sub-group from the C-19 Tactical Response Group).

A CPT duty Officer is on-call 24/7. A number of incidents during January / February as outlined below were responded to:

- Widespread flooding (Jan/Feb) inc: supporting evacuations of vulnerable residents
- Liaison with Health Colleagues regarding residents who were unable to leave their properties due to flooding to receive their C-19 vaccine
- Attended Flood Advisory Service meetings
- Ensured and provided regular common information picture updates to key stakeholders within GCC.

Plans

The LRF **Mass Evacuation and Shelter** plan has been updated in liaison with key stakeholders and, after consultation with the wider LRF, this plan has now been finalised. A discussion exercise is being planned for early 2021 to validate the plan.

Consultation with LRF partners on the **Coastal Pollution Plan** is due to finish mid-February. A discussion exercise is being planned for early 2021 to validate the plan.

In light of the recent Avian Flu outbreaks a light touch plan update is being undertaken on the **Animal Disease Plan**, in consultation with APHA (Animal & Plant Health Agency, WWT Slimbridge, GCC Public Health and GCC Trading Standards). This is due to be completed mid-February.

Training / Exercises

In partnership with other LRF member agencies, a pilot multi-agency response training 'JESIP Multi-agency Operational Course' has been delivered virtually. Further sessions are planned for 2021. Work is also underway to revise and adapt the 'JESIP Multi-agency Tactical Course' to a virtual session for delivery throughout 2021.

Virtual training sessions have been delivered to district partners and accredited volunteers (Gloucestershire Emergency Support Team) regarding the operation of rest centres, duty officer (tactical), training. Support is provided to GCC Gloucestershire Emergency Support Team (GEST) in recruiting new volunteers and providing ongoing engagement and training for volunteers to be able to support Rest Centres if required.

The post GCC Silver exercise report has been written and shared with the silver team to further develop organisational learning.

A virtual training session, delivered to the new staff who form the C-19 hub at GCC, provided a wider understanding of the statutory responsibilities of the County Council under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, the LRF, and how the command & control structure (both single and multi-agency) works in response.

Exercise Tinsel (a call-out exercise to test availability/ response times of key staff) was delivered on 22nd December 2020. Participants included a number of GCC key response officers, District Councils and Gloucestershire Emergency Response Team (GEST). A post exercise report has been compiled and distributed.

Business Continuity Management (BCM)

The programme of business continuity management (BCM) work is continuing and is on track.

District Service Level Agreements

The current agreements to support 5 of the districts with their emergency management expires on 31st March 2021. A revised 3 year agreement (April 2021 – March 2024) has been developed in consultation with GCC Legal. The proposed SLA is currently with the districts for consideration. Deadline has been given for SLA's to be returned by 1st March 2021 if each district wishes to continue the arrangement.

Prevent

An SLA with all of the PREVENT partnership Board members for secretariat support has been reviewed in consultation with GCC legal, the proposed SLA is due to be presented at the next Gloucestershire Prevent Partnership Board (GPPB) by the chair at the next meeting (March 2021) for consideration.

Executive Decision Making by an Officer with Delegated Powers

- To direct award a contract to Volvo Car UK Ltd for the purchase of 16 light fleet vehicles via compliant process through the Blue Light Crown Commercial Service Framework (RM6060)

Report end