

Adult Social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committee Induction

Report from the Interim Chief Fire Officer

22nd June 2021 – Community Safety Report

Gloucestershire County Council has a legal duty to provide a fire and rescue service for the County. Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service deliver this duty on behalf of the County Council through focused prevention and protection work, combined with response to emergencies in times of need.

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service is committed to involving all sections of the community in the decisions that need to be made about future service provision and how best to protect the most vulnerable in the communities.

Included within the remit of the Adult Social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committee is a requirement for Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS) to provide the committee with a strategic update on key issues and matters relating to community safety provision and non-fire related services provided by GFRS.

At the Gloucestershire County Council Annual General Meeting on 19 May 2021, the Council agreed to establish a new, (stand alone), scrutiny committee, comprising seven members, to scrutinise the Fire and Rescue Service. The new committee will be asked to carry out the scrutiny functions of the County Council, as set out in Article 8 of the Constitution, in the context of matters relating to Gloucestershire Fire & Rescue Service, including: -

- a) Response to fire and other emergencies
- b) Fire regulation, prevention and promoting fire safety
- c) Performance against Key and Local Performance Indicators
- d) Progress against recommendations from inspections and delivery of the Improvement Plan
- e) Co-operation and partnership working with other local responders to enhance co-ordination and efficiency and increase community resilience
- f) Cross-boundary co-operation with other Fire and Rescue Authorities
- g) Civil contingency planning
- h) Leadership, culture and workforce development across the service

It is important to note that the Adult Social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committee is no longer required to consider the above, fire related, aspects of work as part of their remit.

1. Trading Standards

Overall demand on the service in 2020/21 was 25% higher than the previous year reflecting the additional work of the Service in relation to Covid Restrictions. Conversely, the number of inspections completed and breaches of the law investigated was considerably lower than the previous year. This will be reflected in the number of formal investigations carried into and concluded in 2021/22.

Moving into 2021/22, following the easing of lockdown restrictions, especially the requirement for non-essential businesses to close, the Trading Standards Service has

seen a return to business as usual. Officers are once more responding to a variety of consumer complaints. Those which pose an imminent threat, inspections to food outlets, farms and livestock markets have resumed and we are planning projects which will test compliance by traders whose responsibilities have changed following EU Exit.

Officers were largely able to complete funded animal feed inspections last year following a relaxation by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to allow 'virtual' inspections; concerns about loss of revenue are allayed and feed related income in 2021/22 will be largely as forecast.

The Food Standards agency also monitors levels of inspection and intervention with high, medium and low risk food premises. There is a national backlog in work in this area including inspections not carried out in Gloucestershire during the pandemic; the FSA have presented Local Authorities with a timeline to address this backlog. We are confident we can meet the timeframe and complete all outstanding inspections by June 2022 as required.

2. Coroners Services

The Coroner's Service has continued to run its entire core functions from the Coroner's Court at Barnwood, Gloucester throughout the pandemic. Autopsies and body receipt/releases has been continuous in the mortuary, with enhanced PPE as directed by professional bodies. The majority of bodies have been swabbed on receipt with the results of these swabs dictating future investigation. 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 both of their vaccinations. The Coroner's Officers and admin were operating a 'two team' system during the most recent lockdown but have now re-joined as one as restrictions have been eased to help the business needs and continuity of the service. Those able to, are still utilising working from home whenever appropriate.

Inquests have continued to operate from Barnwood during all lockdowns. The majority of these have had minimal public attendance for social distancing reasons. The Senior Coroner is now considering those cases that can be rescheduled for later in the year (if in accordance with Government guidelines) and the office of the Chief Coroner has also recently issued guidance encouraging local services to devise plans to deal with backlogs. The service also continues to investigate electronic means for allowing more people to virtually attend these hearings.

3. Civil Protection Team/Local Resilience Forum

Operational Response:

The Civil Protection Team (CPT) continues to support the response to C-19.

The CPT Duty Officers are on-call 24/7 and have responded to a number of incidents between February – May 2021 as outlined below:

- Explosion at property with potential evacuation
- Suspect package – potential evacuation
- Water Supply interruption

- Unexploded device – potential evacuation
- Building fire – support displaced residents

Plans:

- **LRF Mass Evacuation and Shelter Plan** updated and finalised
- **Coastal Pollution Plan** near completion pending decision on coastal pollution contractor
- Full revision of the **Animal Disease Plan** being undertaken
- Supporting the re-write of the **LRF Fuel Plan**
- As per DEFRA's updated guidance, re-writing the strategic part of the **Multi-Agency Flood Plan**
- Revising the **Human Aspects Centre Plan**, to include a virtual version
- Revising **Major Accident Hazard Pipeline Plan** in consultation with key stakeholders

Training / Exercises

CPT, in partnership with other LRF member agencies, delivered the first face to face JESIP multi-agency Operational course on 21st May 21.

District Service Level Agreements

The Service Level agreements to support five of the districts with their emergency management have been renegotiated and signed for a further three years (April 2021 – March 2024). Annual work plans have been written & agreed for each district.

Prevent

An SLA, covering a three-year period with all Partnership Board members for secretariat support has been reviewed in consultation with GCC legal, for approval at GPPB June 2021.