

FRIDAY, 19 MARCH 2021

REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ‘MAKING SURREY SAFER PLAN’

Purpose of report:

To summarise the activity of the working group to monitor the implementation of the ‘Making Surrey Safer’ Plan and its conclusions.

Introduction:

1. The Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee scrutinised the [‘Making Surrey Safer’ Plan](#) in public at its 16 September 2020 meeting. To ensure ongoing scrutiny of the objectives of the plan and the service’s readiness for re-inspection in 2021 the Select Committee created a working group to meet with the Cabinet Member for Communities and senior officers to monitor progress.
2. The working group has been chaired by Saj Hussain. The other Members on the group were: Jonathan Essex, Mike Goodman, Jan Mason, John O’Reilly and Fiona White.
3. Members would like to thank the Cabinet Member for Communities, the Chief Fire Officer and his staff for their support of this working group especially during this very difficult time.

Process

4. The group agreed its terms of reference in October 2020 (see Annexe 1). Its purpose was to:
 - Monitor the effectiveness of the implementation of Phase 2 of the Fire & Rescue Authority’s (FRA) ‘Making Surrey Safer’ Plan, providing assurance to the Communities, Environment & Highways Select Committee.

- Continue to monitor the effectiveness of the changes made to the Service as part of Phase 1 of the FRAs Making Surrey Safer Plan, to assure the Select Committee that these improvements have become embedded as ‘business as usual’.
 - Seek assurances that sufficient progress is being made ahead of an inspection by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMCIFRS) in 2021, by offering critical friend challenge to the Cabinet Member for Communities and the Leadership Team of SFRS.
5. The group sought both quantitative performance information and qualitative feedback from staff and stakeholders as evidence to review the implementation of ‘Making Surrey Safer.’ The Group worked with Officers to identify and review this evidence over the course of four meetings.
 6. The group met the Cabinet Member, Chief Fire Officer, and other Senior Officers to scrutinise progress on 12 October, 25 November and 15 December 2020 and 16 February 2021. The Group was not able to extend its evidence gathering sessions to include frontline staff. A final meeting of the Group was held on 26 February 2021 to agree its conclusions.
 7. Members aligned their lines of enquiry to the recommendations in the HMCIFRS’s 2018 [inspection report](#) with a focus on changes to the response model, workforce – both in terms of establishment figures and diversity – staff wellbeing and the service’s communications.

Findings:

8. The group acknowledged the work done by the SFRS to achieve full **establishment** in three out of four staff sections and to shift away from a reliance on overtime. They noted the success had in recruitment and the ongoing work to recruit on-call firefighters but did ask questions about how representative the service was, and the actions being taken to change the make-up of the workforce.
9. Officers told the group that **diversity** was an ongoing issue for SFRS as identified by HMCIFRS, and the cultural change needed was likely to continue to be a long-term, national issue. The Service explained that it was employing a range of methods to target women and minority groups in order to encourage people to consider careers in the fire and rescue service.
10. The group raised questions about **staff wellbeing** given the changes being implemented and the toll of the pandemic. The group learned that preferences could be submitted on shift patterns and working location and following staff

feedback, priority was given to staff affected by phase 1 and 2 of the plan for six months post-implementation. The service would prioritise staff mental health issues and its wellbeing offer and would engage with staff in stations and via focus groups.

11. Members reviewed **response time** data at two of its four meetings and noted that the indicator showed that the SFRS remain on target with the average time of the first appliance to critical incidents below its 10-minute target (07:14 in December 2020). The Service were confident they would continue to meet the target next year when road traffic was expected to return to normal levels. The Group asked questions about incidents that took more than 10 minutes to respond to and consider this to be something worthy of future scrutiny.
12. Regarding **communications**, a lot of work had been done on how the service communicates to residents and external stakeholders. The group noted the increased use of the service's revised webpages and social media as well as the increase in staff capacity in this area. Members thought that there should be an analysis of interactions with the Service via these channels to ascertain satisfaction levels. Staff have been **engaged** through focus groups and weekly face-to-face visits to stations, there is also a dedicated staff email address for feedback. SFRS has made changes based on feedback for example instigating preference forms and prioritisation for those affected by changes to crewing stations. The group was keen for SFRS to engage with Surrey residents and staff so efforts should continue in this area.
13. **Coronavirus** has inevitably had an impact on the service's activity as many staff were redeployed to support the Local Resilience Forum (LRF). The group were advised that targets around prevention and protection measures could not be met this year, but the service had made use of remote technology to adapt its management processes and training offer for staff. The Group reviewed the outcome of the HMCIFRS COVID-19 [inspection](#) and the SFRS' actions to respond.

Conclusions:

14. The group notes the progress made by the Service in remedying the issues reported by the HMCIFRS in 2018 by implementing the 'Making Surrey Safer' plan in two phases.
15. The group notes the impact coronavirus has had on the service's ability to meet some of its performance targets.

Recommendations:

16. That the Select Committee use the findings within this report to aid scrutiny of the report from the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service within this agenda.

Next steps

The Group identified several points that could form the basis of future scrutiny of the SFRS:

1. Areas of ongoing improvement work that form part of the 'Making Surrey Safer' Plan such as improving workforce diversity and recruitment to on-call positions
 2. Analysing comparative data showing the relative performance of SFRS with other suitable peer Fire and Rescue Authorities
 3. Analysis of incidents where the first appliance to critical incidents exceeded 10 minutes
 4. Analysis of satisfaction levels with the Service's communications
 5. Qualitative evidence from frontline staff on changes to the SFRS
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Report author

Saj Hussain, Vice-Chairman of the Communities, Environment & Highways Select Committee

Report contact

Ross Pike, Scrutiny Business Manager, Democratic Services

ross.pike@surreycc.gov.uk

Sources/background papers

Working Group Terms of Reference (Annex 1)