

Scrutiny Committee

7 February 2017

Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service - Improving services through collaboration

Summary

1. This report provides information about the work being undertaken by Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service to develop collaborative arrangements with other blue light services and public sector partners.

Objective of the Scrutiny

2. The objective of this scrutiny is to provide the Committee with an opportunity to consider how Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service is collaborating with blue light services and other public sector partners to increase efficiency and effectiveness, maximise available resources, enhance local resilience and to improve the service delivered to the public.

Scrutiny Focus

3. The scope of this scrutiny has been developed to provide the Committee with information to come to a view on the following key questions:
 - a. What are the implications of the Policing and Crime Bill?
 - b. How is the Fire Service collaborating with other blue light services in Suffolk?
 - c. What evidence is available to demonstrate the factors which underpin successful blue light collaboration?
 - d. What are the key challenges/barriers?
 - e. How is the Fire Service supporting the Council Council's wider priority of supporting those most vulnerable in our communities through collaboration with other public sector bodies?
 - f. What data is available to demonstrate the costs and benefits of increased collaboration to date?
 - g. What is the overarching strategy for the Fire Service estate?
 - h. How is the transformation funding made available to support blue light collaboration being used in Suffolk?

- i. What progress has been made to date and what are future aspirations?
- j. What are the key risks and challenges associated with the strategy and how are these being addressed?

How does this relate to County Council priorities?

4. This scrutiny is linked to the County Council’s corporate priorities as indicated below. All scrutiny items should consider how well they are delivering against the County Council priorities and Suffolk’s Community Strategy.

Suffolk County Council’s Corporate Priorities	Link to this Scrutiny
Raise educational attainment and skill levels	
Support the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to increase economic growth	
Maintain roads and develop Suffolk’s infrastructure	
Support those most vulnerable in our communities	✓
Empower local communities	✓

5. Having considered the information, the Committee may wish to:
- a. make recommendations to the Cabinet;
 - b. make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Environment and Public Protection and/or Chief Fire Officer;
 - c. seek to influence partner organisations;
 - d. identify topics which may warrant further scrutiny or request further information.

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Background

- 6. Public sector funding is expected to continue to reduce in coming years, and public services will continue to need to look for ways of increasing their efficiency and effectiveness, whilst maintaining quality of services delivered and achieving the financial savings required.
- 7. Nationally, the profile of demand for all three emergency services is changing. Incidents attended by fire and rescue services have been on a long term downward trend, whilst conversely there is an increasing demand on the ambulance service. The independent crime survey for England and Wales suggests crime has fallen by more than a quarter since June 2010, but the overall demand on the police has not reduced in the same way.
- 8. Collaboration presents an opportunity for emergency services to increase efficiency and effectiveness, maximise available resources, enhance local resilience and improve the service delivered to the public.

9. The Home Office, Department for Communities and Local Government and the Department of Health jointly launched a public consultation on 11 September 2015 which sought views on how to implement a range of proposals to enable greater collaboration between the emergency services. The consultation ran for six weeks and ended on 23 October 2015. The Government's response to the consultation was published on 26 January 2016, and sets out a range of legislative proposals, in the form of the Policing and Crime Bill, which includes the introduction of a high level duty to collaborate on all three emergency services. Further details of the Policing and Crime Bill, and its progress through the legislative process can be found at: <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/policingandcrime.html>
10. In Suffolk, the Fire Service net budget for 2016/17 was £21.35m with a forecast outturn of £21.15m. In November 2016, the County Council's Audit Committee received Suffolk Fire and Rescue Authority's Statement of Assurance. The Committee heard that Suffolk compares favourably to other authorities as far as expenditure is concerned. For example, the Service is in the lowest quartile in terms of: cost per head of population; cost per hectare; cost per incident; cost per fire station, fire appliance and incident and ratio of uniformed officers per fire station.
11. Central government investment through the Police Innovation Fund (PIF) and Fire Transformation Fund has already helped to drive some blue light collaboration projects which have delivered savings and improved outcomes. The Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service was previously successful in its bid for Fire Transformation Grant and received £4.943m which is due to be spent over 3 years to continue support blue light transformation and collaboration projects. Separately, the Police, in partnership with Fire made a successful bid to the Home Office for innovation funding of approximately £400,000. The funding is supporting the programme of work to substantially improve and share property assets.
12. This scrutiny item provides the Committee with an opportunity to explore what progress the Service has made to date to work more closely with other emergency services and public sector partners, and what future developments are planned.

Main body of evidence

13. Evidence Set 1 has been provided in response to the key areas for investigation set out at paragraph 3 above, and is attached to this report.
14. Invitations to attend the meeting have been extended to representatives of Suffolk County Council, the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, the Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner, Suffolk Constabulary and the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust.

Glossary

DCLG – Department for Communities and Local Government

EEAS – East of England Ambulance Service

ICT – Information and Communications Technology
JESIP - Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme
LRF – Local Resilience Forum
NHS – National Health Service
PCC – Police and Crime Commissioner
SCC – Suffolk County Council
SFRS – Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service

Supporting Information

Audit Committee (29.11.16); Agenda Item 07 Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Annual Statement of Assurance 2015-2016; available from: <http://tinyurl.com/jqy4j2x> and [Agenda Item 07 Appendix A - Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Annual Statement of Assurance 2015-2016](#)

Further details of the Policing and Crime Bill, and its progress through the legislative process can be found at: <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/policingandcrime.html>

Details of a range of projects can be found on the Blue Light Innovation website at: <http://bluelightinnovation.co.uk/news/>