

Starting the journey of service transformation and improvement in Mid and West Wales Fire & Rescue



Mid and West Wales Fire & Rescue Service are currently in the initial stages of a three-phase plan to transform and improve their services to better respond to changing demand and to meet the challenge of continued funding constraints.

In Phase 1, Process Evolution is conducting a comprehensive evidence-based review of every aspect of front line services including the management structure, policies, response capability, establishment and crewing models. This is establishing the current baseline of practice and performance. Phase 2, commencing in November 2016 will develop and model options for current and future improvement, with final Phase 3 decisions and implementation taking place in financial year 2018/19.

Introduction

Continuing austerity measures are likely to mean that funding for Fire and Rescue Services will continue to reduce in the coming years. Many of our Services have decided to treat these funding cuts as an opportunity to transform and improve the services they deliver. This has meant formulating clear proposals for new ways of working in which their Service can be structured and delivered. These need to be presented for consideration by the Service, the relevant Fire Authority or governing body and by the public.

Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service

In Wales, Fire and Rescue Authorities are uniquely positioned to determine their own budgets and not tied to a centrally governed 'Comprehensive Spending Review' over a number of years. However, they must do so with a thought for current financial constraints on public spending. Services must sustain

maximum efficiencies whilst maintaining the highest standards. It also reinforces the need to reduce costs by proactive prevention work, rather than responding to fires. There is a need therefore, to ensure that the Service has a good strategic insight as to where it can make potential savings yet stand up to scrutiny on these transformations by the relevant Fire Authority.

Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service (MAWWFRS) started pre-planning for these budget restraints in the middle of 2015 and initiated their Risk Review Project Team in September 2015.

Strategic Assessment and Service Review

MAWWFRS adopted an approach to simultaneously cover an external 'Strategic Assessment' of the Service whilst undertaking a comprehensive 'Risk Review' to provide a clear understanding of the risk profile within the communities it serves.

Working in parallel, this has enabled a full understanding of the who, what, when, how and where questions around risk. The outcome of this assessment will then support their objective of applying the appropriate resources to the identified risk at the appropriate time.

The Strategic Assessment is focussing on the external factors to the Service and will include an assessment of planned development and growth within the borders of MAWWFRS. It will also define the economic factors that may play a part in effecting the Service in the foreseeable future. This will provide a clear and concise overview and will naturally feed into and compliment the Risk Review objective.

Additionally, support has been sought from the Welsh Economic Research Unit at Cardiff University. This has provided some quality assurance and endorsement to the teams work around the demographic build up in MAWW and has assisted in the process of identifying development and planned growth from the Services risk perspective.

Risk Review

The Risk Review Project itself is currently encompassing a '3 Phase' approach and will incorporate every aspect of front line services including the management structure, policies, response capability, establishment and crewing models. The development options that result from this work will lead to changes in the way MAWWFRS approach frontline Service Delivery.

Some minor adjustments to crewing arrangements have already been made in recent years, particularly around the Swansea area with varying whole-time shift patterns. Additionally, the Command Structure has increased from 6 to 7 areas and incorporates a divide of Powys to alleviate an 18 station Command Area and deliver a more evenly balanced geographical comparison to other areas.

Consistent with many other Fire and Rescue Services, incidents in MAWWFRS have almost halved in the last ten years. During this time, the Service has increased its medical intervention with co-response duties at specifically designated stations and currently attend nearly 2,000 medical emergencies each year. This has been supported in the partnership with Welsh Ambulance Service Trust (WAST).

These selected stations/areas are chosen by the WAST and it does not necessarily mean that all

stations will be equipped to deal with a medical response in the future. This demonstrates how changing needs within the community affect the demands upon MAWWFRS but it creates opportunities to apply these resources and expertise in new ways.

Phase 1

As this phase commenced in November 2015, a number of internal collaborative partners were identified from both uniformed and non-uniformed members of staff. They were issued with a work package that appertained to their own departments and support functions. Each of the 17 work packages required a detailed account of the current status and particularly focussed on the purpose and future resource requirements for each department and function. Some of these work packages related specifically to future development options available to the Service; new firefighting techniques, new crewing arrangements and looking at Section 13 and 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, 'Over the Border' arrangements to identify net contributor stations and those stations that benefit from other Services by mutual agreement.

The Baseline Work Package returns will be completed in readiness for the commencement of Phase 2 in November 2016.

Projects that potentially conflicted or had a bearing on the Risk Review were promptly identified and aligned to the project objectives. This also reduced the initial number of work packages down to 15 as work was already being done in some of these areas.

Using a combination of data analysis and modelling software, the risk profiling of the Service also began in February. This commenced with a 'Diagnostic' evaluation of the Service by Process Evolution and covered the last five years of data analysis up to March 2015. The presentation highlighted the current risk profile and delivered the baseline from which the Service could move forward with its evidence-based approach objective.

Part of the Risk Review process has also been to involve stations with their own 'Station Risk Profiles'. This has allowed members of staff, particularly from stations, to interact with the process and enable their thoughts and professional judgement to be heard via a number of forums and communication conduits back into the team.

The document includes all of the facts and statistics specific to their station, both from a response and Community Safety perspective and quantifies the following detail:

- Station Ground Map
- Turnouts and Incidents
- Incident Profiles
- Risk and the Community
- Station Ground Demographics
- Groups of People and Risk
- Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation
- Station Crewing Information
- Staff Profile and Performance
- Property Data and Future Development

Overarching documents provide detail to each of the seven Command 'Cluster' Areas and successively an over-viewing document for the whole of MAWWFRS provides the details for the Service in a similar format. Although the Option Development Phase does not commence until November 2016, the documents have been well received by stations and will be available prior to Phase 2 commencing.

Additionally, voluntary Engagement Champions have been invited to attend update forums and interactive discussion meetings which is then subsequently fed back into the ELT monthly updates.

The Baseline Project Report for the Service will be completed by the end of October 2016.

Phase 2

This Phase, starting in November 2016, will primarily focus on the Option Development aspect of the project and will offer a degradation of financial options available to the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) during 2017 in preparation for the following financial year 2018/19. These options are as of yet unclear, but will become apparent following the collation of all work packages and associated data gathering around frontline services, policies and support functions.

In May, Process Evolution gave a Scenario Analysis presentation to the Project Team. This offered a number of simulated options and potential solutions to some of the Services concerns. It provided efficiencies around crewing and optimized some of the current fire station locations and fire appliances

with little or no detriment to current performance. These outcomes will form part of the Phase 2 'Option Development' in November.

Uniquely, MAWWFRS will be in a position to accurately quantify the impact of these jointly developed options whilst providing a clear rationale for change that stakeholders can easily understand and buy into.

The Service will be able to utilise the simulation software resulting in improvements to Service Delivery. Performance criteria adheres to the Welsh 'Dwelling Fire Charter' which signifies a 10 minute attendance standard time for all property fires throughout Wales. This is the standard that has been applied to the modelling software.

Phase 3

Although financial restraints are evident in Wales, the three Services within the country continue to rationalise their own spending rather than collectively and this phase in the project is rather dependant on the current financial climate. The outcomes and final decisions for MAWWFRS are not due to be realised until the financial year 2018/19.

Summary

MAWWFRS plan to provide a number of development options after November 2016 following the commencement of the second phase of the project. These options are dependent on the financial implications and decision making outcomes from the ELT and MAWW Fire Authority.

The Service recognises the high decrease in numbers of incidents in recent years and the proportionately high level of secondary type incidents they currently attend. It has the potential to move away from always sending a conventional fire engine, that carries four to six firefighters, to every incident irrespective of what category of incident it is. This will increase the capability to attend incidents with the appropriate resource.

Any future proofing or transformation changes will not take place until at least April 2018 and will be staged with many aspects having to be trialled in the first instance to safeguard and maintain current standards prior to implementation.