

For Publication

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority
Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group
7 March 2019
Item No. 12

REPORT AUTHOR: HEAD OF PROTECTION

SUBJECT: ANNUAL REVIEW OF PARTNERSHIPS

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Background Papers:

RSM Internal Audit Report 2017
HMICFRS Report 2018

Implications (tick ✓):

LEGAL			FINANCIAL	
HUMAN RESOURCES			EQUALITY IMPACT	
ENVIRONMENTAL			POLICY	
CORPORATE RISK	Known	✓	OTHER (please specify)	
	New		CORE BRIEF	

Any implications affecting this report are noted at the end of the report.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Members of Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group with an update on how the revised Partnership and Collaboration Policy implementation will strengthen our partnership governance and address previous internal audit recommendations and the area for improvement set out in HMICFRS report 2018.

RECOMMENDATION

Members are requested to consider the content of the report.

1. Background

- 1.1. BFRS has been involved in a wide range of partnership/collaboration work over many years and is subject to certain statutory requirements in relation to partnership working, such as those for Community Safety Partnerships and the Local Resilience Forum and the statutory duty to consider blue light collaboration under the Policing and Crime Act 2017. The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England also sets out expectations in relation to collaboration for both efficiency and effectiveness.
- 1.2. In 2014, BFRS implemented a recommendation from an Internal Audit undertaken by Baker Tilley to review partnerships on an annual basis and report outcomes to the Authority. A report was submitted to FRA in 2015/16, but deferred in 2017/18 to allow a policy review to be completed.
- 1.3. The policy review was required due to a need to better align the governance of partnerships to levels of risk and strategic significance and to improve evaluation of performance and return on investment. The levels of management oversight in many instances were disproportionate to these. This combined with the high volume of interactions with other agencies classified as partnerships within the scope of the policy, created somewhat bureaucratic and unwieldy partnership governance arrangements. The scope of the policy was also limited exclusively to the area of community safety.

- 1.4. A review undertaken in 2017 found that of 88 relationships deemed to be partnerships, most did not have any agreed outcomes, timeframe, performance standards or any means of evaluation. The partnership database did not reflect current activity with external organisations and discussion with staff identified that:
 - The bureaucracy for maintaining the database was prohibitive in terms of volume and time
 - There was a general absence of evaluation criteria for partnerships and collaborations.
- 1.5. In 2017, RSM completed an internal audit of blue light collaboration activity and made a number of recommendations. These were completed in March 2018, but included actions regarding management, review and evaluation which were similar in some respects to the parallel partnership review.
- 1.6. In late 2018 a new draft partnership policy was produced taking account of audit recommendations and the review findings. This is currently out on circulation for consultation. It will be supported by a new partnership database to record details of all significant partnerships/collaborative working arrangements.
- 1.7. The report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate FRS on the inspection of BFRS published on 20 December 2018 included a range of positive findings on partnership/collaboration, recognising *'many positive examples of the service working constructively with partner organisations and other agencies'*. The report cited examples including; sharing premises with police and ambulance services; joint procurement; joint provision of services and work with licensing and housing authorities on rogue landlords and licensed premises. The report also identified the following area for improvement; *'The service should ensure it effectively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of any initiatives. This should include collaboration.'*
2. Features of proposed new policy arrangements
 - 2.1. The new arrangements will apply to all relevant partnerships/collaborations. The definition of partnership adopted for policy purposes is:

"A documented collaborative working relationship where the parties work towards a common purpose or desired outcomes, and where there is mutually agreed sharing of resources, risk and benefits within an agreed timeframe"
 - 2.2. The new policy will set out processes to identify the nature and strategic significance of partnerships/collaborations so that governance and oversight is proportional and undertaken at an appropriate management level by clearly designated owners.

This will serve to reduce the volume of partnerships requiring annual review at a strategic level and focus scrutiny on the partnerships with most impact.

- 2.3. The new policy will set out processes to ensure that the purpose, risks, benefits and resources in partnerships will be captured on a more user-friendly database and processes to ensure regular monitoring, review and evaluation of benefits and outcomes. The Partnership Development Manager will coordinate regular reporting appropriate to the significance of the partnership.
- 2.4. The new policy will also set out a process for regularly considering potential new partnerships that can be embarked on to assist the Service in the achievement of its strategic objectives.
- 2.5. Work is currently ongoing to prepare for implementation of the new arrangements upon conclusion of the consultation and publication of the new policy.
3. Potential future collaboration
 - 3.1. There is a range of collaboration being actively explored overseen by the Blue Light Collaboration board which is reported on direct to the Authority.
 - 3.2. The Partnership Development Manager also has a remit to work with all functions of the Service to identify and assist in the development of new collaborations, particularly those that can achieve efficiency savings or generate cost recovery or income.
 - 3.3. The draft Community Risk Management Plan 2019-2023 currently out for public consultation contains a plan for 2019/20 to 'Proactively pursue new and innovative ways to work together with partners to contribute to the wider public health agenda in support of the NHS 10 year plan'. The Service is currently in discussion with Alzheimer's Society, Memory Assessment Service and Bedfordshire Carers with regards to a proposed service for generating referrals for BFRS Home Safety Advisers to undertake Safe and Well visits and offer advice to reduce the risk of falls in the home.

4. Recommendation

4.1. Members are requested to consider the content of the report.

**SOC IAN EVANS
HEAD OF PROTECTION**