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Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service

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Fire Plan: Draft for Consultation

Background

The Fire Plan is the overarching strategy for Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service (GMFRS) for the next four years. It includes five priorities for the Service and a series of commitments under each one. The final Plan will also include introductions from the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Chief Fire Officer, as well as a framework to measure outcomes. These will be developed with consideration of the feedback from the consultation.

In response to the Fire Plan, GMFRS will produce a delivery plan, updated annually to adapt to changing risks and progress, and will be underpinned by an outcomes framework. The delivery plan will provide more detail regarding the allocation of resources in response to identified risks and priorities. Together these documents will constitute the Service's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

The Fire Plan has been written by the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor, in collaboration with the Chief Fire Officer. Initial consultation has already been undertaken with representatives from each of the region's 10 Community Safety Partnerships, as well as with the Police, Crime and Fire Steering Group.

The wider consultation on the Fire Plan is an opportunity to shape the strategic priorities for the Service and its commitments to the people of Greater Manchester.

Priorities for Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service

1. Provide a timely, safe and effective response
2. Help people reduce the risks of fires and other emergencies
3. Help protect the built environment
4. Use resources sustainably and deliver the most value
5. Develop a culture of excellence, equality and inclusivity

Embedded within each priority is an overarching commitment to integrate the planning and delivery of services with partners, supporting the place-based approach to public sector reform enshrined in the Greater Manchester Strategy. Addressing complex issues and major incidents in partnership with other services ensures our approach is as effective as possible,

whilst providing greater value to the public. We want to break down completely the silos that exist between different organisations and create a “one public service” model that is preventative and person-centred, and provides the best outcomes for the people of Greater Manchester.

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Priority 1: “Provide a timely, safe and effective response”

We will plan for emergencies and ensure resilience, to provide a timely, safe and effective response.

Why is this important?

It is essential we understand and adapt to the changing risks Greater Manchester faces, so we are ready when an emergency occurs. To respond to an emergency effectively we need to do so quickly, in the right numbers, with the appropriate skill and equipment. In 2019/20 our response time to primary fires (fires with a threat to life) was the 5th fastest in England. Often incidents also demand an integrated approach and so we need to be able to work seamlessly with other emergency services.

A. Risk and Planning

The threats to our communities have changed considerably over the last 10 years. The Manchester Arena attack, the Saddleworth Moor fire, wide-area flooding, the Cube fire in Bolton, and the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrate the scale, complexity and increasingly protracted nature of the incidents that Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service (GMFRS) now faces.

Greater Manchester itself has also transformed in this time and will continue to do so. Economic and residential growth is radically changing our town and city centres, including a huge increase in the number of high-rise buildings. Elsewhere in the city region some of our communities are becoming increasingly diverse, whilst others are increasingly ageing. The number of vulnerable residents with complex needs is increasing. Our transport infrastructure is being constantly improved and expanded. Individual developments such as Airport City are creating brand new business neighbourhoods, whilst across the region, the increasing population and the lack of homes requires house-building on a huge scale, in line with the region’s spatial plans.

GMFRS updates its understanding of the threats our communities face through its Strategic Assessment of Risk. Using our own incident data, we will continue to identify risks at small neighbourhood levels to understand where to locate our workforce, fire engines and specialist equipment. The Service will also share and use community intelligence from our partners – local authorities, the Police, and Health - to ensure that all Greater Manchester’s public services have a complete picture of the threats and foreseeable risks our communities face. Complex local problems require an integrated approach, and across Greater Manchester they are being tackled by place-based teams with officers from different services. It is vital that GMFRS develops its local plans with these partners to ensure there is shared understanding and approach to these risks.

Responding to large-scale and complex incidents such as flooding, moorland fires, pandemics and terrorist attacks requires joint planning and training with other agencies. GMFRS will continue to work closely with the Greater Manchester Resilience Forum and individual agencies to identify and share large-scale threats to our communities and develop joint plans to mitigate, respond to, and recover from them. Mitigating the threat of moorland fires and flooding will also involve engaging with those responsible for land management to help reduce some of the causes of these incidents.

Case Study: The moorland fires

At the height of the region's moorland fires in 2018, 57 fire engines and 220 firefighters were in operation across Greater Manchester.

GMFRS has 50 fire engines available at any one time, so the moorland fires required support from 15 other fire and rescue services, some 100 soldiers, and the United Utilities helicopter.

Peat fires burn underground making them very difficult and resource-intensive to tackle. GMFRS committed resources to the 2018 fires for almost three weeks before they were finally extinguished. During the incident, GMFRS also supported Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service to protect the vital communications infrastructure on Winter Hill.

The 2018 fires spread across 11km², roughly twice the size of Manchester city centre, forcing the evacuation of 34 homes and the closure of four schools. As well as the danger of the smoke cloud affecting air quality and visibility for road and air traffic, there were also longer-term environmental impacts of the fire continuing to spread. The peat and vegetation on the region's moorlands absorb significant levels of rainfall – its destruction increases the threat of flooding across Greater Manchester. As well as being home to numerous species of wild animals and birds, the moorlands are a vital carbon sink that need protecting to help reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and the subsequent impact of climate change.

We always aim to respond to an incident as quickly and safely possible. Modelling risks and joint planning with our partners, as well as ongoing work with our 999 control room at North West Fire Control, will help the Service to achieve the quickest possible response times and the most effective operational cover for different types of emergencies.

B. Resilience and joint response

The moorland fires of 2018 highlighted the scale of the incidents that GMFRS faces. The incident was protracted and very resource-intensive and required significant support from other fire and rescue services to ensure we could provide cover at the fire, and across the

rest of the region. GMFRS will ensure that it has effective agreements with other fire and rescue services so that it always has the resilience to provide emergency cover, as well as providing mutual support in return. GMFRS is also committed to ensure it has the resources to support national resilience, helping other regions when they need us.

The need for ongoing resilience in response to the climate emergency is considered within Priority 4. Resilience also requires planning and flexibility. At the outbreak of the pandemic we quickly implemented a COVID-19 strategy and clear guidance to help keep both our staff and the public as safe from infection as possible. This agility in the face of changing threats will be essential going forward.

Large-scale incidents require a joint response with other agencies. It is essential that when different services come together at an emergency they can work together seamlessly. GMFRS will conduct regular joint training with other services to ensure that when a large-scale incident occurs the response is integrated and effective. This will include the requirements of the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) which set out how emergency services should jointly respond to major emergencies.

Following the horrific terror attack on the Manchester Arena in May 2017, the Mayor of Greater Manchester commissioned an Independent Review into Greater Manchester's preparedness and response. The Kerslake Review made a number of recommendations for the emergency services, Government, and others. GMFRS has committed itself to learning and improving following the incident. We have implemented the recommendations from the review over a number of areas, including some of our protocols with our control centre, North West Fire Control. More recommendations for the emergency services are likely to come from the Public Inquiry into the Arena attack. It is vital these improvements are also effectively implemented by the Service.

C. Training and innovation

Responding to emergencies is a hazardous profession undertaken in extremely challenging environments. Ensuring our frontline is protected is of the utmost priority. To ensure the effectiveness of our response and the safety of our firefighters, operational training must be regular, comprehensive and of high-quality, as well as adaptable to changing risks.

Our training centre in Bury allows live training for a number of different and complex incident types including high-rise fires, road traffic collisions, flooding, rescue from collapsed buildings, multi-agency incidents such as terrorist attacks, and more. Facilities can be adapted as new threats emerge. Developing the skills of incident Commanders can be very resource-intensive, so training for this can also take place virtually at our Incident Command

Academy (ICA). The fully interactive software at the ICA enables the creation of limitless scenarios, to prepare incident commanders for all current and emerging threats.

New approaches are also being applied to our emergency response itself. Using learning from the moorland fires we have invested in new vehicles and adapted existing ones, as well as purchasing new protective equipment for firefighters. This will ensure our approach to wildfires is as fast, direct and safe as possible. During the Christie Hospital fire in 2017, many years of vital cancer research was saved by firefighters. The Service's drone was used to determine the location and extent of the fire in the roof, and thermal imaging cameras were used to identify pockets of fire spread. In order to reach the fires burning in the building's cavity spaces, we utilised our high-pressure lances. Lances focus water at pressures great enough to pierce through the walls. They also create a water mist that is more effective at extinguishing flames. Following a programme of research and development with manufacturers, we have provided all our frontline fire engines with lances. This equipment can also improve firefighter safety by allowing fires to be tackled from the outside of a building, rather than entering it, reducing exposure to both flames and toxins. Our response to fires in high-rise buildings has also changed in response to the Grenfell Tower fire and the ongoing Inquiry. More information can be found within Priority 3.

In response to the risk of wide-scale flooding across Greater Manchester, we have invested in new equipment and new protective equipment for firefighters. All of our firefighters now have immediate access to flood response equipment enabling them to respond to a variety of water incidents safely and efficiently. We also have specialist water rescue units with a variety of enhanced equipment to facilitate the rescue and search for people and animals in different waterways. More information on our response to the climate emergency can be found within Priority 4.

To ensure our response to emergencies is as safe and successful as possible, it is important that GMFRS has the most effective operational technology available and our workforce is proficient at using it. This includes critical communication systems and the data terminals on our fire engines that provide firefighters with site-specific risk information.

We will use learning from our own incidents and from other services to build upon national operational guidance and learning. We will ensure our own operational procedures, policies and guidance are as safe and effective as they can be for the inherently dangerous environments that our emergency response staff can work in. More information on developing a culture of learning can be found within Priority 5.

We commit to:

1. A response to emergencies that is as quick and safe as possible. This includes remaining one of the top 10 fastest services in England to respond to fires that are a threat to life.
2. Continually improving how we model risk and demand to ensure we have the right resources available, in the right place, at the right time, and are able to support other fire services and national resilience.
3. Dedicating a senior officer to the Greater Manchester Resilience Forum to lead on multi-agency planning and training for large-scale threats including flooding, terrorist attacks and pandemics.
4. Implementing all relevant recommendations from the Public Inquiry into the Manchester Arena attack.
5. Reviewing the current performance and future model of our control room functions continuously to improve performance.
6. Investing in state of the art operational training facilities to ensure they are as effective and flexible as possible.
7. Researching and applying innovative technology and techniques to ensure our fire appliances, resources and protective equipment continue to keep our communities and firefighters safe.
8. Implementing all relevant recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.
9. Continually improving our operational procedures, policies and guidance, ensuring they build upon national best practice to be as safe and effective as possible for firefighters and the public.

Priority 2: Help people reduce the risks of fires and other emergencies

We will help people reduce the risks of fires and other emergencies, and help build safer communities.

Why is this important?

Preventing an emergency is far safer and more effective than responding to one after it has occurred. It is essential that we understand our communities and work with other services to help people look after themselves, particularly the most vulnerable.

D. Working together

Addressing local problems is best achieved through integrated working with other agencies and Greater Manchester's advanced devolved structures afford the region more opportunity to do this than other places.

GMFRS, Greater Manchester Police (GMP) and the region's 10 local authorities share the same Greater Manchester geographical boundaries, supporting the ambition of creating a single integrated public service team. GMP's priorities include keeping people safe; reducing harm; and strengthening communities and places - aims that GMFRS also shares. The locations that demand the most resources from GMFRS, GMP and local authorities are frequently the same. For instance, if you map the location of certain kinds of deliberate fires and the location of anti-social behaviour incidents, the two very closely correlate. A joint preventative approach with these other services is the most effective way of tackling these threats. A framework for joint and integrated working already exists in Greater Manchester. For instance, Community Safety Partnerships bring together different public services to address local problems collectively. Place-based teams exist across the region, tackling local problems together, sometimes in an integrated way, where officers from different organisations serve as a single public service team, with the same priorities, aims and outcomes.

GMFRS has a strong brand, trusted within our communities. The Service is able to reach the residents that other public services may struggle to access, residents who are perhaps more vulnerable, or with more complex needs. In order to provide the best value to the public, it is vital that firefighters and other GMFRS staff are provided with appropriate training to identify the wide range of risks faced by our residents and help people get the support they need.

The vision of the Greater Manchester Strategy, *Our People, Our Place*, is to make the region one of the best places in the world to grow up, get on and grow old. GMFRS will integrate

working with partners in GMP, Health and local authorities to develop a whole life approach to reducing risks within our communities.

E. Home Fire Safety Visits

GMFRS visits thousands of households every year to deliver fire risk assessments. These are bespoke, person-centred assessments that include the fitting of safety equipment, the development of escape plans and the provision of relevant advice on potential risks. GMFRS obviously does not have the resources to visit every household in Greater Manchester to undertake these assessments. It is vital, therefore, that the Service improves how it targets its home safety visits to the most vulnerable, those most likely to experience a fire. To do this GMFRS needs to develop a clear and accurate understanding of where our most vulnerable residents are. This requires analysis of a range of different information including our own incident data and intelligence, and national databases such as Mosaic. Local partners in Health and councils also collect their own data on vulnerable residents and it is important that the Service improves how it uses this community intelligence.

Case Study: Bury Training and Safety Centre (TASC)

Bury TASC houses a purpose-built training and safety centre designed to help visitors protect themselves against fire and other dangers.

“The visit that could save your life” introduces the work of GMFRS and provides an immersive theatre that engages the senses with the smell of smoke, the heat of fire and the sound of sirens to put visitors in the middle of an emergency incident.

The centre not only offers a curriculum enhancing, interactive learning environment that supports the work of schools and emergency services, but also shows visitors how to protect themselves against fire and other dangers, and what to do in an emergency.

As well as the immersive theatre, visitors can witness the impact of a car crash with a simulated collision and explore a full size house to spot the risks and see the devastation of fire damage.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, GMFRS undertook much of its home fire safety activity remotely. It is vital that we understand the impact this has had on preventing fires and whether there is any best practice that can be continued post-pandemic. This is considered further within Priority 4. The development of online tools for less vulnerable residents to undertake their own fire risk assessment will free up resources to focus on those residents that need us most.

F. Prevention campaigns

GMFRS's Training and Safety Centre (TASC) in Bury provides an interactive centre teaching people how to identify and reduce the risks posed by fires, roads and more. Although the social distancing requirements of COVID-19 forced GMFRS to suspend delivery of this programme, it is essential the Service gets the most out of this facility, ensuring that it reaches as many people as possible in Greater Manchester including specific groups such as the elderly.

In addition to TASC, it is vital GMFRS supports and helps resource local initiatives such as water safety partnerships and the Greater Manchester Safer Roads Partnership, as well as national programmes such as StayWise. The Service's reach over the whole of Greater Manchester puts it in a strong position to help bring together different approaches across the region. It is vital that GMFRS safety messages reach as many people as possible and that we fully utilise a wide range of online platforms to make this possible. For those residents that do not use such platforms, it is also vital that we understand and implement the best methods for alternative engagement.

In order successfully to reduce the threats our region faces, GMFRS must be able to understand and relate to all the diverse communities that make the region such a vibrant place to live. This is best achieved by an organisation that represents and listens to the communities it serves. Research also shows that vulnerable communities are disproportionately affected by fire and feel its affects more acutely. To help protect those communities, we must be able to reach and influence them. This is considered further within Priority 5.

G. Youth Engagement

In June 2020, Mayor Andy Burnham announced his appointment of Diane Modahl as Chair of the new Youth Task Force. Part of the work of this task force is the creation of a Young Person's Guarantee. The four key themes of the Guarantee – keeping connected, staying well, making effective transitions, and removing economic inequalities - were agreed by young people as part of the consultation process. The Guarantee is aimed to help young people recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and feel positive about their future.

GMFRS has a strong brand in our communities, including with young people. The Service undertakes a number of different youth engagement programmes including the Prince's Trust, cadet schemes and initiatives for deliberate fire setters. These programmes have different aims including reducing deliberate fires and anti-social behaviour, increasing young people's understanding of risk, developing life and work skills, and familiarising young

people with the work of the fire service. We also deliver a number of apprenticeship schemes. These are considered further within Priority 5.

We commit to:

10. Working in a more integrated way with partners to deliver joint responses to local problems, including the allocation of a Station Manager to all community safety partnerships and the resourcing of place-based teams.
11. Aligning our prevention activities with our partners and embedding a “Start Safe, Live Safe, Age Safe” approach, ensuring GMFRS staff are trained to recognise a wider range of potential threats to help residents get the support available to them.
12. Engaging our diverse communities in the development of local plans, through advisory groups and voluntary sector partners. Using this intelligence to understand better and target all our communities with safety messages and campaigns.
13. Working in a more integrated way with partners to develop a shared understanding of vulnerability, delivering safety work where it is needed most.
14. Increasing the number of people who use our Training and Safety Centre, and developing safety packages for different age groups that can be delivered online and in the community.
15. Providing every primary school in Greater Manchester with a range of interactive, web-based resources aligned to the National Curriculum, with further face to face support in higher risk areas. Developing further resources for secondary schools.
16. Supporting local and national programmes to reduce the risks posed by roads, water and other threats, utilising a wide range of engagement methods as effectively as possible to increase the number of people we reach.
17. Convening a Greater Manchester summit on water safety to explore opportunities to reduce the risks through infrastructure initiatives and communication campaigns.
18. Expanding our youth engagement schemes and ensuring they also help deliver the region’s wider commitments to young people, providing the best possible outcomes to participants and communities.

Priority 3: “Help protect the built environment”

We will improve and regulate the built environment to protect people, property and the economy.

Why is this important?

The Grenfell Tower fire and other incidents have demonstrated the high levels of risk within the built environment. As well as our risk-based inspection programme, we will work with partners and developers, and shape national policy, to help ensure our buildings are safer and better protected from fire. This is essential for the safety of our residents and our firefighters, and the protection of our economy, our heritage, and the environment.

H. The built environment

If buildings are constructed correctly, they are expected to perform in a certain way in a fire. In most circumstances safety features should limit fire spread for long enough for fire services to tackle a fire at its point of origin, before it spreads and grows. However, since the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower, a number of other buildings across the UK have failed in fires, including The Cube in Bolton. Not all these buildings have been high-rise.

In response to this increased threat within our built environment, Mayor Andy Burnham created the Greater Manchester High Rise Task Force. Chaired by the Mayor of Salford, Paul Dennett, the Task Force brings together GMFRS, local authorities, landlords, building control, senior civil servants, universities and other specialists to provide an integrated response to the risk in high-rise residential buildings.

As part of this work, GMFRS has inspected every high-rise building to ensure risks are adequately assessed and measures put in place for the safety of residents. Our firefighters have regularly revisited higher risk buildings to ensure appropriate interim safety measures are maintained. Planning exercises have taken place in every borough, to ensure different services are prepared to respond to a major high-rise incident. As well as submitting numerous proposals to the Government to improve legislation and improve building safety, the Task Force also holds regular meetings with high-rise residents to understand their concerns and share updates.

It is essential the Service maintains a constantly updated understanding of the risks within the whole of the built environment, both high-rise and non high-rise buildings. This includes implementing the recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry and any other similar inquiries.

Case Study: The Cube Fire

In November 2019, part of The Cube building in Bolton city centre was destroyed by fire. The affected building was a seven-storey block of student accommodation, wrapped in high-pressure laminate cladding. The speed with which the fire took hold and the devastating impact it had on the building was shocking.

The initial incident commander quickly realised the rapid spread of the fire demonstrated the building was not performing the way it should do, and called for more fire engines and immediate evacuation. This decision triggered the High-rise Immediate Resident Evacuation (HIRE) action plan, a new, local approach to tackling primarily high-rise fires developed by GMFRS in conjunction with the Task Force.

Evacuating large numbers of occupants whilst dealing with a rapidly developing fire is complex and challenging. To manage this situation effectively, the HIRE action plan required a number of additional resources be sent to the fire including extra fire engines, an extra command team dedicated to evacuation, and a specialist officer to advise on the building's fire safety features. GMFRS also mobilised one of its new turntable ladders to enable a rescue from the sixth floor, which was subsequently destroyed by flames. To ensure fire cover across the rest of the region, GMFRS had to call on 18 fire engines from four other fire and rescue services.

No deaths or serious injuries were reported and all 217 residents were accounted for. However, the loss of work, personal belongings and documents, added to the immediate impact of being involved in a very serious fire.

I. Risk and resources

It is essential our operational workforce understands the increased threat within the built environment and are trained to recognise and respond to a building that is not performing the way it should do in a fire.

Understanding the threat posed by a building requires the collection and dissemination of accurate and up to date risk information, so when firefighters arrive at a fire they understand the specific threats that building poses. This requires improving how we collect and store this information, and improving the capabilities and use of the mobile data terminals on our fire engines. These improvements will help ensure the safety of both the residents in the building and the safety of our firefighters.

GMFRS undertakes a risk-based inspection programme to ensure businesses are complying with fire safety legislation and to help them become more resilient to fires. We prioritise

higher risk premises - those buildings with known fire safety concerns, or a history of fire incidents, or ones highlighted to us by intelligence from partners and the community. Previous central government funding cuts, as well as an intense focus on high-rise buildings following the Grenfell Tower fire, have left gaps in the resourcing of this programme. It is vital we recruit suitably-qualified staff and train firefighters appropriately to ensure we deliver the risk-based inspection programme at scale.

The social distancing requirements of the COVID-19 pandemic changed the way we delivered fire safety advice to building owners and managers, with some of it being delivered remotely. It is important we understand the impact this has had on building safety and whether there is any best practice that can be continued post-pandemic. This is considered further within Priority 4.

Our fire investigation officers work with the Police and the criminal justice system to provide evidence on the causes of fires. It is important this function is adequately resourced and works as effectively as possible with these other agencies.

Building safety regulation is changing and GMFRS's role in ensuring fire safety will need to adapt. GMFRS will need the right level of resources in this area to ensure we are able to deliver our new responsibilities, as well as continuing to deliver our existing functions.

J. Business support

Greater Manchester is the fastest growing region outside London. Our ambitions for the region are made clear in the Greater Manchester Strategy, *Our People, Our Place*. Fires can be economically devastating for businesses, not only from the destruction of assets, but from the impact on business continuity. GMFRS has a significant role in enabling the region's growth by providing businesses with fire safety support and advice and making them more resilient to fires. To maintain an awareness of varying risks, it is also vital that we understand and relate to all the diverse communities in the region. This is best achieved by an organisation that represents and listens to the communities it serves. This is considered further within Priority 5.

Our fire engineers provide consultation advice to building developers to try and embed fire safety in a building as soon as possible. The Service also works with the region's Business Growth Hub, which brings together different local authorities to provide businesses with a single point of access for advice on regulatory compliance, including environmental health, trading standards and fire safety regulation.

In some districts fire safety staff work in integrated teams with other public services including trading standards and licencing. Like the Growth Hub model, this joint approach reduces the regulatory burden on businesses, creates a more complete picture of community risk for the services involved, and enables a more effective joint response to safety issues.

There are times when businesses and building owners continue to disregard the advice and support provided to them. In these instances, when all avenues have been explored, GMFRS will undertake robust enforcement action to ensure buildings and businesses do not pose a threat to the safety of the people who use them, or to the environment around them.

Where it is in the public interest, we will also pursue prosecutions. This is most effectively undertaken in partnership with other services including local authorities, the Police and, where applicable, the Environment Agency.

We commit to:

19. A continued integrated focus on the built environment that includes engagement with our residents. Using resident feedback to increase our pressure on the Government to make buildings safe and protect leaseholders from the financial costs of failed regulation and building control.
20. Implementing recommendations from relevant inquiries and research into building safety.
21. Improving how we collect and use accurate risk information on buildings to ensure our response to emergencies is as safe and effective as possible and our inspection programme targets the buildings most vulnerable to fire.
22. Applying pressure on Government to fund adequate numbers of qualified staff to successfully deliver our own building safety programmes and the requirements of the new national regulatory regime.
23. Working with partners to provide advice and support to developers, building control, building owners, businesses and planning teams to embed fire safety as soon as possible and throughout the life of a building.
24. Ensuring we relate and listen to all our diverse communities, to understand what influences them and better target our advice and support across every part of the region.
25. Robust enforcement and prosecutorial action when necessary, to ensure the safety of the users of a building, and the safety of the environment around it.

Priority 4: Use resources sustainably and deliver the most value

We will use resources efficiently and sustainably in a way that delivers the most value.

Why is this important?

We are funded by the public. It is vital that we provide the greatest value, with the least possible impact on the environment. This includes working in an integrated way with partners to provide a service that is more efficient and more effective at tackling complex problems.

K. GMFRS funding

Baseline funding, the largest element of Government funding for GMFRS, is provided by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Further funding is received from the Home Office covering pensions-related costs and department-specific fire and rescue programmes. These include national resilience, which supports GMFRS in delivering a sustained, effective response to major incidents, emergencies and disruptive challenges.

The Local Government Settlement 2017/18 introduced 100% retention of business rates for pilot authorities, including those in Greater Manchester. The pilot authorities each retain 100% of locally raised business rates, of which the local authorities retain 99% and 1% is retained by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority in respect of GMFRS. GMFRS also receives funding from local council tax payers, as part of the Mayoral General precept.

There are a number of priority funding issues currently facing GMFRS:

- Securing an inflationary increase in Government funding to maintain firefighter numbers and provide adequate Fire cover across the region
- Ensuring the Government incorporates Protection funding into its baseline funding to improve the safety of our built environment
- Securing ongoing Government grants to cover the shortfall in pensions funding
- The implications of COVID-19 on GMFRS funding collected through council tax and business rates
- Local flexibility around council tax for GMFRS.

L. Public value

It is vital the public feels we provide value for money both in terms of the Council Tax they pay that funds the Service, and also in terms of the taxes they pay that supports other funding we receive. It is also important that the public understands how we are using its money. More information on the source of the Service's budget, reserves held, and spending can be found in our Medium Term Financial Plan which is available on the GMCA

website. More detail on the ways we are investing to improve the delivery of our service can be found within Priority 1.

Central government funding for GMFRS has reduced significantly over the last ten years. As covered within Priority 3, our revised approach to tackling fires in failing buildings requires more resources. Planned operational changes to help meet some of the Government shortfall have been postponed in light of the Phase 1 report of the Grenfell Tower Fire Public Inquiry and The Cube fire in Bolton. This has been funded by an increase in the Fire and Rescue Service element of the Mayoral Precept of £6.25, taking it to £66.20 per annum at Band D.

Whilst the impacts of the pandemic and subsequent lockdown are yet to be fully understood, it will undoubtedly affect households' and businesses' ability to pay their council tax and business rates, negatively impacting on the funding we are able to secure from these sources. At the same time, the financial impact of Brexit is still unclear. We are likely to have to rely more heavily on central government funding over the coming years. These factors will negatively affect the Service's ability to deliver functions beyond its statutory duties. However, it is essential that GMFRS strives to provide the best possible value to our communities.

Irlam was our first tri-station, a combined Fire, Police and Ambulance station. In Wigan we have a combined Fire and Ambulance station. We also share our community fire stations with GMP in Stockport, Irlam and Mossley. This not only saves the public money, but it also encourages a more integrated approach to tackling the threats facing our communities. We will continue to be flexible, and explore further ways to share our people and resources where we can to support our communities and other services, and to provide maximum value to the public.

We will also provide greater value to the public by continuing to develop and expand our schemes that improve outcomes for young people. These are considered further within Priority 2.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Fire Chief's Council, employers, and the Fire Brigade's Union worked together to agree a wider role for fire and rescue services. GMFRS worked with local authorities and other partners to deliver a range of humanitarian assistance activities throughout the pandemic including 24-hour fire safety support to the NHS Nightingale Hospital, providing drivers to deliver supplies, and co-ordinating a network for the distribution of personal protective equipment.

The pandemic has also driven the Service to become more agile. For instance, software was immediately rolled out to facilitate online rather than face-to-face meetings. This has had a positive impact on the financial and environmental cost of staff moving from one site to another. As mentioned within Priorities 2 and 3, GMFRS responded to the social distancing requirements of the COVID-19 pandemic by delivering some of its services remotely. It is vital that we evaluate the success of these adapted approaches to identify what best practice can be continued when the pandemic is over.

Case study: The PPE Taskforce

Greater Manchester is the only region with a devolved healthcare system. This integration has created strong links between the NHS, local authorities and social care providers, and facilitated the creation of the region's Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) taskforce.

The PPE taskforce was responsible for ensuring millions of items of PPE was provided to all the region's social care providers, emergency services, GPs, pharmacies and others. The taskforce established its own procurement system, directly sourcing PPE from national and international markets. As a result, the region has been better able to fill in gaps in PPE stock when national supplies have been delayed.

GMFRS was a driving force in the PPE taskforce. It provided staff to procure PPE and co-ordinate its delivery, cataloguing and distribution. GMFRS staff helped develop and maintain a database to track PPE procurement, distribution, and the rate at which partners were using it to ensure front line services did not run out. The Service also provided a location to store all PPE both nationally and regionally procured.

The PPE taskforce system has worked in tangent with the NHS's own supply chain, sharing GMFRS resources for its receipt and storage. This facilitated a mutual aid system, allowing monitored stock to move between the NHS and social care providers when either front line service was running low.

Joint procurement has been in place at GMFRS for some time and has helped us achieve better value for the services and goods we buy. We work with other fire services nationally and particularly across the North West, but also collaborate on city region level with the wider public sector such as the Police. As part of Greater Manchester's bid to build a better, fairer and greener economy following the pandemic, Leaders have updated the region's social value framework, grounding it in the Greater Manchester Strategy and the region's recovery plans. The framework will enable GMFRS to maximise the social good and wider

positive impact it can bring about by procuring services that have a positive impact on skills, jobs, the environment, communities and resilience.

The Service will also continue to improve employment standards through its commitment to the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter. As well as focusing on health, working arrangements, leadership, recruitment and staff voice, the Charter commits to excellent practice in developing a real living wage.

GMFRS was the first fire and rescue service to mobilise all its firefighters to cardiac arrests in support of the ambulance service. The initiative was subsequently undertaken across the country. The Fire Brigade's Union had some legitimate concerns about how it was being implemented and a decision was taken nationally to discontinue the initiative. Whilst there were improvements that could have been made to implementation, particularly regarding firefighter welfare, the initiative saved many lives in Greater Manchester. If future funding requirements permit, we are keen to explore with staff, unions and partners whether there is scope to revisit and improve this function, ensuring effective procedures are put in place and firefighter welfare is a priority. There are other areas where GMFRS could provide further support to the Ambulance and Police services, including gaining access for paramedics at 'concern for welfare' incidents and searches for missing persons. GMFRS has a statutory duty to collaborate with other blue light services and there is more the Service could do regarding the sharing of estates, procurement, training, development and service delivery.

We must also ensure our response to emergencies provides the greatest value to the public. False alarms continue to negatively impact on GMFRS. In 2019/20 they accounted for 46% of all incidents and can tie up our resources for extended periods. With continued budgetary constraints, it is important we reduce the numbers of false alarms we attend so we can continue to provide effective fire cover across the region. Automatic fire alarms are a major cause of false alarms attended. We will continue to implement policies that reduce the number of resources we send to false automatic fire alarm signals when we are completely sure it is safe to do so.

M. The Climate Emergency

Greater Manchester's 5 Year Environment Plan sets out what we all need to do to tackle environmental challenges and capitalise on the opportunities and benefits that will come from taking action. There are many ambitious aims in the plan include making the city region carbon neutral by 2038; meeting World Health Organisation guidelines on air quality by 2030; recycling 65% of our municipal waste by 2035; protecting, maintaining and enhancing our natural environment; and adapting to the future changes caused by increases

in climate shocks and stresses. In addition to the Environment Plan, the importance of reducing climate impacts was recognised by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority in 2019 through the formal declaration of a climate emergency.

GMFRS plays an integral part in delivering these plans. The Service is more directly affected by the consequences of the climate emergency than many other organisations. Not only do we need to manage and maintain our own assets and resources when faced with extreme events, but we are also expected to mobilise those assets and resources promptly and effectively to intervene to help communities, and protect vital infrastructure and environments. These impacts and requirements have also been recognised by the Local Government Association. In their report, *Climate Emergency: Fire & Rescue Services*, GMFRS is included as a case study focusing on the innovative steps we have already taken.

The Service's original Sustainability Strategy was launched in 2008/09. By 2020, GMFRS had reduced the organisational carbon footprint by 44% and achieved a reduction in utility bills of £590,000. Solar panels produce 11% of the Service's electricity and the remainder is from 100% renewable sources. GMFRS also collaborated with Greater Manchester Police to acquire a new waste provider, who offer zero waste to landfill through recycling and a dedicated EFW (energy from waste) plant. We will be updating our Strategy to support the ongoing delivery of the Mayor's 5 year environmental plan, and to support delivery of the ambitious plans around carbon reduction and climate change.

GMFRS carries out Environmental risk assessments for all incidents to identify the potential risks posed by fire service actions on the environment and the control measures that can be applied to reduce or, where possible, prevent environmental damage. The Service has a dedicated Environmental Protection Unit that can be mobilised to incidents where there is potential for significant environmental harm. With an array of specialist equipment provided by the Environment Agency, the Unit allows crews to identify ways to reduce and collect firefighting water run-off to reduce pollution. The Unit also provides advice on safe controlled burning, when it is less harmful to the environment to allow a fire to burn out than it is to extinguish it. Training firefighters on environmental protection is now part of their maintenance of skills. GMFRS has also worked with a third sector company to develop an emergency services carbon literacy toolkit as part of a pilot funded by the Government.

It is also important that the Service adapts to the potential impacts of the climate emergency. We have a collaborative partnership with other fire services in the North West to deliver a shared control room function. North West Fire Control (NWFC) is a jointly owned company providing control and mobilising functions for Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Cumbria and Lancashire Fire and Rescue Services. The centre in Warrington is

located with consideration of environmental risks, such as flooding, and is purpose built to high resilience standards, allowing its operation to continue in crises.

We commit to:

26. Continued transparency on how GMFRS spends public money, and further engagement with the Government to secure appropriate funding for the Service.
27. Working in an integrated way with partners and other fire services to get the most financial and societal value out of joint and socially responsible procurement.
28. Improving employment standards in line with the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter, including working towards paying a real living wage.
29. Delivering a more ambitious blue light collaboration programme, including the development of a working group with Greater Manchester Police to explore the integration of training, service delivery and estates.
30. Working with building managers to reduce the burden of false alarms and implementing robust attendance policies to safely reduce the threat to fire cover.
31. A refreshed Sustainability Strategy to help the Service meet the aims of Greater Manchester's 5 Year Environmental Plan and ensure the Service is resilient to the potential impacts of the climate emergency.
32. Evaluating and implementing good practice from COVID-19 adaptations to ensure the Service is agile, resilient and sustainable.

Priority 5: Develop a culture of excellence, equality and inclusivity

We will develop staff and leadership excellence, in an inclusive and progressive workplace.

Why is this important?

Our workforce is our most valuable asset. A successful public service reflects the public it serves and engages effectively with its workforce. It has the right people, with the right skills, and creates a culture that is supportive, inclusive, and driven forward by inspiring leadership.

N. Equality, diversity and inclusion

GMFRS's inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in 2018 judged the culture of the service to be inadequate and requiring significant improvement. It specifically identified leadership, staff engagement and the need to engender a culture that is fair, inclusive and promotes professional development.

Prior to its inspection, GMFRS and the Mayor had already acknowledged the need for improvement and initiated the Programme for Change. This major review has looked at all areas of the Service and our direction of travel was consistent with HMICFRS' findings. Following station visits from the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, and extensive meetings between staff groups across the Service, the GMFRS Leadership, Culture and People Strategic plan was developed, building on the work that had already begun. These improvements include:

- The development of a new leadership programme based on best industry practice.
- Introduction of the "Best Companies" engagement survey to benchmark engagement and identify priority areas for improvement.
- The adoption of a comprehensive Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) Strategy including a new Attraction Strategy to help recruit a more diverse workforce.
- The development of a new Equality Impact Assessment tool.
- Work to update the female and gender neutral facilities across the estate.
- The development of a refreshed vision, mission and values.
- The development of the EDI Strategy Group and staff networks.
- Using the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index to measure some of our progress with EDI initiatives.

Fire services need to represent the people they serve. As mentioned in previous section of this Plan, this is not only true for ethical and well-being reasons, but because a service that reflects its communities is more effective at engaging with them. To reduce fires and other emergencies even further, GMFRS must have a positive presence in all its communities. This will involve outreach work in our underrepresented communities to demonstrate that the fire service can be a career choice for all, women as well as men, people from Black and

minority ethnic communities and other underrepresented groups. The Service must be able to understand the specific risks in different communities and implement the most effective ways to promote safety advice and guidance to them. The threats facing our region can be complex and this requires a modern, agile and progressive service.

Continued reductions in central government funding and the restrictions in place as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic are making large-scale attraction and recruitment very difficult. It needs to be acknowledged, therefore, that changing the demography of our firefighter workforce will be a long-term initiative. However, there is still more that we can do, particularly around retention. Improving the diversity of new recruits is the first step, but it is essential that we create a culture in which our underrepresented groups want to stay and progress. The number of women in uniformed leadership roles is particularly low and must be improved. We are reviewing and making positive changes to our attraction, recruitment, and promotional processes to remove barriers and develop pathways that are inclusive, modern and progressive. This work includes the introduction of our Attraction Strategy for 2019-2022, and a review and redesign of our current promotional processes, to focus on developing talent within the organisation.

Improving the culture of the Service is vital for the wellbeing and development of all our staff and we are working hard to make it better. The Service has appointed an EDI Manager to implement the EDI Strategy and ensure it is effectively embedded. Champions have been created to oversee and promote EDI activity across the Service. Staff networks have been established for BAME, LGBT and Allies, Women, and People with Disabilities. Each network is championed by a member of the senior leadership team. Our Reverse Mentoring Programme with senior leaders aims to create a meaningful understanding of the lived experience of our employees from different protected groups.

We have also refreshed our online training to include specific packages on a wider range of EDI topics such as inclusive language, allyship, and race bias. It is important that all staff understand and demonstrate the values of the Service in both their interactions with our communities and with each other. Embedding an improved culture across the organisation is not just a particular team's responsibility, it is the responsibility of all of us.

Our senior leadership team has undertaken a programme of leadership development and coaching, and the National Fire Chiefs Council Leadership (NFCC) Framework has been adopted at all management levels. Additionally, 100 senior leaders in the organisation have participated in a series of personal development workshops and have agreed individual leadership development plans as a result. We must continue to empower all our managers

to manage and lead their staff effectively, through support, training, coaching and clear communication.

Senior managers have introduced and maintained a comprehensive programme of station visits to talk to and listen to firefighters. We recognise the need to invest in the front line. This investment includes a diverse range of resources, from IT provision, station improvements, training, up to date policies and refreshed guidance. Our aim is to create an environment where all staff feel valued, have a voice, and their views, thoughts and ideas are encouraged and acted on.

The Service is also introducing *Freedom to Speak Up*. Adapted from best practice in the NHS, the scheme aims to improve the opportunities staff have to raise concerns without risk of detriment to themselves. The goal is to increase trust between staff and the Service, and improve organisational performance as a result. Freedom to Speak Up Guardians will support staff to speak up when they feel that they are unable to do so by other routes. They will ensure that people who speak up are thanked, that the issues they raise are responded to, and make sure that the person speaking up receives feedback on the actions taken.

Trade unions and representative bodies also play an essential role in supporting staff and promoting a positive culture. It is vital that GMFRS builds and nurtures good relations with unions and representative bodies to work together to achieve the best possible environment for staff and the best possible service to our communities.

O. Learning and development

Knowledge and learning are at the heart of successful organisation. We need to ensure our workforce has the right training and skills to be effective in their roles and to help them prepare for any future opportunities.

GMFRS will deliver a new Learning and Development Strategy that sets out a transparent and coherent training offer for all our staff. The risks in our region are constantly changing and it is essential our staff can continue to effectively support and protect our communities. Clear training plans will ensure all staff understand and acquire the skills they need to successfully undertake their role. It is important that we effectively monitor and report on the completion of training so we have a constantly updated picture of staff progress, including progress amongst different demographics to ensure everyone is undertaking the development that is available to them. We will improve how we spot talent to ensure there is a consistent approach to recognising high achievers. More information on our commitment to provide the best possible operational training can be found within Priority 1.

We are also using the apprenticeship scheme to develop ourselves and our staff. There are almost 300 apprentices working right across GMFRS and the wider GMCA. Our apprenticeships are helping us contribute to the Greater Manchester Strategy to make the region one of the best places to grow up, get on and grow old. They are aimed at anyone who wants to start, advance or change their career, wherever they are in their life. The programmes are not only developing individuals' experiences, skills and qualifications, but are also helping the organisation become a modern, progressive and more diverse public service. The schemes also help deliver the region's Young Person's Guarantee discussed in more detail within Priority 2.

It is important we learn from our own delivery of services. This means acknowledging and improving when mistakes have been made, and promoting and embedding all the good practice that goes on. To drive innovation and respond to changing risk, we must also capture and embed learning from incidents and fire services around the world. This is discussed further within Priority 1.

There is also much good practice than be adopted from the NFCC, the Local Government Association (LGA) and HMICFRS. In the areas we need to improve, it is vital that we learn from other organisations that have implemented successful change. For instance, Greater Manchester Police have worked hard to improve the progress of female officers and this is reflected in the number of women in senior positions.

P. Safety, health and wellbeing

Maintaining the health and wellbeing of our staff is of primary importance to GMFRS. It is vital not only for individuals and their families, but also for the safe and efficient delivery of our services.

Our health and wellbeing support offers a wide range of interventions, designed to promote the wellness of our staff groups and their families, in and out of the work place. This support includes occupational health services providing medicals, physiotherapy and counselling to ensure individuals are well and fit for the workplace. Our Employee Assistance Programme provides independent and confidential advice services for staff across a range of personal issues.

Our introduction of mental wellbeing support includes bespoke plans to help manage an individual's physical and mental wellbeing in the workplace. We provide direct support for operational staff attending traumatic and critical incidents, including early diffusers, team debriefs, and the Trauma Risk Management protocol (TRiM), delivering trauma-focused

peer support. We have also made changes to annual leave processes and are improving flexible working arrangements, to try and make the Service more family-friendly.

Everyone in the organisation has a duty to maintain safety, health and wellbeing practices within the workforce, and we need to ensure they have the tools to do so. This means providing the right appliances, equipment, policies and training. More on our commitment to operational training and safety can be found within Priority 1.

The ageing population and the Government's increase in the pension age for firefighters will cause an increase in the age profile of our operational staff. It is essential that firefighter health is maintained and staff are protected. Physical fitness is a fundamental requirement for all firefighters and the Service will build on pilots already undertaken to establish and train a network of fitness leads on stations.

Q. Performance improvement

Our commitment to becoming a learning organisation will help us drive continuous improvement. We will continue to monitor our own performance and review working practices, standards, and training. We will undertake effective assurance and evaluation to ensure organisational and individual learning and accountability, and to demonstrate the achievement of our outcomes. And we will continue to learn from other services and organisations, embedding best practice into our policies and procedures.

At the same time, we want to empower staff to make decisions and improvements themselves. For instance, station and borough staff are best placed to understand the threats in their local communities, and therefore best placed to develop the plans and the relationships with other services to most effectively tackle them. It is vital we provide staff with the skills and support to be able to do this successfully.

We commit to:

33. Engaging more effectively with our diverse communities, challenging external perceptions with outreach work to attract, recruit and retain a workforce that is more representative of the people of Greater Manchester. This includes embedding a new Engagement Toolkit to create high quality, effective and meaningful engagement, involving people to inform decisions and direction.
34. Developing a process to capture and evaluate feedback from service users to ensure the voice of the public and partners is utilised to identify improvement opportunities.

35. Ensuring the culture of the Service is one of respect and inclusivity in line with our values. Evaluating the impact of initiatives using staff surveys, external benchmarking such as Stonewall, and pay gap reporting.
36. Improving development opportunities for all staff and removing barriers to provide pathways that are inclusive, modern and progressive, increasing the number of women and other underrepresented groups in leadership roles.
37. Building and nurturing positive relationships with trade unions and staff groups and implementing new engagement methods such as *Freedom to Speak Up* to ensure all staff have a voice that is listened to and good practice is embedded.
38. Embedding the National Fire Chief's Council leadership framework to create inclusive, high performing teams that are inspired to constantly improve outcomes for the people of Greater Manchester.
39. A major overhaul of our fire stations and facilities to ensure they are fit for purpose and reflect the needs of our workforce and the public.
40. Developing and further embedding our apprenticeship programmes to improve individual and organisational growth and help deliver the region's Young Person's Guarantee. This includes recruiting a further 350 apprentice firefighters over the next four years.
41. Becoming a learning organisation, embedding improvements in response to our own performance as well as implementing recommendations and best practice from other organisations, HMICFRS and all relevant inquiries.
42. Providing effective methods to improve and manage the health, safety and wellbeing of our workforce. This includes implementing strategies to maintain firefighter fitness, further embedding mental wellbeing programmes such as MIND, and creating an environment that is as flexible and family-friendly as possible.
43. Creating an environment where staff have the skills and support to develop place-based initiatives with partners, within a framework that provides consistency and accountability.

Outcomes and aims of the Fire Plan

What do we want to achieve with the Fire Plan?

We have distilled the strategic aims of the Plan to make them clear, straightforward and meaningful for our workforce, our partners and our communities.

We want to:

- 1. Reduce deaths, injuries and damage caused by fire and other threats to our communities.**
- 2. Deliver the best value to the public with the least impact on the environment.**
- 3. Develop and maintain a diverse, high-performing, and healthy workforce.**

After feedback from the consultation has been considered, we will develop an outcomes framework for the Fire Plan, ensuring we deliver what our staff, partners and communities consider important, as well as our statutory responsibilities. This framework will enable us to measure the Service's progress at delivering against the priorities and the commitments in the Plan and whether the aims above are being met.

As part of this Framework, GMFRS will produce an internal / external outturn report outlining its progress against delivering the Plan, as well as any other risks identified. This report will then inform the subsequent year's annual delivery plan. As stated above, delivery plans will be updated annually to adapt to changing risks and progress. The delivery plan will also provide more detail regarding the allocation of resources in response to identified risks and priorities.

This Framework approach to tracking the progress of the Plan's delivery will allow for quantitative assessment such as the speed of our response to emergencies; the number and focus of our home safety visits; workforce diversity etc. It will also allow for a qualitative assessment of initiatives including progress against delivering inquiry recommendations; outreach work undertaken; integrated work on the built environment etc.