

Supporting service redesign

Merseyside is in a strong position to meet the financial challenges for the future. We have credible political and managerial leadership, a loyal, committed and motivated workforce and a very strong track record in service delivery. Our new mission statement 'safer stronger communities – safe effective fire fighters' is understood and owned by everyone and has provided a new sense of clarity and purpose which staff can unite behind.

The challenges ahead, however, are considerable and in this context, we wanted the LGA's fire peer challenge to focus on our organisational capacity and how that would impact on our plans for operational preparedness and response.

We have worked hard to improve our operational response planning and have a group of Station Managers who are overseen by a Group Manager who together have a very clear understanding of the objectives and standards that all Fire Stations in Merseyside need to work to.

Our back to basics approach has enabled us to demonstrate that the core activity of a Firefighters role is as important at a corporate level as it is to individual staff.

This approach has played out well across all parts of our Service. There is a high level of acceptance that we are going to continue to change over the coming years and a good level of consensus about how that can be achieved without compromising our operational response.

The Peer Challenge was very helpful indeed in confirming the legitimacy of our thinking around how we redesign our service to meet the financial challenge over the course of this and the next spending review. The Peer Challenge team also highlighted a number of areas to explore which will give us the opportunity to drive further improvement through our performance management processes.

We invested heavily in designing and scoping the approach to our fire peer challenge to ensure it met our needs. Using our Operational Assessment we identified key areas that were important to Merseyside, some of these were outside the scope of the toolkit – such as Information Technology and Systems Thinking. Throughout the LGA worked with us to build a team to address these areas and provide that added value.

As our peer challenge took place in November 2012 we are now working through the report to develop a prioritised action plan which will be published alongside the report in XXXX. This new flexible approach gives us the opportunity to ensure that the outcomes of the peer challenge fit into our business planning processes and inform our future plans and are not imposed on us.

Finally the peer challenge also provided us with an opportunity to reflect and celebrate our successes. This is equally important in challenging times and having external validation of our work with partners and the work we do with our diverse communities was encouraging.

Overall I was grateful to the peer challenge team giving their time and for their hard work in supporting Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service to deliver a high quality service to our communities.

More details on the LGA's peer challenge offer to all Fire and Rescue Services is available by visiting: www.local.gov.uk/peer-challenge.

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