

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	CSC/21/4
MEETING	COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	2 NOVEMBER 2021
SUBJECT OF REPORT	OVERVIEW OF DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE'S COLLABORATION ACTIVITY
LEAD OFFICER	ACFO PETE BOND, DIRECTOR OF SERVICE DELIVERY
RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>That this report is noted.</i>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>The Community Safety Committee at its meeting on 26 July 2021 requested a report explaining Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service's collaborative plans that build upon the ambulance driving support it has given to South Western Ambulance Service during the Coronavirus pandemic.</p> <p>This report not only explains the collaborative plans that the Service is developing with South Western Ambulance Service, but also outlines the Service's collaborative history, the legislative requirement to collaborate, the emerging national picture within the fire and rescue sector agenda for reform and the range of collaborative initiatives that the Service currently operates with other partners.</p>
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	Existing Service resource with seconded support from South Western Ambulance Service
EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS	N/A
APPENDICES	N/A
BACKGROUND PAPERS	Response to the National Resilience Strategy Call for Evidence from the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) (September 2021)

1. INTRODUCTION

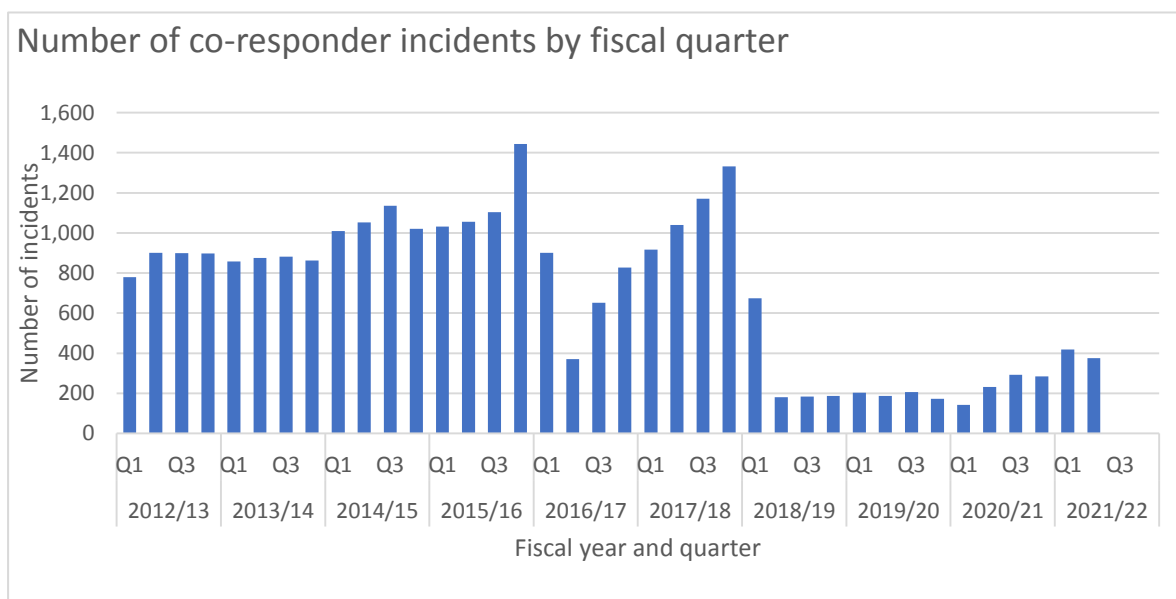
- 1.1. The Community Safety Committee at its meeting on 26 July 2021 requested a report explaining Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service's collaborative plans that build upon the ambulance driving support it has given to South Western Ambulance Service during the Coronavirus pandemic.
- 1.2. This report also looks back at the Service's collaborative history, which in the modern era can be demonstrated by the introduction of co-responding response to medical emergencies by on call firefighters on behalf of South Western Ambulance Service in 1997.
- 1.3. The Service's collaborative activity has advanced significantly since this point, with many partners, and there is now also a statutory requirement to collaborate with blue light partners following the introduction of the Policing and Crime Act 2017.
- 1.4. These solid collaborative foundations were the basis upon which the Service, in April 2020, was able to respond to South Western Ambulance Service's request for help at the beginning of the Coronavirus pandemic. Within 15 days of that request being received, the Service had firefighters driving ambulances to emergencies alongside South Western Ambulance Service colleagues. This is a collaborative activity that the Service continues to support at the time of publication of this report. Over the past twelve months, the Service has covered 1,387 ambulance shifts, responded to 6,063 emergencies and helped to save the lives of 26 casualties.
- 1.5. The fire and rescue sector reform agenda emerging from Central Government and the Home Office also presents an opportunity for fire and rescue services across the UK to be pivotal in the Government's ambition to be "the most resilient nation".
- 1.6. This report outlines how the Service is proposing to develop its collaborative relationship with South Western Ambulance Service building on the co-responding and ambulance driving activities undertaken by our firefighters, contribute to saving lives across Devon and Somerset and be at the leading edge of the fire and rescue sector reform.

2. CURRENT COLLABORATION WITHIN THE SERVICE

Co-responding

- 2.1. The Service has been co-responding to trauma incidents on behalf of South West Ambulance Service since 1997. This long-standing collaboration currently involves twenty of our on-call fire stations across Somerset and Devon. The model involves on-call firefighters with higher levels of trauma care training being mobilised by South Western Ambulance Service to category 1 999 calls (i.e. those incidents involving the highest life risk such as cardiac arrest) when these crews would be quicker to attend than an ambulance.

- 2.2. The Service's co-responding crews consist of two firefighters responding in dedicated Service-branded co-responding blue-light cars that are equipped with defibrillators, oxygen therapy, monitoring equipment and pain relief (Entonox).
- 2.3. As can be seen from the graph below, South Western Ambulance Service, in line with their own revised response model, limited the type of calls that the Service's co-responding crews attended to category 1 only in 2016. Whilst this reduced the volume of incidents that the Service's teams attended, the firefighters maintained their higher level of trauma care skills and as a result the Service was able to use the co-responding cohort effectively to respond to South Western Ambulance Service's request for support to drive ambulances at the beginning of the pandemic in April 2020.



Ambulance driving

- 2.4. On 31 March 2020, South Western Ambulance Service made a request to Chief Fire Officers of the five fire and rescue services across the south west (Cornwall, Dorset and Wiltshire, Avon, Gloucestershire and the Service) for firefighter ambulance drivers to support their response to the expected surge in cases resulting from the Coronavirus pandemic.
- 2.5. The Service's Chief Fire Officer took the senior point-of-contact role on behalf of all five regional fire and rescue services. Consequently, a small team of Service officers worked collaboratively with South Western Ambulance Service to co-ordinate the overall response to this firefighter ambulance driving request.
- 2.6. The Services firefighting crews, mainly consisting of co-responding trained firefighters and first aid instructors from the Service's Academy training team, commenced ambulance driving for South West Ambulance Service only fifteen days after the initial request was made. There have been two phases of this ambulance driving response, 15 April 2020 to 31 August 2020 (known as phase 1) and from 2 November 2020 to date (known as Operation Braidwood).

- 2.7. Phase 1 saw the Service's ambulance driving team respond to 2,015 South Western Ambulance Service incidents, and during Operation Braidwood, over 6,000 more to date. Regionally, the total is over 20,000 ambulance incidents that firefighters have driven ambulances to and in supporting paramedics with trauma care have saved in excess of 120 lives.

Police and Fire Community Support Officers (PFCSOs)

- 2.8. The Police and Fire Community Support Officers are a collaborative initiative between the Service and Devon and Cornwall Police based in North Devon that started in 2016. In essence these are Police Community Support Officers who are employed by the police, who are also trained as firefighters and are able to respond to fire and rescue incidents as part of local on-call firefighting teams. Whilst on patrol the Police and Fire Community Support Officers also undertake crime and fire prevention activities within their communities.

- 2.9. There are currently two Police and Fire Community Support Officers in North Devon, and the Service and Devon and Cornwall Police are currently working together to introduce more of these roles into both North and South Devon.

Community Responders

- 2.10. Community Responders are an innovative collaboration between the Service and Devon and Cornwall Police whereby on-call firefighters are employed on a 21-hour contract during which time they patrol their communities as Special Constables.
- 2.11. This scheme started as a pilot with seven Community Responders in market towns across Devon in 2019, but four have since been successful at either becoming Police Constables or wholetime firefighters.
- 2.12. The Service and Devon and Cornwall Police jointly commissioned an independent evaluation of this scheme which was completed earlier this year. Whilst there are key learning points, both the Service and Devon and Cornwall Police are currently committed to revising and expanding the scheme.

Safeguarding

- 2.13. This is a collaborative initiative between the Service and Devon and Cornwall Police that was initially trialled in a collaboration between the police and Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service.
- 2.14. The Service, this year, have employed a new member of the community safety team who is embedded within Devon and Cornwall Police's safeguarding unit in their Middlemoor Headquarters in Exeter. This enables the Service employee to access police databases that indicate individuals across Devon who are likely to become involved in arson activity and thus enabling early intervention by the Service's community safety team to prevent escalation of this fire-setting behaviour.

Networked Fire Services Partnership (NFSP)

- 2.15. The Networked Fire Services Partnership is a significant collaborative initiative with Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service (DWFRS) and Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service (HloWFRS). This fire sector partnership started in 2011 as a collaboration to develop a joint Control system.
- 2.16. In essence, all of the three Services' Controls use the same software system called Vision. Vision is currently provided by Capita. The benefits of this collaboration are high levels of Control resilience with the ability of each Control able to handle seamlessly emergency calls from each Service, and then mobilise each other's assets to incidents at times of high demand or system fault. The partnership handles in excess of 60,000 emergency calls per annum. This collaboration has developed over time and through its governance is now managing key collaborative projects. These are:-

Attribute Based Response (ABR) (Networked Fire Services Partnership project)

- 2.17. In its simplest form, Attribute Based Response will allow Services to respond to incidents with the basic attributes needed to bring that incident to a successful conclusion. This will improve both fire and rescue service response efficiency, but more significantly response times by, for example, sending small teams from different stations to create a single incident response.

Cross Border Risk Sharing (ScDiscovery) (Networked Fire Services Partnership project)

- 2.18. This project brings together location-specific risk information and Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) to provide essential risk intelligence to firefighters as they approach and during a developing incident. ScDiscovery is the new product from our Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) providers, Airbus, which will seamlessly share cross-border risks. This gives Control and firefighting crews the most up-to-date version of site risk information from the source Service.

Firefighter and Officer mobile telephone paging application (Networked Fire Services Partnership project)

- 2.19. This mobile telephone application is designed to provide fill-in coverage for the existing alerters (pagers) that many of our on-call staff use. This is especially important in areas where existing alerter coverage is sometimes unreliable. The feedback from firefighters on the pilot has been very positive, and at this stage the project has a mixture of people using the application on personal mobile phones, as well as Service provided mobile phones. One benefit of the application is that firefighters and officers can log out when they are not on-call and will not be unnecessarily disturbed, something that cannot be achieved with the current alerters which need their batteries removed to silence them. The current alerters are also obsolete (although the Service has enough buffer stock to enable their use for a further two years).

Multi-agency Incident Transfer (MAIT) (Networked Fire Services Partnership project)

- 2.20. Multi-agency Incident Transfer is an opportunity to digitally pass incidents between Controls and Service systems. It was listed as an option to improve inter-control room communications in the Grenfell Inquiry report and is being supported by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and Home Office.

Fire Survival Guidance App (Networked Fire Services Partnership project)

- 2.21. This project is looking at a Fire Survival Guidance application that London Fire Brigade (LFB) have developed to support Immediate Building Evacuation (IBE). This acts as a link between the Control room and incident ground to digitally track emergency calls giving support and advice to occupants of the affected building. This ensures that the fireground is kept up to date of ongoing advice given by fire control to individual occupants and additionally any actions conducted at the fireground that affect the advice given by fire Control. The application can be used in the Control mobilising system by neighbouring Control rooms (for overflow calls) and Service officers at the incident ground.

Use of Service Estates

- 2.22. The Service has a number of collaborative estate-sharing initiatives across Somerset and Devon, and with a variety of partner organisations. The table below shows where these arrangements currently exist.

Property Name	Beneficiary	Nature of interest	Use
Axminster	Devon & Cornwall Police Authority	Lease	Site sharing for Police
Devon stations	The Police & Crime Commissioner for Devon & Cornwall	Licence	Collaboration licence for access to fire stations across Devon by police officers for welfare facilities
Lynton	The Police & Crime Commissioner for Devon & Cornwall	Licence	Office for local police
Martock	Avon & Somerset Police	Lease	Office for local police and parking space for two vehicles
Plympton	The Police & Crime Commissioner for Devon & Cornwall	Lease	Exclusive office space / use of shared areas

Property Name	Beneficiary	Nature of interest	Use
Braunton	The Police & Crime Commissioner for Devon & Cornwall	Ground Lease	Cabin / Shared areas
Wells	Avon & Somerset Police	Ground Lease	Office for local police/ shared areas
Chard	South Western Ambulance Service	Lease	Use of first floor office and parking space.
Danes Castle, Exeter	South Western Ambulance Service	Ground Lease	Cabin
Exmouth	South Western Ambulance Service	Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)	Site sharing arrangement.
Plympton	South Western Ambulance Service	Licence	Site sharing - rest room, kitchenette and parking within Plympton station
Wells	South Western Ambulance Service	Lease	Site sharing for Ambulance Service - siting of portable building for standby point and parking space
Wincanton	South Western Ambulance Service	Lease	Site sharing for Ambulance Service - use of room and parking for standby point
Bridgwater	South Western Ambulance Service	MOU	Cabin / parking / shared welfare
Wincanton	South Western Ambulance Service	MOU (as well as lease)	Shared welfare / storage container

Property Name	Beneficiary	Nature of interest	Use
Martock	South Western Ambulance Service	MOU	Shared areas within Station / use of an Appliance Bay and yard area

Operations collaboration

- 2.23. The Service has a number of formal and informal operational collaborative arrangements. Examples of these are:-
- 2.24. Gaining entry to properties to enable South Western Ambulance paramedics to reach patients who are locked inside their property
- 2.25. Provision of Service welfare units (containing kitchens, rest areas and toilets) and gazebos to the police at serious crime scenes. Examples of this are incidents such as the recent shootings at Keyham in Plymouth and a murder scene in Salcombe. At the Salcombe incident, the Service's specialist rescue teams also created pathways at the scene to allow police forensic teams to operate safely on a steeply sloped wooded area whilst protecting the evidence
- 2.26. Firefighters closing minor roads and traffic control at fire and rescue service incidents to reduce demand on Devon and Cornwall and Avon and Somerset police resources
- 2.27. Wide-area searching for missing persons in support of the police
- 2.28. The use of Service drones in support of special police operations across the region, a recent example was the search of a disused mineshaft for a missing person
- 2.29. The recovery of bodies on behalf of the police in locations that are difficult to access.

3. LEGAL REQUIREMENT TO COLLABORATE AND NATIONAL PICTURE

The Legislation

- 3.1. Section 21 of the Fire & Rescue Services Act (2004) requires the Secretary of State to prepare a Fire & Rescue Service National Framework setting out priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities in discharging their functions. Section 21(7) of the Act requires fire and rescue authorities to 'have regard to' this framework when carrying out their functions.
- 3.2. Section 2 of the Framework references The Police and Crime Act (2017) and places a statutory duty on fire and rescue authorities and others to collaborate.

National Framework Document (NFD)

- 3.3. The information in paragraphs 3.4 to 3.6 in respect of collaboration is extracted from the National Framework Document:
- 3.4. The Policing and Crime Act (2017) created a statutory duty on fire and rescue authorities, police forces, and ambulance trusts to:
- keep collaboration opportunities under review;
 - notify other emergency services of proposed collaborations that could be in the interests of their mutual efficiency or effectiveness; and
 - give effect to a proposed collaboration where the proposed parties agree that it would be in the interests of their efficiency or effectiveness and that it does not have an adverse effect on public safety.
- 3.5. The duty is deliberately broad to allow for local discretion in how it is implemented and recognises that local emergency services are best placed to determine how to collaborate for the benefit of their communities. However, the duty sets a clear expectation that collaboration opportunities should be considered.
- 3.6. The duty does not preclude wider collaboration with other local partners, such as local authorities and wider health bodies. To reflect their wider role, ambulance trusts are required to consider the impact of the proposed collaboration on their wider non-emergency functions and the National Health Service when determining if it would be in the interests of their efficiency or effectiveness.
- 3.7. The Home Office has also been developing their Fire Reform Programme over a number of years, and the Government is expected to soon publish a White Paper considering the future of the fire and rescue sector. In response to these issues, the National Fire Chief's Council published, at the end of September 2021, their response to the National Resilience Strategy Call for Evidence. This document reflects the National Fire Chiefs Council's views that there is therefore a period of change and reform to the fire and rescue sector driven from Central Government. Their response to this highlights a number of opportunities for the sector to be central in achieving the Government's ambition to be "the most resilient nation".
- 3.8. The National Fire Chief's Council, within their paper, consider a range of activities for which the fire and rescue sector can contribute, and that includes an enhanced role in responding to medical incidents. They state:-

Trauma Response

- 3.9. A common consequence of many of the current risks facing the UK is the existence of high numbers of casualties requiring immediate lifesaving medical support. Whilst primacy for this capability sits with the Ambulance Service the FRS (Fire and Rescue Services) can play a significant role in rescuing, triaging and treating casualties at the scene of an emergency. The majority of firefighters are trauma trained, however, there is an opportunity to strengthen the approach and ensure all staff have specific training covering a range of scenarios likely to be

encountered if any of the risks covered in the NRSA (National Security Risk Assessment) occurred.

- 3.10. The attack on the Manchester Arena in 2017 and the subsequent ongoing Inquiry have shown that there is a lack of clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies involved in the front-line response to such an incident. The NRS and subsequent review of the Civil Contingencies Act are opportunities to remove any uncertainty around the roles and responsibilities of emergency responders.

Emergency Medical Response (EMR)

- 3.11. Although some Fire and Rescue Services currently provide Emergency Medical Response to support their local ambulance services the provision varies dramatically across the country. (It should be noted that the Service does not currently provide Emergency Medical Response).
- 3.12. The Policing and Crime Act 2017 introduced a duty for the police, fire and rescue, and emergency ambulance services to keep opportunities for collaboration under review ‘where doing so would improve their efficiency or effectiveness’. There is evidence that a wider rollout of Emergency Medical Response would increase both efficiency and effectiveness and yet there appears to be a reluctance from certain Ambulance Trusts to explore this opportunity. (It should be noted that South Western Ambulance Service do wish to explore this option).
- 3.13. The National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Authorities Fire Brigades operated a successful trial of fire and rescue services playing an enhanced role in responding to medical emergencies. The trial, which operated between 2015 and 2017, was the subject of two independent evaluations from the University of Hertfordshire and New Economy.
- 3.14. The University of Hertfordshire report published in January 2017 found:
“Appropriately trained and equipped firefighters co-responding to targeted, specific time critical medical events, such as cardiac arrest, can improve patient survival rates.”
- 3.15. The report also estimated a return on investment of between £5.67 and £14.40 for every £1 invested.
- 3.16. The New Economy report, published in November 2017, built on the previous work undertaken by Hertfordshire University. The report found:
“Analysis sets out a strong value-for money case for Emergency Medical Response. The indicative benefits to both health and social care partners far outstrip the initial investment required, with an overall financial return on investment of £4.41 per £1 invested, taking a conservative view of the population served. Taken as a very broad average, this equates to a net financial saving of approximately £214 per callout;”
- 3.17. For each individual with new, good cerebral performance, it is broadly estimated that a benefit is created in the order of:

- £24,000 for clinical commissioners as a result of reduced length of stay in intensive care and less costly treatment requirements; and
- £44,500 for social care commissioners as a result of reduced demand for post cardiac arrest domiciliary care.

3.18. The financial case for Emergency Medical Response appears to be strong. However, there are also potentially wider benefits linked to national resilience. The University of Hertfordshire Report also stated:

- Given that firefighters generally are highly trained for rapid intervention, expanding their role (requiring some additional education and training) to include serious medical emergencies looks likely to be in the public interest.
- The fire and rescue services are able to reach incidents as a whole before ambulance services in 62% of cases based on the trial incident data.
- In time-critical incidents, such as cardiac arrests, they arrive sooner than ambulances in 93% of cases.

3.19. Introducing a duty on fire and rescue authorities to provide Emergency Medical Response (EMR), underpinned with appropriate funding would deliver significant benefits for communities and help ease the growing pressure on the National Health Service and Ambulance Services. There is also a link to the wider resilience agenda, as having firefighters trained and responding to medical emergencies, in support of the ambulance service provides a greatly enhanced resilient capability for the consequences of other national risks. The National Fire Chiefs Council would suggest that this opportunity is tied together with an enhanced trauma support provision.

3.20. The trial of EMR was caught up in discussions at the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Authorities Fire Brigades on broadening the role and the insistence from the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) that any additional work undertaken by firefighters should lead to an increase in pay. The industrial relations issues and bureaucratic negotiating mechanisms present a real barrier to progress in the sector.”

4. DEVELOPING THE COLLABORATION WITH SOUTH WESTERN AMBULANCE SERVICE

4.1. Whilst the Service continues to develop a number of collaborative arrangements with other agencies, a key area of planned development is securing the collaborative legacy following the successful ambulance driving collaboration with South Western Ambulance Service during the Coronavirus pandemic.

4.2. The Service’s Chief Fire Officer has already held positive discussions with the Chief Executive of South Western Ambulance Service and, as a result, there is top-level regional support for the development of this initiative.

4.3. The respective collaboration leads for the Service and South Western Ambulance Service have also commenced the planning process with the next step being the production of a full scoping document for the respective Executive Boards.

- 4.4. Whilst this report has highlighted the successful collaborative arrangements that the Service has in place already with South Western Ambulance Service (co-responding, ambulance driving, estates sharing and gaining entry to properties), the following paragraphs set out the context for the legacy initiative and the outline of the proposed collaborative concept.
- 4.5. Ultimately the aim of this legacy partnership with South Western Ambulance Service will contribute to saving lives by:-
- providing South Western Ambulance Service with firefighter ambulance drivers during periods of peak demand with immediate availability resulting in reduced delay to life risk trauma incidents
 - reviewing the Service's co-responding activity to improve response times to South Western Ambulance's category 1 life threatening incidents such as cardiac arrest
 - improving the trauma care techniques that firefighters across the south west apply in a way that dovetails with the techniques being used by South Western Ambulance Service. This will enable all south west fire and rescue services to have common clinical governance in association with South Western Ambulance Service
 - a reduced need for ambulances to attend fire and rescue incidents where there are minor injuries which reduces demands on South West Ambulance Service, and reduces the time that fire and rescue services are in attendance at incidents awaiting an ambulance.
- 4.6. The key to this legacy is a joined-up casualty care system that is designed and governed by South Western Ambulance Service and jointly deployed with the south west fire and rescue services. Currently fire and rescue services operate different trauma care training packages from each other and with varying levels of assurance.
- 4.7. The Service's collaboration team will lead regionally on developing this legacy in association with and behalf of the south west regional fire and rescue services with a senior officer from South Western Ambulance Service seconded to the Service to support the development and implementation of the technical clinical detail. The current proposal is to commence this collaborative work in January 2022 once the full scope has been approved by the respective Executive Boards.
- 4.8. The legacy arrangements do not exclude the introduction by the Service of Emergency Medical Response (EMR) using front line fire engines to respond to cardiac arrests on behalf of South West Western Ambulance Service. However, whilst the Service has the ambition to introduce Emergency Medical Response, the Service are aware that there are Fire Brigade Union (FBU) sensitivities with Emergency Medical Response and would look to introduce this in agreement with all representative bodies. The proposed legacy arrangements with South Western Ambulance Service will provide a solid foundation and governance for the introduction of Emergency Medical Response at the appropriate time. Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service are the only service in the south west that currently undertake this activity.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1. In conclusion, the Service have historically worked very closely with South Western Ambulance Service and as a result have saved many lives. The collaborative response to the Coronavirus pandemic further enhanced the relationship between both emergency services and has given a platform for the development of a legacy collaboration which will save even more lives, not only in Somerset and Devon, but in communities across the south west.
- 5.2. Sustained work will continue with existing collaboration projects with all partners as indicated above and the Service will maintain its duty to collaborate by considering all possible opportunities as they arise.

ACFO PETE BOND
Director of Service Delivery