

**CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY**

**ITEM: 2**

**MEETING OF** : **PERFORMANCE & OVERVIEW COMMITTEE**  
**DATE** : **25 SEPTEMBER 2013**  
**REPORT OF** : **HEAD OF PERFORMANCE, PLANNING AND**  
**COMMUNICATIONS**  
**AUTHORS** : **GILLIAN CONWAY / PAUL VAUGHAN**

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**SUBJECT:** **QUARTER 1 FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE**  
**REVIEW 2013-14**

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### **Summary**

1. The purpose of this paper is to provide to Members of the Performance and Overview Committee an account of organisational performance against plan as at the end of the quarter 1 (Q1) of the current financial year (30 June 2013).

### **Recommended That:**

2. Members note the issues presented in this report and request further detail on any matter if required.

### **Background**

3. The Authority's vision, plans, policies, and organisational structures are all focused on ensuring the Service can deliver the improvements in safety outcomes that matter to the communities of Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East, Halton and Warrington. Strong performance management is key to ensuring that these long term objectives can be achieved. This report forms part of the quarterly corporate reporting schedule and reflects the Service's commitment to performance management throughout the organisation.
4. The report includes a statement of the Authority's financial position, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and brief commentary from each Head of Department about Q1 progress against their 13-14 plans (Appendix 3).

### **Financial Performance**

#### **Revenue**

5. The Service is slightly underspent at the end of Quarter 1, but it is too early to sensibly revise the likely budget outturn. Operational Service Delivery is

underspent due to a lower than budgeted level of activity and temporary staffing arrangements, and there are continuing vacancies in Community Fire Protection. The Prince's Trust budget is showing a slight overspend but this is to be the subject of a thorough review at Mid Year to ensure that all costs are correctly categorised. Corporate Training Budgets continue to be underspent, and will also be reviewed at Mid Year, as spend on training may increase in the light of the potential for industrial action and the delivery of the Emergency Response Review (ERR). The impact of the VFM review of Transport and Workshops has led to a small underspend. Budgets will continue to be closely monitored in the coming months, and the financial performance at September will form the basis of the comprehensive Mid Year Review. This review will include forecast outturn, suggested virements and will also help to inform the preparation of the 2014-15 budget.

6. The capital and revenue implications of the ERR will be reported separately as the programme develops, and members will be regularly updated. At this stage members may wish to note that we have allocated £3m of capital spend to each of the stations. In addition, £30k has been allocated from recruitment costs for the development of a vehicle as a mobile recruitment resource. It is anticipated that this will be contained within existing budgets, but if not the costs will be met from the IRMP reserve.

### **Capital**

7. Attached as Appendix 1 is a report on the capital programme. This includes all active capital schemes, and shows slippage from schemes which started prior to 2013-14. The only significant scheme (relating to Chester Fire Station) is on hold pending the outcome of the ERR.
8. The 2011-12 4 wheel drive purchase programme will be completed in the current financial year. The first two phases of the ICT review are substantially complete. Any further investment in ICT will be subject to consideration by the ICT steering group.
9. Of the 2012-13 starts, the testing of new mobile devices continues as the Service strives to ensure that it buys the most appropriate technology. The agreement for Poynton partnership with the Police has been signed and work is progressing well on site. The Manchester Airport training facility opened in June, but some costs have yet to be reimbursed.
10. The remainder of the capital programme starting in 2013-14 is made up the purchase of equipment and vehicles, and these remain on target for completion in 2013-14.

## Repayment of Loans

11. The Treasury Management Annual Report which was presented to Policy Committee on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2013 included a recommendation to repay £1,120k of PWLB loans prematurely, which Members approved. This repayment has now taken place, with the premium payable (£369k) funded by an earmarked reserve. The Authority now has long term debt of £2,218k.

## Service Performance

12. The commentary in this section accompanies the Corporate Performance Scorecard (Appendix 2) which reflects the Q1 position against targets set at the start of the year for the Service's KPIs.
13. The number of primary fires during 2012-13 was the lowest level ever recorded for Cheshire. The ongoing target is to continue to reduce the numbers further year on year. During Q1 this year there has been a lower number of accidental dwelling fires (ADFs) than the same period last year, however, fires in non-domestic premises have been higher as have deliberate primary fires.
14. Deliberate secondary fires were also at an all-time low last year and the drier, warmer weather conditions in Q1 have made for a challenging start to this year with an increase of 56% compared with the same period last year. Due to the strong correlation between weather and deliberate fires and the peaks and troughs that this can create between years, the target for the deliberate fires indicator is set using the average number of the previous three years as the baseline. The overarching aim is to focus on long term reductions with localised initiatives that target persistent hotspots while continuously monitoring early warning signs of emerging problems.
15. During Q1 there has been one tragic fire death which was a woman in her 40s in an accidental dwelling fire in Cheshire East and the incident is still under investigation. There have been 14 fire-related injuries recorded across Cheshire, only one of which has been classed as severe involving burns. Four injuries occurred during the same incident at a house in Crewe when a deliberate fire involving a wheelie bin spread to the property causing the resident family to be exposed to smoke and fumes.
16. Delivery against planned prevention and protection activities is broadly on track with strong performance during Q1 for the completion of Home Safety Assessments and Fire Safety Audits in particular. The plan for the delivery of Road Safety events is more heavily weighted in Q2 and Q3 so the number of people engaged will increase over the coming months. Similarly, the Business Safety internet pages will see increased traffic in line with the scheduling of specific campaigns.

17. The pass rate against the new Cheshire Response Standard stood at 90% at the end of Q1 against the target of 80%. Average On-Call availability is improving with the assistance of the new staffing system, Gartan. Call handling performance remains unchanged compared with last year and the number of malicious calls received in Q1 has been low which means that interpretation of the data to assess the effectiveness of call challenge procedures is not meaningful at such an early stage of the year.
18. The main concern relating to the resources indicators for Q1 is the number of days lost due to injury. The numbers do fluctuate month to month and the nature of some of the individual cases means that absence can be prolonged. During Q1 two individuals accounted for a large proportion of the days lost due to work-related injury. The KPI relating to firefighter core skills training shows that there has been a strong start to the year for the delivery of the training schedule. The staff satisfaction survey has been postponed due to the current crisis management planning and is now scheduled for reporting later in the year.

### **Legal Implications**

19. The Authority is charged with securing appropriate governance and pursuing effective performance. This report helps Members to fulfil their role in promoting these objectives, allowing them to scrutinise performance at a strategic level.
20. There are no issues to report for Q1 that would affect the Service's ability to meet its statutory or other legal obligations.

### **Equality & Diversity Implications**

21. Each department provides relevant monitoring information on equality and diversity issues as part of their quarterly reporting. Individual projects and activities are required to have equality impact assessments completed in accordance with the organisation's approved Project Management Framework.

### **Environmental Implications**

22. Projects are individually assessed for environmental implications by the relevant project managers in accordance with the organisation's Project Management Framework.

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**BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

Appendix 1 – Capital Programme

Appendix 2 – Corporate Performance Scorecard

Appendix 3 – Summary of departmental progress against plan