



MINUTES OF THE PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE held on 24th February 2016 at Lecture Theatre, Fire Service HQ, at 10:00am.

PRESENT: Councillors D Bailey, P Harris (Chair), D Mahon, J Mercer, L Morgan, M Simon and N Wright. Independent Member: Mr M McBride

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Tony Cobain and Kevin Lloyd, representatives from Mersey Internal Audit Agency

PART 1 – MATTERS CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A RECORDING OF MEETING

Members were reminded that the meeting would be audio-recorded.

B APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence received.

C DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of Members' interests.

D MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That

the minutes of the meeting of the Performance and Overview Committee held on Wednesday 18th November 2015 be confirmed as a correct record.

E MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE

The independent member sought clarity on the nature of the approval given in respect of the construction of Lymm Fire Station and Safety Centre. He commented that he had interpreted the minutes of the Policy Committee as indicating that the Committee had approved the build and budget requirements which he thought was the responsibility of the Fire Authority. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services explained that the build and capital programme budget had already been through the approval process at the Fire Authority. The report to Policy Committee was an additional step in the process to allow Members to approve the award of the design and build contract once the tender process was complete. Policy Committee was able to approve the additional funding according to the financial rules.

RESOLVED: That

the minutes of the Meeting of the Policy Committee held on Wednesday 16th December 2015 be received, for information.

F MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That

the minutes of the Meeting of the Policy Committee held on Wednesday 27th January 2016 be received, for information.

ITEMS REQUIRING DISCUSSION

2 QUARTER 3 FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2015-16

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications introduced this report which provided Members with the Quarter 3 position in respect of the organisational performance against Service plans and budget.

The Head of Finance drew Members' attention to Appendix 1 of this report which showed the estimated outturn position of the Authority compared to the revised budget for each department. He provided Members with further information on the variances in certain departments including an underspend in Service Delivery pay budgets which was offset by some additional costs in relation to the Bosley incident. He informed Members that although the Authority had a contingency budget and the reserves strategy recognised the financial risk in dealing with significant incidents it was unlikely that there would be a need to draw on reserves for the cost of this incident. Due to the overall estimated outturn the costs would be accommodated within the existing overall Authority budget.

He explained that overall it was estimated that the Authority would underspend by a further £331k, in addition to the underspends previously reported to Members at Quarter 1 (£500k) and Mid Year (£317k). It was recommended that any underspend be transferred to the IRMP or capital reserve as part of the approval of the Authority's accounts for 2015-16 to reflect the reserves strategy agreed at that time. However there were a number of additional costs that had not been known at the time of the writing of the report which included approx. £50k to fund equipment for the forced entry work and the pilot cardiac arrest project and an additional £50k in respect of additional pension costs. These additional costs might reduce the total reported underspend although consideration would be given to funding the pension costs from an earmarked reserve.

The Head of Finance provided a brief summary of the latest position in relation to the Authority's capital programme for 2015-16 which was detailed in Appendix 2 of the report. He concluded by advising Members of the debtors position as at the end of December 2015 with the total amount of debt outstanding of approximately £38k and confirmed that the Authority had a low level of debt and no significant problems in recovering debts.

A Member queried whether the number of vacancies were a result of recruitment being put on hold because of Blue Light Collaboration or if there were difficulties in recruitment. The Head of Finance explained that some posts were vacant as part of the agreed savings programme but there had been difficulties in recruiting specialist officers in the Protection Department. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) added that the Service would be advertising the existing Watch Manager (WM) Protection posts nationally as the internal skill base was too small and posts were not being filled.

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications continued by presenting those sections of the report that related to the Service's performance. He highlighted the project in respect of the launch of the Firefighter Apprenticeship Scheme and explained to Members that they would be received a detailed report on this project at the March Fire Authority meeting.

He referred Members to the Corporate Performance Scorecard, attached as Appendix 4 to the report, which reflected the Quarter 3 position against targets for the organisation's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). He highlighted the performance against target of a number of KPIs, where the targets set had not been achieved. These included the number of recorded deaths and injuries in primary fires which had risen. However they were still at a low level and the overall five year direction of travel was extremely positive. In respect of the rise in the number of deliberate fires this figure was against an historically low figure recorded the previous year and when the activity has been benchmarked with other organisations the same trend was identified. The overall trend still showed a decrease in the numbers. The decrease in on-call availability was also discussed and the Head of Planning, Performance and Communications explained that further analysis identified that the main problems were at stations where the on-call firefighters were staffing the second pump. He explained that there was a major piece of work being carried out, as part of the ERP2 programme, to develop a more sustainable recruitment and retention model for on-call staff going forward.

Members discussed the information provided and asked if a briefing paper with further details in respect of on-call availability could be provided. The DCFO agreed that this would be provided for the next Performance and Overview Committee meeting and added that a detailed station breakdown would be included in the information. He explained that new initiatives such as assistance at forced entries and cardiac response should lead to more activity for on-call firefighters going forward.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Financial and Performance Review for Quarter 3 2015-16 be noted.

3 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN - QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT

Tony Cobain and Kevin Lloyd (the Auditors), representatives from Mersey Internal Audit Agency were in attendance at the meeting to present the report to the Committee.

The Auditor advised Members that this brief report provided an update on progress against the 2015-16 Internal Audit plan attached as Annex 1 to the report.

He informed Members that the review on Unitary Performance Groups had been completed since the last report provided to the Committee and noted Member involvement in this review. He advised that a 'Significant' assurance level had been given and there were 5 medium recommendations and 2 low recommendations that had been agreed for action and were identified in the report.

The Auditor concluded by informing Members that there were a number of reviews currently in progress; Fire Cadets, Princes Trust, Operational Training, Combined Financial Systems, Capital Programme and NW Fire Control; and following discussions with officers the IT Critical Applications review would be re-phased into 2016/17.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Quarterly Internal Audit Plan Progress Report be noted.

4 2015 BONFIRE REPORT

The Group Manager, Prevention and Protection introduced this annual report to Members which summarised the preventative and operational activities of the Service and partners during the bonfire period from 16th October 2015 to 9th November 2015 inclusive. He advised Members that the report summarised activities carried out and provided data on the number of small deliberate fires recorded for this period compared to previous years and also the areas where they occurred.

The Group Manager, Prevention and Protection drew Members attention to the continuing reduction in bonfires attended with 4 fewer incidents in 2015 (73) compared to 2014 (77). He added that there was a positive 5 year downward trend with 53% fewer incidents attended compared to 2011. There were a number of reasons for the continuing reductions which included increased engagement in respect of bonfire and firework education, a tolerant risk based approach to dealing with incidents and a targeted plan approach in high risk areas. He concluded by referring Members to the recommendations detailed in the Bonfire Period Report 2015 for their consideration.

Members welcomed the continuing reduction in incidents during the bonfire period but queried whether the tolerant risk based approach had led to an increase in complaints about non-attendance. The DCFO explained that since the Service had adopted a more tolerant policy there had been a reduction in the number of incidents and no significant issues. Any callers who complained about non-attendance would receive an explanation of the rationale for the decision and firefighters would also provide an explanation if they had attended a call but decided not to take action.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the report be noted; and**
- [2] the recommendations in the Bonfire Period Report 2015 be supported.**

5 STAFF SATISFACTION SURVEY 2015

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications presented the report which summarised the key themes and issues highlighted in the survey and set out a draft action plan aimed at addressing the key concerns and challenges. He explained that the overall engagement score of 74% was above the Public Sector average but there were a number of areas where the results had fallen since the previous survey. Satisfaction levels had fallen from 80% in 2011 to 60%, in particular the differential between operational and support staff had grown significantly since 2011 with only 60% of operational staff versus 87% of support staff satisfied overall.

The action plan was attached as an appendix to the report and would be the key document used to detail the steps to be taken to address the survey's findings and make improvements in the necessary areas. It was proposed that the action plan be used by Members to monitor progress and that an updated report be submitted to the Performance and Overview Committee in six months time.

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications informed Members that the first staff engagement roadshow was held on Monday 15th February and one of the key issues raised by staff was the need for more transparency on the outcomes of negotiations between officers and unions to inform staff of agreements reached on shift systems etc. He added that the outcomes of the roadshows would be used to refine the action plan as it progressed.

A Member queried why there had been a four year gap since the last survey in 2011 as prior to that the surveys had been carried out every two years. The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications explained that the survey was scheduled for 2013 but it was deferred as firefighters had just voted to take industrial action as a result of the proposed pension changes. Unfortunately the industrial action became protracted and the delay to the survey became a lot longer than originally anticipated. Future surveys would be scheduled to take place every two years and used to measure the effect of implementing the action plan. He added that the Service may also undertake a number of smaller surveys with a focus on particular projects in the interim period.

Members noted that the lowest result was in respect of the Service encouraging a good work/life balance and asked if this was due to any specific reasons. The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications explained that a number of the lower scores were likely to be a reflection of the introduction of the 12 hour shift system and the changes to the firefighters pension scheme. A Member also highlighted the low score in relation to managing change effectively and added that change management would be an important factor going forward. The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications

commented that management was aware of the importance of engaging with staff and ensuring managers were effectively briefed on any proposed changes. He added that the Watch Managers have a critical role in implementing change and the WM Leadership Development Programme would now incorporate managing change modules.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the action plan (attached as an appendix to the report) be used by Performance and Overview Committee to monitor progress on the issues identified and update reports be brought to future meetings.**

6 EQUALITY AND INCLUSION UPDATE REPORT

The Policy and Inclusion Manager presented the report which provided an update for Members on progress made in relation to equality and inclusion. He explained that the Service had a strong commitment to equality and inclusion and sought to embed this commitment throughout the organisation.

The report detailed the key activities that the Service had delivered in line with the Corporate Equalities and Inclusion Strategy which covered the period from 2014 to 2016. The Policy and Inclusion Manager drew Members attention to the key developments which included progress on the evidence for assessment against the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework, revisions to the terms of reference for the Equality Steering Group, revisions to the Equality Impact Assessments and the production of a cultural calendar. He added that the Service had achieved 13th position in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index in January 2016. The Index is used by employers to assess their achievements and progress on the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) equality in the workplace and this was an outstanding achievement as the Service was both the top performing emergency service and top North West employer.

A Member queried how departmental equality champions were nominated. The Policy and Inclusion Manager explained that Heads of Department would nominate individuals whose role was the most relevant to developing policies where consideration of equality issues was required. Training was on-going to ensure that the number of champions could be expanded if required.

Members thanked the Policy and Inclusion Manager for his commitment and hard work over the last 5 years as the Chair of Firepride which had culminated in the recognition by Stonewall.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the update report and intended equality and inclusion activities be noted.**

7 BLUE LIGHT COLLABORATION

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services provided a verbal update for Members in respect of the Blue Light Collaboration (BLC) programme. He

provided a brief recap of previous reporting on BLC to Members and added that the next report would be presented to the Fire Authority at its meeting on 30th March.

A copy of the decision-making table in respect of the key documents/decisions required for the programme was distributed to Members at the meeting. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services drew Members attention to the matters reserved to Fire Authority/Management Board. He explained that the report in respect of approval to proceed had been agreed by the Fire Authority and the next steps would be the approval to proceed to enter into key documents governing the relationship of parties. Work on the key documents was ongoing and included a number of legal agreements.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services informed Members that he had been appointed as the Service's lead officer following the Assistant Chief Fire Officer's retirement and commented that the delivery of the programme would be a challenge for the Service as it had a much smaller workforce so resources were limited. It was anticipated that the report to the Fire Authority on 30th March would ask Members to authorise officers to enter into the necessary legal agreements. He explained that there were a number of issues which he understood that Members were keen to see covered and asked Members to comment.

The following list was confirmed:

- An explanation about overall collaboration management arrangements and day-to-day operations;
- A description of what the joint HQ building and associated facilities would be like;
- An outline of how the key 'people issues' associated with the programme would be dealt with; and
- A section providing Members with reassurance about PFI.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services concluded by providing an update on current work in progress. There was a meeting of the BLC panel on Friday 26th February to discuss ICT readiness to move staff to Clemonds Hey. In respect of resourcing external legal, HR and property advisors had been appointed (some to assist with the project generally; some to assist the Service).

A Member queried the proposed timescales for the programme and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services explained that the draft programme plan was still in development and there were still a number of uncertainties.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the verbal update on Blue Light Collaboration be noted.

8 INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2015–16 (IRMP12) – PROJECTS PROGRESS

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications provided Members with a brief verbal update on progress in respect of the delivery of projects identified in the Service's Integrated Risk Management Plan 2015-16 (IRMP12).

He informed Members of the progress made in respect of the Forced Entry pilot and explained that at the latest pilot review meeting had provided an evaluation of the pilot to-date. Initially there had been some concerns about the Fire Service arriving first on the scene but the latest evaluation report stated that there continued to be an increase in North West Ambulance Service arriving first on the scene at forced entry incidents. All partners were satisfied with the progress being made with the pilot and further forced entry training would be delivered to fire crews over the next few months.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the verbal update on Integrated Risk Management Plan 2015-16 (IRMP12) progress be noted.**

9 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Members reviewed the forward work programme and the DCFO proposed items that could be added to the April meeting, specifically an update on the Safe and Well project and on the Cardiac Response pilot. Members agreed that these two items should be added to the programme.