



**MINUTES OF THE PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE held on 1 October 2014 at Lecture Theatre, Fire Service HQ, at 10:00am.**

**PRESENT:** Councillors D Flude, P Harris, M Simon, A Tate (Chair), J Weatherill, N Wright and S 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 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

**B DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of Members' interests.

**C 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 2 July 2014 be confirmed as a correct record.**

**MATTERS ARISING:**

**Item 2: End of Year Financial and Performance Review 2013-14**

At the meeting in July Members had asked for further information about the arson conviction rate. The Arson Reduction Manager and the Service's Police Liaison Officer were in attendance at the meeting. The Arson Reduction Manager explained that the Service investigated the cause of deliberate fires which were assessed as Level 1 or Level 2, with Level 2 being deemed as a crime and information passed on to the Police. The Police Liaison Officer added that not all deliberate fires were recorded as arson and instead would be defined as 'loss with criminal damage' rather than arson, (e.g. if a car was stolen and subsequently set on fire).

The Arson Reduction Manager summarised that the conviction rate achieved by the Service was 12% which compared well with the national average of 8%.

## **D MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE**

Members noted that the meeting of the Policy Committee scheduled for Wednesday 17 September 2014 was cancelled.

### **ITEMS REQUIRING DISCUSSION**

#### **2 QUARTER 1 FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2014 - 15**

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications introduced this report which provided Members with the Quarter 1 position in respect of the Authority's performance against Service plans and budget.

The Head of Finance drew Members' attention to the summaries of each department financial performance detailed within the report. He explained that Service Delivery's budget was broadly on target. As timings for delivery of the Emergency Response Programme become clearer and budgets are adjusted to reflect this, this will reduce the requirement to use the IRMP reserve to fund costs.

The Head of Finance referred Members to the reported corporate costs where he explained that there was a long outstanding issue on accounting for stores which had now been resolved. This meant that the Authority was able to credit the Income and Expenditure Account with an anticipated liability of around £50k which would not now materialise. He confirmed that this approach had been agreed by the Authority's auditors.

He advised Members that further savings had been achieved as a result of a review of the pay and mileage budgets which had identified around £95k savings. Additionally £190k had been saved with lower than estimated pay awards and general inflation and reported a saving of around £80k due to lower than budgeted PWLB interest. The Head of Finance informed Members that the Authority would be reviewing its overall borrowing requirement during the autumn.

The Head of Finance made Members aware of the approximate cost of the Authority's strategy in dealing with strikes. He explained that whilst direct costs could be calculated these did not include the cost of lost productivity (i.e. whilst they provided cover during periods of strike action their normal work was not carried out).

He summarised that the overall anticipated revenue budget underspend was around £500k and it was recommended that the Authority transferred any underspend to the IRMP reserve as in previous years.

The Head of Finance concluded by referring Members to the Authority's capital programme detailed in Appendix 2 to the report. Their attention was also drawn to the table within the report which showed the length of time it had taken for the Authority's debt to be collected during 2013-14. He confirmed that the reporting of debt collection information would be reviewed and a more focussed report

would be provided as part of the Mid Year Review to the December meeting of this Committee.

Members queried where the additional costs of industrial action were being funded from and whether the indirect costs could be quantified. The Head of Finance confirmed that the financial costs of £70k had until now been absorbed by the Authority. He advised it was difficult to quantify the indirect costs due to the range of factors involved.

A Member asked what the £95k savings made from the pay and mileage review consisted of and also whether due to interest rates currently being low would the Authority consider borrowing now to take advantage of the low rates. The Head of Finance confirmed that the Service would review its borrowing requirements and consider this option. He advised that the £95k included savings as a result of an overall review of the salaries, mileage and essential user budgets.

A Member referred to the debt collection information and queried whether a surcharge was administered for late payment of invoices. The Head of Finance responded that interest and surcharges were not applied as most of the debt was with public bodies and was successfully collected.

A Member queried whether the quarter 1 performance and financial information detailed in this report could be presented on a more timely basis for scrutiny by the Committee. The Deputy Chief Officer stated that scheduling of Member meetings could be difficult due to other factors determining the timing of certain Authority meetings but advised Members that officers would consider this further when scheduling the timetable for 2015/16.

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications continued by presenting those sections of the report that related to the Service's performance which included the quarter 1 position and a brief summary from each Head of Department which reflected Quarter 1 progress against 14-15 Service plans and targets, attached as Appendix 3 to the report.

He advised that the Service had completed its 3 year programme of Value for Money Reviews (VfM) and any lessons learnt from the reviews would be carried forward to the next programme of VfMs. He summarised progress on the two major campaigns for smoke alarms and sprinklers with the focus on securing legislation to improve fire safety. National and local attention and support was continuing.

In conclusion, the Head of Planning, Performance and Communications referred to progress with the Emergency Response Programme with planning permission now approved on all four sites. He also advised Members that system and data issues experienced with the move of the control function to North West Fire Control had now been rectified and it was anticipated that full performance mid year reporting would be available including the Corporate Scorecard detailing the Service's key performance indicators.

Members were pleased that the sprinkler campaign was progressing well and offered their support with progressing the sprinkler project with Wulvern

Housing. Members requested further information be brought back to the Committee in relation to the fitting of sprinklers in new developments e.g. care homes for the elderly. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed that, when consulted, the Service fed into building regulations including older people's homes where very strong recommendations would be made. He suggested that further information could be provided to Members at a future Planning Day.

A Member asked whether there were any job losses in the recently completed programme of VfM reviews and if so were any compulsory. The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications confirmed that 25 full time jobs were lost with the majority going through natural wastage and a very small number resulting in compulsory redundancy.

**RESOLVED: That**

**[1] the Quarter 1 Financial and Performance Review 2014-15 be noted.**

### **3 QUARTERLY INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN PROGRESS REPORT**

The Head of Finance introduced Tony Cobain and Kevin Lloyd, the Authority's appointed Internal Auditors from Mersey Internal Audit Agency, who were in attendance at the meeting and would be presenting this report to the Committee.

The Auditor advised Members that this report provided an update on progress against the 2014-15 Internal Audit plan attached as Annex 1 to the report. He confirmed that two reviews had been finalised (Stores Review and DCLG Health and Safety Framework) and one review was in progress (Utilisation of Vehicle Fleet).

He explained that the Stores Review focussed on the procedures at Headquarters and Winsford Fire Station and had resulted in two 'High' recommendations being recorded and a split assurance of Significant/Limited. He confirmed that key areas for action had been agreed with management and were detailed within the Auditor's progress report. Members asked how the Service would deal with the key area identified in relation to the temperature controls in stores and would any action taken be monitored. The Auditor advised Members that dates had been agreed for implementation of actions and the Auditors would carry out a follow up review for all recommendations.

The Auditor continued by drawing Members' attention to details of the second review undertaken. This provided an independent review of the gap analysis completed by the Service following an exercise which reviewed the policies and procedures against the DCLG Health and Safety Framework guidance issued in June 2013. The Auditor explained that the independent review was advisory and no assurance was provided but it had concluded that the analysis represented an accurate position. The report also provided some areas for further consideration.

**RESOLVED: That**

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

#### **4 ANNUAL ROAD SAFETY REPORT 2013/14**

The Prevention and Road Safety Manager presented this report to Members which summarised the Service's 2013/14 targeted road safety activities and performance. He drew Members' attention to Appendix 1 to the report which detailed the Service's interventions delivered in conjunction with its partners. These included the Driver Engagement Days, CFOA National Road Safety Week, CFOA TyreSafe Winter Driving Events, Brake Road Safety Week, ACPO Winter Drink Drive Campaign and FireBike events. He referred to the successful delivery against target for the majority of these events and campaigns. He added that the Service's 'flagship' event Drive Survive had now been running for 15 years and the aim was for 20,000 young people to have attended the course by next year.

He summarised by advising Members of the continued success of the commissioned road safety activity that the Service delivered in Cheshire East. This was a four year contract and he provided details of the delivery of a structured road safety intervention to all 130 primary schools in Cheshire East in the second full year of the contract. He explained that the Service was looking to extend this contract with Cheshire East.

A Cheshire East Member congratulated the Prevention and Road Safety Manager and his team on the successful delivery of the commissioned road safety activity in Cheshire East primary schools. Members commented that this good news story raised the profile of the Service and congratulated him on the personal award he recently received from CFOA in relation to his lifetime commitment to road safety, which was thoroughly deserved.

The Prevention and Road Safety Manager concluded by advising Members that the Service had recently entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Police to jointly deliver road safety initiatives which further strengthened the Service's position.

**RESOLVED: That**

**[1] the Annual Road Safety report 2013/14 be received; and**

**[2] the performance reported for the period be noted.**

#### **5 ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT**

The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager introduced this report and explained that the Fire Authority was the duty holder for Health and Safety (H&S) and this annual report provided assurance that the Authority's accountabilities were being discharged.

He drew Members' attention to the Health & Safety annual report which was attached as Annex 1. This report covered a number of aspects of H&S and he highlighted the following areas:

- i) Key areas to note: a continued reduction in the number of incidents of violent behaviour towards staff and fewer minor accidents reported
- ii) Key achievements: British Safety Council (BSC) International Award achieved for the fifth successive year gaining a merit; Training courses provided to staff and also BSC Level 1 courses provided to 18 of the Service's Princes Trust Teams; Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) audited the delivery of the Managing Safely courses provided by the Service and offered the Service the opportunity to become an accredited training centre to enable it to offer courses to partner organisations.
- iii) Accident reporting: HSE calculated accident rates across various industries, making it possible to compare the number of injuries to operational staff, showing the Service was performing better than average in the North West; the Service uses the data from recording of accidents to best assess the need for interventions (e.g. higher number of manual handling accidents resulting in training programme for managers and e-learning training packages)
- iv) Vehicle accidents: slight increase in number of vehicle accidents accounted for by an increase in the number of third party vehicles that collided with Service vehicles whilst stationary, which had increased from 16 to 21 in the current year.
- v) Governance: Service's Health Safety and Welfare Committee which was attended by a dedicated Member Champion, met on a regular basis and monitored the implementation of action plans arising from audits; Peer Review due to commence in October
- vi) Wellbeing: annual program of health and welfare campaigns planned both internally and externally, including cycle awareness following several accidents involving bike riders.

The Health, Safety and Welfare Manager concluded by summarising the targets for the coming year and confirming to Members that the Service had successfully discharged its legal duties for H&S on behalf of the Fire Authority.

Members thanked the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager for a very comprehensive report and congratulated him and his team on achieving the accredited provider status for the delivery of Managing Safely courses. Members queried whether the Service charged other organisations for attendance at these courses. He confirmed that it was intended to charge for the administration costs of the course.

A Member queried why the HSE only reported comparable data for operational staff and what the Service's ranking was within the region. He also asked what the actual cost of H&S was for the Service compared to other fire services. The Health, Safety and Welfare Manager confirmed that the HSE statistics database only made it possible to compare injuries to operational staff up to the rank of Station Manager and Cheshire's average was the best performing in the North West and the second best performing nationally. In relation to the cost of H&S he explained that the cost was spread across the Service and was difficult to quantify.

**RESOLVED: That**

**[1] the annual Health and Safety report for 2013/14 be approved.**

**6 EQUALITY MONITORING REPORT 2013 - 14**

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications introduced this report which provided Members with a summary of the key issues from the Service's Annual Equality Monitoring Report 2013 – 14 which was attached as Appendix 1 to the report. He explained that the Service collated and monitored data from a number of areas both in its employment practices and in ensuring that the prevention, protection and emergency response services provided were accessible to all sections of the community. He advised Members that the Equality Task Group which included Member Champion, Councillor S Wright, met quarterly to scrutinise the information collated to identify any adverse trends and discuss appropriate action to be taken.

He introduced the Equalities and Inclusion Officer who was also in attendance at the meeting who summarised the key areas of interest in relation to the 2013-14 monitoring report. She confirmed that in relation to the top 5% of earners the Service had been achieving its target for females during quarter 3 but fluctuations in cut-off points and leavers meant that this had dropped during quarter 4. She advised that within on-call recruitment, 7.1% of applications were from females and the Service continued to undertake positive action to increase the number of applicants from a diverse range of backgrounds.

The Equalities and Inclusion Officer advised Members that the disclosure of equality information had improved, mainly for support roles. A guide had been published to explain the reasons it was important to disclose this information as there were still a considerable number of cadets and volunteers who had not provided some or all of their equality data.

She summarised by explaining that enforcements and prohibitions issued by the Service were disproportionately issued to BME businesses. She confirmed that the Service was working with local environmental health staff to try and identify ways to work together and also that she had recently contacted the Asian Fire Service Association to seek assistance and advice on alternative ways to engage with those businesses.

Members queried whether the Asian Fire Service Association had been able to offer any assistance in engaging with BME businesses. The Equalities and Inclusion Officer confirmed that they had offered a number of suggestions some of which had been tried previously by the Service and some that would be re-visited.

**RESOLVED: That**

**[1] the Equality Monitoring Report 2013 - 2014 be received.**

**7 INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2014 – 15 (IRMP 11) – PROJECTS PROGRESS**

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications provided Members with a verbal update on progress in respect of the delivery of projects identified in the Service's Integrated Risk Management Plan 2014-15 (IRMP11). He advised that the Emergency Response Programme was now in the activity stage and assurance on progress was regularly monitored and managed by the Service's Land and Stations Group. A high level report was presented to officers at the monthly IRMP Programme Board meetings chaired by the Chief Fire Officer.

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications confirmed that all value for money reviews had now taken place and closedown reports were being completed for the final reviews undertaken.

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications concluded by advising members that an Open Day had taken place for on-call recruitment in Alsager and the new Recruitment Pod had been very successful.

**RESOLVED: That**

- [1] the verbal update on Integrated Risk Management Plan 2014-15 (IRMP11) progress be noted.**

## **8 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed that, as mentioned earlier, performance information for North West Fire Control would be included in the mid year report.

He referred to a Member request for further information regarding the sprinkler campaign in relation to new developments and he confirmed that this would be scheduled for discussion at a future Members Planning Day.

Members queried whether the programme of agenda items for the December meeting was manageable, with 10 items identified and Members agreed it would be sensible to re-schedule some agenda items to the February 2015 meeting to provide a more balanced programme. The Chair asked Members to advise her of items they felt could be deferred to the February meeting so that she could advise officers.