



MINUTES OF THE PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE held on 5 February 2014 at Lecture Theatre, Fire Service HQ, at 10:00am.

PRESENT: Councillors D Flude, P Harris, A Tate (Chair), J Weatherill, N Wright and S Wright. Independent Member: Mr W Ravenscroft

PART 1 – MATTERS CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor M Simon.

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 4 December 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

Item 3: Community Fire Protection Prosecutions Update

The Chair requested an update on the Service's approach to the new legislation which enabled office blocks to be converted to residential accommodation without the requirement for planning permission. This had been raised at the last meeting of the Committee.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the Service continued to engage with Planning and Building Control to work with owners and offer advice on fire safety requirements in relation to multiple occupancy residential accommodation and would review the new legislation in regard to change of usage of properties.

Item 4: Interim Bonfire Report

The Chair referred to the last meeting where a Member queried whether the Service provided those running organised bonfire events with any safety

instructions in relation to the lighting of bonfires and asked whether further consideration had been given to this request.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed the Service would actively engage with privately organised bonfires to provide fire safety advice and asked Members to advise officers of any particular events they were aware of that would benefit from fire safety advice.

D MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That

the minutes of the Meeting of the Policy Committee held on Wednesday 29 January 2014 be received, for information.

ITEMS REQUIRING DISCUSSION

2 2013 BONFIRE REPORT

The Arson Reduction Manager introduced this report which set out the preventative and operational activities undertaken by the Service and its partners during the bonfire period dated 17th October 2013 to 7th November 2013. He advised Members that the report analysed and evaluated the effectiveness of the joint efforts of the Service and its partners so that resources could be deployed more effectively in future years. He explained that there had been a significant reduction in the total number of small deliberate fires during the bonfire period compared to the same period last year.

He drew Members attention to the following points within the Bonfire Period Report 2013 which was attached as an Appendix:

- Details of the planned interventions and strategies based on local needs and historical data which included a more targeted approach in some specific areas addressed by local groups, including an additional group in Ellesmere Port this year.
- Halton Primary Schools, mainly in Runcorn, had received additional education in all forms of fire safety and there were only six deliberate fires during the bonfire period this year. This was an 80% reduction on previous years.
- Engagement with secondary schools had been challenging and was identified as an area for improvement
- Control handled a total of 808 calls for Cheshire over the bonfire period which included 103 small deliberate fires, a 46% decrease compared to the same period last year. However 32% occurred on 5th November compared to a 22% average over the 5 years.
- An increase from 2,570 last year to 6,766 unique visitors to the Service's website bonfire page which provided additional safety advice and provided a list of local organised events for the public to attend.

Members highlighted the small number of deliberate fires in Cheshire East and queried whether any lessons could be learnt by the other unitary areas, where numbers were higher. The Arson Reduction Manager confirmed that there had

not been a huge number of deliberate fires historically in this area over this period and that also there were a large number of organised displays which could have had some impact. A Cheshire East Member added that the Bonfire Removal Service provided by Streetscene staff in the Cheshire East area was excellent and assisted in the removal of additional collection of waste and provided a clearance service for this period. She continued by informing the Service that they should be aware that the Streetscene Service would be a commissioned service in the future. The Fire Service should consider engaging with the new service provider to ensure the continued success of this initiative. A Warrington Member referred to the provision of skips for the disposal of refuse and advised the Service that they should make the unitary council aware of the success of this initiative.

Members commented that the Service needed to consider the impact on its partnerships with the change to commissioning of services by the constituent authorities. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the Service would need to consider this further and suggested a report could be brought back to this Committee. Members confirmed that this would be useful.

The Arson Reduction Manager concluded that the Bonfire Period Report 2013 included a number of recommendations for 2014 for Members consideration. He highlighted that the delivery of a targeted and timely education plan in all unitary areas would continue and engagement with secondary schools would be monitored closely to improve the level of engagement in this area.

Members queried why the Service found it difficult to engage with secondary schools. The Arson Reduction Manager advised that the schools seemed reluctant to participate due to the impact on the curriculum.

Members discussed whether they could offer any assistance with accessing the secondary schools to provide fire safety education to pupils through their unitary areas. It was suggested that details of the fire safety education offered could be included within the relevant Director's Report for each constituent authority which was distributed to all schools across Cheshire. Members agreed that this issue should be taken up at their local Unitary Performance Group meetings. Fire Authority Members could raise this issue with fellow councillors who may sit on governing bodies in secondary schools and may be able to offer an introduction to the Service. Members suggested that it may be worthwhile for the Service to provide an information sheet for Councillors, to use when discussing the fire safety educational plans available. The Arson Reduction Manager confirmed that this could be provided.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the 2013 Bonfire Report report be noted; and**
- [2] the recommendations detailed in the Bonfire Period Report 2013, attached as an appendix to the report, be supported.**

3 ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT

The Health and Safety Wellbeing Manager advised Members that the Fire Authority was the duty holder for Health and Safety (H & S) and this report provided Members with assurance that their accountabilities were being discharged by providing this Committee with an annual report reviewing H & S performance. He advised that the publication of this annual report met one of the components identified in the Key Assessment Areas for H & S in the Operational Assessment and Fire Peer Challenge Toolkit, that of sharing H & S performance information with stakeholders.

He explained that the Service's H & S team had undergone some internal changes which had seen the team integrate into the Service's Operational Planning and Assurance Department. This had enabled closer working with the development of operational policies, management of operational risks and development of appropriate operational training in relation to H & S.

The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager highlighted the key items to be noted which included; reduction in the number of incidents of violent behaviour towards staff; fewer minor accidents and none which would be classed as major under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR); achievement of a British Safety Council International Safety Award for the fourth year; and launch of a new firefighter fitness testing programme.

The Health and Safety Wellbeing Manager drew Members attention to the following points detailed within the H & S Annual report 2012/13 which was attached as an appendix:

- Key achievements included; revised fitness policy with the installation of treadmills on all stations; increased number of training courses provided to the Service's Princes Trust Teams; and continued success of random drug and alcohol testing
- Performance included; comparison injury rates to operational firefighters showed the Service had fewer than the national average; reduction in the number of incidents of violent behaviour towards staff; and a continued reduction in the number of vehicle accidents from 74 to 58.
- Targets included; continued health awareness campaigns; development of an e-learning package to combine the annual Display Screen Equipment risk assessment with awareness training; and the launch of a new simplified electronic accident reporting system.

The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager concluded by advising that the Service's Health Safety and Welfare Committee met quarterly to consult with representative bodies and staff on matters concerning H & S. He confirmed that Councillor Rudd, appointed as Member Champion in 2013, was a member of this Committee and attended the meetings of which the minutes were published on the Service's Intranet for access by employees.

A Member queried whether the firefighters had cameras on their helmets and also whether there had been any resultant prosecutions from the reported attacks. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager advised that cameras

were fitted on the fire appliances rather than firefighters helmets and confirmed that any reported physical attacks on firefighters were reported to the Police but that no prosecutions had resulted.

A Member referred to the reported incidents of verbal abuse directed at Community Safety advocates and enquired whether consideration was given when visiting vulnerable adults i.e. suffering from dementia. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the Service had a specific dementia advocate who carried out these visits and also provided training to other advocates.

Members asked how much the drug and alcohol testing cost the Service and how this service was procured. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager advised that the cost was approximately £4k per annum. The contract had followed the Service's procurement process and the current supplier was reviewed annually.

Members referred to the e-learning package being introduced for Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessments and asked whether there were any risks if this assessment was not being carried out manually with Managers. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager confirmed that, if any issues were flagged when the electronic assessment was completed, a management process was in place to identify and implement any adjustments.

Members queried the performance data provided within the annual report. This included the analysis of the cause of injury accidents which referred to the number of employees hit by moving objects or by something stationary and asked whether the cause was due to reduced visibility from smoke. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager confirmed that the incidents were not normally due to smoke visibility and there was no pattern which had emerged from the recorded accidents.

Members thanked the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager for a very well presented comprehensive report and confirmed that health and safety was very important to the Service. They congratulated the Service on the British Safety Council International Safety Award which had been achieved.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Annual Health and Safety report for 2012/13 be noted.

4 INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2013-14 (IRMP10) – PROJECTS PROGRESS

The Corporate Programme Manager provided Members with a verbal update on the progress of the projects identified in the Service's Integrated Risk Management Plan 2013-14 (IRMP10). She described the cultural change the Service had undertaken to improve the project process and supporting documentation.

The Corporate Programme Manager summarised the IRMP10 projects currently in progress which included the Emergency Response Programme (ERP). She

confirmed the build programme was broadly on schedule with the Alsager build currently slightly ahead of schedule and commented that the response from the public consultation had been positive for the Penketh build. She explained that the consultation for Lymm was scheduled for early March and that a report on the proposed Lymm Safety Centre would be presented to the Fire Authority at its meeting in February.

The Corporate Programme Manager concluded by referring to the value for money review programme which was near to completion and had taken place across all the Service's departments. She confirmed a summary report would be presented to this Committee upon completion of all reviews later in the year. She informed Members that all completed value for money reviews had submitted close down reports which confirmed the implementation of actions from each review and illustrated the financial impacts of each review. She explained that lessons learnt from the completed reviews had been recorded on the Service's Planning System for future reference.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the verbal update on Integrated Risk Management Plan 2013-14 (IRMP10) progress be noted.

5 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Service's Solicitor confirmed that an agenda item 'New Commissioned Models for Local Authorities- Impact on the Service' had been identified to be added to the Forward Work Programme.

He referred Members to the existing Forward Work programme which detailed previous agenda items identified by the Committee and advised that 'Income Generation' had been deferred due to existing lack of resources to move forward with this project at the present time.

A Member queried the reasons for the Income Generation project being deferred as he felt that with the continued challenge to the Service to cut costs, income generation could assist in this challenge if opportunities for income were identified. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer informed Members that the Service had reviewed the priority of the existing projects and the resources available to deliver these projects but explained that if Members wished to increase the priority of the income generation project then the Authority may need to invest in additional resource. He continued by confirming that some initial research had been carried out by the Service and that a separate entity or business would have to be created as the existing Service's public funded resources could not be utilised for this type of work. He confirmed that the only example that had been identified in the research of successful income generation had been by Humberside Fire and Rescue Service. They had successfully tendered for the fire and rescue services of a private company. Members requested more information on how this fire and rescue service had achieved the successful tender for this work as they felt this should be a consideration in the future for this Service. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised Members that a report

could be provided to the Committee at a future meeting detailing the analysis carried out so far and the research undertaken.

In conclusion, Members requested dates be provided for the forward work programme items identified at previous meetings of the Committee and the Deputy Chief Fire officer confirmed these would be provided at the next meeting.