



MINUTES OF THE PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE held on 19 August 2015 at Lecture Theatre, Fire Service HQ, at 10:00am.

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Tony Cobain and Mike Nulty, representatives from Mersey Internal Audit Agency and Mr Ken Clemens, CEO, Age UK Cheshire

PART 1 – MATTERS CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A RECORDING OF MEETING

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

B CHAIR AND MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE 2015/16

Members were asked to note the appointment of a Chair, Deputy Chair and membership of the Committee for 2015/2016, as agreed by the Fire Authority at its annual meeting on 17 June 2015 and listed below:

Councillors:

P Harris – Chair
D Bailey
D Mahon
J Mercer – Deputy Chair
L Morgan
M Simon
N Wright

Independent Member:

Mr M McBride

Substitute Members:

Cllr D Marren
Cllr R Polhill

C APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor J Mercer.

D DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of Members' interests.

E 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 18 March 2015 be confirmed as a correct record.

F MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That

the minutes of the Meeting of the Policy Committee held on Wednesday 24 June 2015 be received, for information.

ITEMS REQUIRING DISCUSSION

2 QUARTER 1 – FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2015-16

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications introduced this report which presented organisational (Authority) performance against Service plans, Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) programmes and projects and budget.

The Head of Finance drew Members' attention to the summaries of each department's financial performance detailed within the report. He informed Members that although at this stage in the financial year it was too early to anticipate year end change he wished to highlight two significant issues. The first of these was in the Protection Department where the underspends on staff costs, due to vacant posts, was likely to result in a year end underspend of at least £100k. The second issue related to pay inflation. The inflationary pay increases for the Authority's staff remained in the region of 1%, however the Authority had continued to include an inflation increase in the Medium Term Financial Plan based on 1.5%. The rationale for maintaining the higher level was that the introduction of revised National Insurance rates for 2016-17 would significantly impact the Authority's revenue budget from that year. By gradually increasing the budget each year it is hoped to avoid the need for a significant spike in the 2016-17 budget. However this would lead to an underspend against budget in 2015-16 of around £400k.

The Head of Finance informed Members that there were three treasury management related budgets which were impacted by the current position on capital that could also result in underspends, specifically in relation to Minimum Revenue Provision, high cash levels and low borrowing costs. These budgets would be monitored during the year and it would be recommended to the Fire Authority that, as part of the year end process, any underspends were transferred to the capital reserve to fund the future capital programme.

The Head of Finance concluded by referring Members to the Authority's capital programme detailed in Appendix 2 to the report. He explained that the capital programme was dominated by the impact of the Emergency Response Programme (ERP), i.e. the building of four new fire stations and a safety centre and provided a summary which updated Members on current costs. Finally he drew Members' attention to the total amount of debt due to the Authority at the end of Quarter 1.

A Member queried who the main debtors were. The Head of Finance explained that they were mainly partners and other public sector agencies and therefore Finance did not consider that there was any significant risk in recovering these debts.

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications continued by presenting those sections of the report that related to the Service's performance which included a brief summary of the Quarter 1 position on headline IRMP12 projects and programmes. The report also included a summary from each Head of Department which reflected Quarter 1 progress against their 15-16 Service plans and targets (attached as Appendix 3).

He drew Members attention to the position in relation to a number of key projects and programmes. This included an update on the smoke alarm campaign and he confirmed to Members that the legislation to require landlords to fit smoke alarms in all private rented properties would be submitted to Parliament on 14 September 2015.

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications provided a brief overview of the corporate performance scorecard and the supporting commentary and explained that the information reflected the quarter 1 position against targets set at the start of the year for the organisation's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

RESOLVED: That

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

3 QUARTERLY INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN – QUARTER 1 PROGRESS REPORT

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications introduced Tony Cobain and Mike Nulty, 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 the three final reviews reported against in the 2014-15 internal audit plan and progress made against the 2015-16 Internal Audit plan.

He explained that the following audits, relating to the 2014-15 plan, had been finalised since the previous Committee meeting; IT Network Infrastructure, Pension Payments and Statement of Assurance. The Auditor provided details of the audits including the recommendations identified and the assurance level awarded. He also provided an update on work in progress on the 2015-16 plan and explained that Terms of Reference had been agreed in respect of the audits on Fire Cadet Groups, Unitary Performance Groups and Prince's Trust. These audits would be reported to the Committee following completion.

A Member suggested that it would be useful to have more information on the scope of the forthcoming audits. The Auditor confirmed that the objectives agreed for each audit could be included in future reports. It was also noted that the audit on Unitary Performance Groups would be of particular interest to Members.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the Quarterly Internal Audit Plan Progress Report (Q1) be noted; and**
- [2] additional narrative to be added to future quarterly reports regarding the objectives of each audit.**

4 AGE UK PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE

The Chair welcomed Mr Ken Clemens, CEO, Age UK Cheshire to the meeting and Mr Clemens introduced his report to Members which provided an update on the local performance in relation to Age UK Cheshire's partnership with the Service. He informed Members that the report provided an overview of the Springboard partnership and included data covering January to May 2015.

Mr Clemens informed Members that the majority of issues continued to be focussed around entitlements and helping people to live independently. There was an increase in the numbers seeking help completing blue badge applications and help to resolve debt issues. He commented that transport was a particularly difficult issue for the team to respond to as there was a lack of integration between transport and wider public services. The report also included some feedback from those who had used the service with over 90% very satisfied with the service in both Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester.

Members thanked Mr Clemens for the report which they found very useful. A Member queried why there was a lower number of home contacts in Cheshire East compared to Cheshire West and Chester. Mr Clemens explained that this was a reflection of the different commissioning systems across Cheshire. It was hoped that the work of the integration panel and future devolution proposals would assist with providing a more consistent approach. He added that the fragmentation of health and social care across Cheshire also made partnership work difficult and resulted in a lot of gaps and duplications in the service provided across the Cheshire area.

A Member queried what happened in the Warrington area as they were not included in the partnership at present. Mr Clemens explained that Warrington was covered by Age UK Mid-Mersey and they were not currently commissioned to provide this level of service. However this was a piece of work that was being developed and he would try to obtain some figures for the Warrington area for future reports.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the Age UK Partnership Performance report be noted.**

5 PERFORMANCE OF NW FIRE CONTROL

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications presented the report which provided information relating to the performance of NW Fire Control which took over the handling of 999 calls and the mobilising of officers, fire

engines and other resources in May 2014. The report included information about performance recording and monitoring to provide reassurance to Members and also sought Members' agreement in respect of future performance monitoring arrangements.

The report provided an overview of the development of performance reporting arrangements and summarised the high level performance measures being monitored. These include:

- Availability- % of time
- Call Handling and Mobilising systems – fault fixing
- Business Continuity – Testing
- Staffing – Establishment vs Actual
- Call Volumes - Totals
- Call Answering - % answered within target time
- Resource Mobilising – % answered within target time
- Call Challenging – Total challenged and mobilisation figures
- Costs/Savings - % of Calls and share of cost

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications explained that this initial report had a fairly broad basis to give Members a rounded picture of how NW Fire Control had been operating as well as providing reassurance about the effectiveness of the overall project. For future reporting to the Performance and Overview Committee it was proposed to include in-year performance monitoring of the elements of NW Fire Control which directly affected the Service's objectives within the Operational Assurance and Policy Department's quarterly report which was included in the Committee's quarterly performance report. There would also be an annual report on NW Fire Control to the Committee at the end of each financial year.

Members discussed the content of the report and a Member queried how often the percentage payment figures were reviewed. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services explained that, although a period of was not specified for a review to take place it was acknowledged that there would be a review if/when call volumes per authority changed significantly.

The Chair suggested that a visit to NW Fire Control would be useful and informative for new Members and asked for this to be added to the Members Induction Programme.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the report be noted; and

[2] the future performance reporting arrangements to Performance and Overview Committee, as detailed in the report, be implemented.

6 EQUALITY MONITORING REPORT 2014-15

The Policy and Inclusion Manager introduced this report which provided Members with a summary of key issues from the Service's revised Annual Equality Monitoring Report 2014-15. Production and analysis of the report provided reassurance that there were no barriers or adverse impacts in how

services were delivered to communities and how the Service employed and worked with staff as well as satisfying statutory requirements under national equality legislation.

He explained that the revised format had been developed in consultation with the Equality Task Group and was designed to make the information more accessible and user friendly. He also highlighted the key areas of interest from the 2014-15 report.

The Chair queried whether the implications of Blue Light Collaboration would impact on future reports. The Policy and Inclusion Manager explained that the team worked quite closely with the Police and he sat as a critical friend on their diversity group. He added that there were some areas where the Police collected more detailed monitoring information which the Service could use to develop its current monitoring arrangements.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the revised Equality Monitoring Report 2014-15 be received.

7 ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY ANNUAL UPDATE

The Environment, Energy and Engineering Officer presented the Environment and Sustainability Annual report to Members which provided a review of the Service's environmental performance for 2014/15. She informed Members that the annual report provided an update on progress made towards the carbon reduction target in the last financial year and highlighted the proposed environmental/energy efficiency projects for 2015/16.

She highlighted the key environmental milestones that had been achieved in 2014/15 which included two successful boiler replacement projects and four lighting projects that had resulted in significant carbon savings and a successful application to the Office for Low Emission Vehicles for 75% grant funding for electric vehicle leases and charging infrastructure.

The Environment, Energy and Engineering Officer concluded that in summary the Authority continued to make progress towards its carbon reduction target but would continue to monitor performance closely and factor in developments such as the new station builds and the environmental impact of major incidents.

The Chair commented that consideration should be given to reviewing the targets in the current plan to ensure they remained realistic. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer commented that the Environment Member Champion and officers met 6 monthly to review progress on the Environment and Sustainability Strategy and would review the targets as part of this process.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the content of the annual Environment and Sustainability report be noted and accepted as evidence that the Authority was managing its corporate responsibility to the environment.

8 SHARED SITES UPDATE

The Property Manager provided Members with a verbal update in respect of the sites shared with other blue light services. He explained that the Service currently had 25 stations in its property portfolio which were all owned freehold.

The following information on Fire stations where other organisations were sited was presented:

- Ambulance Service - Birchwood, Nantwich and Poynton
- Police – Poynton
- RSPCA – Wilmslow

Rental income data for these sites was also provided.

The Property Manager informed Members that the Service also received an income for mobile phone masts situated at a number of stations as well as HQ Members were asked to note that mast income had reduced over the last few years as a number of mobile phone companies have merged.

He explained that, as part of the Blue Light Collaboration Programme, a strategic review of sites had been commissioned to identify further opportunities to share sites and reduce costs.

The Chair suggested that a further report on Blue Light Collaboration would be useful. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer explained that there would be an update provided for all Members at the September Planning Day. This would be followed by a report to the Fire Authority meeting on 23 September with the intention of submitting final proposals to the December Authority meeting.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the verbal update on shared sites be noted.

9 INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2015-16 (IRMP12) – 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 (IRMP12). He advised that all key projects had delivery plans in place and that progress was regularly reported to officers at the monthly IRMP Programme Board meetings.

He drew Members attention to the following projects:

Installation of Sprinklers in High Rise Buildings – This had proved to be more time-consuming and complicated than initially thought due to difficulties securing the agreement of Housing Associations and tenants to the proposals. One of the lessons learned highlighted from this was the need for early engagement with resident groups when embarking on such projects.

Organisational Review - The timescales for this review had been impacted by the Blue Light Collaboration discussions. Therefore the programme was concentrating on the revenue budget reviews initially and timescales for the remainder of the review would be confirmed once the direction of the Blue Light Collaboration programme had been agreed.

A Member queried where difficulties had been encountered with housing associations and whether Members could assist with any issues within their unitary area. The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications explained that there had been issues engaging with Wulvern Housing in Cheshire East and Member support would be welcomed.

RESOLVED: That

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

10 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The forward work programme for 2014-15 had been submitted to Members and they were asked to agree any additional items that they wished to include for future meetings.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed that an annual report on North West Fire Control would be added to the 2015-16 work programme as agreed at agenda item 5 – Performance of NW Fire Control.

No further items were identified.