



MINUTES OF THE PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE held on 25 September 2013 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 W Ravenscroft

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Mr Ken Clemens, CEO, Age UK Cheshire

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 3 July 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

D MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE

Members noted the meeting of the Policy Committee scheduled for Wednesday 11 September 2013 was cancelled.

ITEMS REQUIRING DISCUSSION

2 QUARTER 1 FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2013-14

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications introduced this report which provided Members with an account of organisational performance against the 2013-14 Service plans as at the end of Quarter 1 of the current financial year.

The Head of Finance advised Members that the Service had a slight underspend at the end of Quarter 1 but that it was too early to revise the likely outturn budget and more detail would be provided at the mid year point. He explained that the underspend was in part due to a lower than budgeted level of

activity and temporary staffing arrangements in Operational Service Delivery, and continuing vacancies in Community Fire Protection.

The Head of Finance drew Members attention to Appendix 1 of the report which detailed the Service's capital programme and included all active capital schemes, showing any slippage on schemes which had started prior to 2013-14. He highlighted a number of the schemes and provided further detail on progress to date.

He explained that the capital and revenue implications of the Emergency Response Review (ERR) would be reported separately as the programme developed, and that Members would be regularly updated. He advised Members that at this stage an indicative figure of £3m capital spend had been allocated to each of the new fire stations and more detail would be reported on the individual stations spend as the projects moved forward. In addition, £30k had been allocated from recruitment costs for the development of a vehicle as a mobile recruitment resource for securing on-call firefighters.

The Head of Finance referred Members to the recommendation to repay £1,120k of PWLB loans that had been approved by Policy Committee at its meeting on the 20th June 2013. He confirmed that the repayment had now taken place and the Authority's long term debt was now £2,218k.

Members queried the amount of revenue saved by the Service, as a result of the early repayment. The Head of Finance confirmed that the Authority would save an estimated £111k over the life of the loans which had been repaid.

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications continued by presenting those parts of the report relating to Service's performance including the Quarter 1 position against targets set at the start of the year for the Service's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These were detailed in the accompanying Corporate Performance Scorecard attached as Appendix 2 of the report.

He summarised the headline performance explaining the number of primary fires during 2012-13 had been the lowest level ever recorded in Cheshire and the ongoing target aimed to continually reduce those numbers year on year. He continued that during Quarter 1 there had been a lower number of accidental dwelling fires than for the same period last year. Deliberate secondary fires had also been at an all time low last year but with the drier, warmer weather conditions in Quarter 1 this year the Service had seen an increase of 56% compared to the same period last year. He explained that the weather continued to be a strong contributory factor in relation to deliberate secondary fires and the Service's aim was to focus on their long term reduction, with localised initiatives targeting persistent hotspots.

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications concluded that one concern for Quarter 1 related to the resources indicators that measured the number of days lost due to injury. This related to two individuals with lost days due to work related injuries. He advised that overall the staff sickness results compared favourably with other organisations.

Members discussed the reported fire related injuries that had resulted from deliberate fires and involved wheelie bins and asked whether consideration had been given to the bins being made from more fire retardant materials.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer explained that gravity locks appeared to provide a better prevention measure compared to the combustion modified bins due to the flammability of the contents.

Members discussed the storage of wheelie bins and considered whether, as Members, they could add some influence to the planning process to ensure better storage was considered for wheelie bins within new planning applications. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed that any support Members could provide within their own constituent authorities would be welcomed.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the issues presented in the Quarter 1 Financial and Performance Review 2013-14 be noted**

3 QUARTERLY INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications introduced this report which provided Members with a status report on progress to date against the 2013-14 Internal Audit plan which had been prepared by the Authority's internal auditors, RSM Tenon, and was attached as an annex to the report.

He confirmed that one audit had been finalised for this period, the Risk Management Framework Audit, which had resulted in a positive 'green' opinion with no 'high' priority recommendations. A total of five recommendations had been made, one of which was prioritised as 'medium'. He explained that further audits were planned for 2013-14 which were detailed within the annex to the report.

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications advised Members that a joint procurement for the internal audit service would be taking place in conjunction with the Police, for the next financial year.

RESOLVED: That

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

4 AGE UK CHESHIRE PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE

Mr Ken Clemens, CEO, Age UK Cheshire was in attendance at the meeting and presented this report to Members which addressed the current and future challenges facing the Service's partnership with Age UK Cheshire and the communities it serves. He added that this report covered activity in Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester. He mentioned that Warrington had a similar scheme operated by Warrington Access Social Care and Sure Start for Later Life operated a scheme in Halton.

Mr Clemens advised Members that the work undertaken by Age UK Cheshire in partnership with the Service was generally innovative and had developed a more integrated system of local support with its joint preventative work by using data resources and targeted interventions to help older people remain safe and maintain and improve their sense of well-being. The partnership and strong brands of both Age UK and the Service gains the trust of the older community to enable engagement and visits to take place so that help and advice on a range of health and social care issues can be given.

Members welcomed the report and asked how Age UK Cheshire managed the referrals provided to them by the Service and queried the length of time taken for a home visit to take place, following a referral being received, as this was a growing demand. Mr Clemens confirmed that all referrals were responded to within three days even though resources were limited. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer added that the Service was seeking some assurance of the value of the contact assessments carried out by the Service during a Home Safety Assessment which was followed up by Age UK Cheshire carrying out a more comprehensive assessment.

Members asked whether more specific data for the success rate for the Service's referrals could be provided in relation to the reported 1054 calls received by Age UK Cheshire. Members also queried how easy it was for a member of the public to contact Age UK Cheshire. Mr Clemens responded that they had experienced problems with answering phone calls and they were currently looking at ways to improve this with the limited resources available.

RESOLVED: That

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

5 TWELVE MONTH REVIEW OF THE UNWANTED FIRE SIGNALS POLICY

The Head of Community Fire Protection introduced this report which summarised the first twelve months' performance of the revised Unwanted Fire Signals Policy following its introduction on the 2nd July 2012. He brought Members attention to the 15% reduction in automatic fire alarms (AFA) attended with a resultant 463 fewer appliance movements. He advised that 98.7 % of AFA's were unwanted fire signals (UwFS) and those accounted for 31.4% of all of the Service's calls during 2013.

The Head of Community Fire Protection reminded Members of the revisions made to the UwFS Policy aimed at reducing the number of false alarms generated and unnecessary emergency responses.

The Head of Community Fire Protection highlighted that 58% of the UwFS attended were at sleeping risk premises which were excluded from call challenge in the revised UwFS Policy due to the high level of risk, and explained that was a limiting factor in achieving maximum UwFS reductions.

He drew Members attention to the pre-determined attendance which had been reduced to one fire appliance for AFAs with the exception of AFAs at high rise

buildings which was three appliances. The overall impact of the introduction of this change had meant at least 463 less appliance movements under 'blue light' condition on the roads during the twelve month period.

The Head of Community Fire Protection explained how other fire and rescue services had approached the reduction of UwFS, with some operating a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week non-attendance unless a fire was confirmed at the premises (with certain exemptions) and other services operating a similar policy between certain times with exclusions for sleeping and other high risk premises.

The Head of Community Fire Protection asked Members to consider the four proposals contained within paragraphs 35–48 of the report. He summarised the proposals which included: streamlining a process; amending letters issued; continuation of pre-determined attendance and non-attendance to commercial buildings during the hours of 0900 to 1700.

Members queried the proposal for non-attendance to AFAs during certain hours asking whether the Service was relying on a phone call to report a fire. The Head of Community Fire Protection confirmed that the majority of commercial premises would be occupied during the hours 0900-1700 and so an emergency call could be made if a fire was identified. A Member asked if this non-attendance would be at weekends and he confirmed the proposal was for 7 days a week and that the risk would be lower at weekends as the majority of commercial premises would be unoccupied.

A Member questioned the pre-determined attendance of one appliance to a hospital as to whether this was sufficient due to the number of sick and disabled people on site. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer responded that hospitals were responsible for evacuation and had robust emergency procedures in place. He also confirmed that if a fire was identified then the level of response by the Service would be far greater, and that the attendance of one appliance was to an AFA and not to the report of a fire.

A Member queried whether the Service had considered charging repeat offenders for attendance at automatic fire alarms. The Head of Community Fire Protection advised that this was not currently practiced in the UK and that the Service would only be able to charge to cover any costs incurred and this would not provide an income stream. A Member suggested this could be considered further by the Service's Income and Charging Working Group.

Members confirmed that the proposals detailed within the report required further debate at a Fire Authority meeting.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the twelve month review of the performance of the Unwanted Fire Signals Policy be noted; and**
- [2] the proposals contained within the report be submitted to the Fire Authority for approval.**

6 REVIEW OF OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE AND PEER TEAM – PROGRESS REPORT

The Policy and Research Manager provided Members with some background to this report. He reminded Members that the Authority had been subject to a Peer Review in July 2012 with the findings reported to the Fire Authority meeting in February 2013 together with an action plan. This report provided an update on the progress against the action plan.

In summary, the Policy and Research Manager confirmed that the Service had made considerable progress against the areas identified by the Review Team and the action plan, attached as Appendix 2 to the report, provided an in-depth analysis of the work undertaken.

Members queried one of the challenges covered in the report, that referring to communications with staff in relation to the North West Fire Control project. The Policy and Research Manager confirmed that this challenge had been addressed and a communications plan had been put in place. The Chief Fire Officer had held regular briefings with the Control staff and Human Resources staff had spent a good deal of time ensuring that staff were kept properly informed.

In conclusion, the Policy and Research Manager suggested that a closedown report for this action plan be brought back to Members upon completion of the outstanding actions. Members confirmed that the closedown report should be submitted to the Fire Authority for approval.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the progress outlined in the Review of Operational Assurance and Peer Team – Progress Report be noted; and**
- [2] upon completion of the outstanding actions contained in the action plan (attached as appendix 2 to the report) a closedown report be submitted to a Fire Authority meeting for approval.**

7 EQUALITY MONITORING REPORT 2012-13

The Policy and Research Manager introduced this report to Members which provided an update and commentary on the Equality Monitoring Report 2012-13. This document had been provided electronically on the Service's website. He explained the importance of collecting equality information to help the Service build a picture of its employees and the community it served.

He advised that the information was collated on a quarterly basis and was reviewed by the Equality Task Group who addressed any issues which arose. Performance & Overview Committee Member, Councillor Steve Wright had recently taken over the role of Equality Champion from Councillor Stef Nelson, and would participate in the Equality Task Group meetings.

The Policy and Research Manager concluded by confirming that work was currently underway on the Service's Equality Strategy and Action Plan and the

development of the new strategy would be discussed at the Equality Task Group.

Members asked for more information with regard to the number of disabled employed by the Service and the Policy Research Manager confirmed this information was available and would be provided to Members.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Equality Monitoring Report 2012-13 be noted.

8 ANNUAL ROAD SAFETY REPORT 2012-13

The Community and Road Safety Manager presented this report to Members which provided a summary of the Service's targeted road safety activities delivered in Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington in partnership with the four local authority highways departments and the Cheshire Constabulary.

The Community and Road Safety Manager brought Members' attention to Appendix 1 of the report which detailed the road safety activities delivered by the Service and its partners. He summarised a number of the successes detailed within the report which included:

- Participation in the CFOA National Road Safety Day, delivering 14 events throughout Cheshire;
- Winter Driving Events held to enhance the road safety message of 'being prepared for winter';
- Promotion and support for the Brake Road Safety Week with 42 Watches taking part in 43 events together with Community Safety staff and volunteers;
- Delivery of 28 Drive Survive courses targeted at young people as future drivers, passengers and road users; and
- Use of the Service's FireBike to engage with motorcyclists to enhance rider training aimed at reducing the number of motorcycle road collisions.

The Community Road Safety Manager also advised Members that the THINK car, which had been donated to the Service by the victim's family, following its involvement in a fatal accident, continued to be used in the Drink Drive campaigns and proved to be very powerful tool for engaging people and delivering the road safety message. He advised Members that the Department of Transport were utilising the THINK car for a national campaign.

He continued by informing Members of the successful delivery of the commissioned road safety activity within Cheshire East which involved a structured delivery of road safety intervention to KS2 and KS4 children within the Cheshire East area. He explained that this was the first year of a four year project and that a 98% delivery rate had been achieved. He added that evaluation of this activity would continue to be completed over the period of the project and feedback from teachers and pupils had been collated and was very

positive. The evaluation report and feedback was provided within Appendix 2 to the report

Members from Cheshire East congratulated the Community Road Safety Manager and his team for the very positive feedback in respect of the delivery of the road safety intervention to their schools.

Members from Cheshire West and Chester commented that they should consider the success of the commissioned road safety intervention for schools taking place in Cheshire East.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer commented that the Service was very proud of its partnership and collaboration with Cheshire East in the delivery of the commissioned road safety intervention and thanked Cheshire East Members for their support for this initiative. He also thanked the Community Road Safety Manager who had been the inspiration behind a number of the road safety initiatives now taking place across Cheshire and also nationally.

Members queried whether the volunteer FireBike riders were all employees of the Service or whether external volunteers were considered. The Community Road Safety Manager confirmed that there was an external volunteer

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Annual Road Safety Report 2012/13 be received; and

[2] the performance to date be noted.

9 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Monitoring Officer advised Members that he had not noted any items identified for the forward work programme throughout the meeting. He asked whether Members wished any further items to be added.

Members suggested that this Committee could consider in more detail the proposal for the Safety Centre. The Monitoring Officer explained that there would be a discussion at the next Members Planning Day scheduled for the 1st November 2013. Members felt they wished to discuss this proposal in more detail prior to any decisions being made. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the Members Planning Day in November was the earliest opportunity for Members to discuss the proposal and explained that the Safety Centre would not progress without Members' approval. .

Please Note:

The matters reported in these minutes were debated in a different order but have been reported as they appear on the agenda for ease of reference.