



MINUTES OF THE PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE held on 26 March 2014 at Lecture Theatre, Fire Service HQ, at 10:00am.

PRESENT: Councillors M Simon, A Tate (Chair), J Weatherill, N Wright and S Wright. Independent Member: Mr W Ravenscroft

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Judith Bickerton and Kimberley Smith, representatives from Baker Tilly and Mr Ken Clemens, CEO, Age UK Cheshire

PART 1 – MATTERS CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors D Flude and P Harris.

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 5 February 2014 be confirmed as a correct record.

D MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE

The meeting scheduled for 19th March 2014 was cancelled.

ITEMS REQUIRING DISCUSSION

2 QUARTER 3 (Q3) FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2013-14

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications introduced this report which provided Members with a Quarter 3 summary of organisational performance against plans and budget.

The Head of Finance drew Members attention to Appendix 1 of the report which showed the projected Financial Outturn position for the Authority's revised revenue budget based on the position as at December 2013. He summarised each department's financial performance which included a number of departments that showed an underspend due to continued staff vacancies.

These included Service Delivery and Community Fire Protection with an underspend in Community Safety being offset by a potential reduction of about £40k in funding for the Princes Trust. He explained the overspend in Property Management reflected the additional security work carried out at the Service's headquarters. He mentioned that the Human Resources and Finance departments were currently subject to Value for Money reviews and posts had been held vacant pending the outcome of those reviews.

The Head of Finance referred to other costs detailed within Appendix 1 which included income the Authority received from Business rates, which had been higher than anticipated. He advised Members that this income would continue to be monitored by working closely with the local authorities.

The Head of Finance confirmed that the overall anticipated underspend was estimated to be £758k and that it would be recommended to the Authority when it formally agreed its accounts in September 2014 that the underspend be transferred to the IRMP reserve.

The Head of Finance concluded by summarising the position in relation to the capital programme which was attached as Appendix 2 to the report. He confirmed that most schemes detailed were complete or due for completion shortly with the exception of the works on Chester Fire Station which were on hold in light of the ongoing Emergency Response Programme (ERP). He confirmed that the ERP showed an underspend for this financial year whilst the identification and purchase of land took place and planning permission was sought. He advised that this underspend would be transferred to the next financial year when it was anticipated that spend would accelerate significantly.

Members commented that the additional income from Business rates was positive but queried whether the Service had been conservative with its estimates for this type of income. The Head of Finance confirmed that this was an area which had proved difficult to estimate and that consideration was given to the difficulties that local authorities occasionally encountered in relation to the collection of these rates. Members also noted that the reduction in the amount of outstanding debt detailed in the report was very positive.

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications continued by presenting those parts of the report that related to the Service's performance which included the Quarter 3 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 4 to the report.

He summarised the headline performance explaining that, although a small number of the KPIs were reported as failing against target by at least 10%, a number of these areas were still performing better than at the same time last year. He referred to the two recorded fire fatalities at the Quarter 3 position and advised Members that each fatal incident was subject to a comprehensive post incident process to identify any lessons that could have been learnt. He drew Members attention to a number of areas where performance was on target. These included the delivery of Home Safety Assessments, the 10 minute

response standard (recorded at 90% against a target of 80%) and the indicators in relation to sickness.

He concluded by referring to the performance of website visitors which was reported as being below target. He explained that this was due to a number of factors including the increased use of social media and he confirmed that a target on performance for this area may also be considered.

A Member commented that the target for website visitors had shown an improvement compared to the previous year and queried whether this year's target had been set too high. The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications responded that the Service continued to set challenging targets and considered the last 3 years performance when setting them.

A Member thanked the Service for the effort that had been carried out in their ward following a recent fire fatality. Members asked whether the review that took place following recent fire fatalities had highlighted any lessons learnt. The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications confirmed that investigations were currently ongoing. However the Service continued to raise awareness around kitchen safety and he reminded Members of the Service's new kitchen safety vehicle that would be used in key campaigns over the next year.

The Chief Fire Officer added that the Service's target setting was discussed and agreed at departmental level and these challenging targets had been set individually by each department rather than imposed by senior officers. He informed Members that the Service had recently been successful in being awarded the Local Government Chronicle Business Transformation Award which reflected the performance of the Service and was a significant achievement for the Fire Authority.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Quarter 3 Financial and Performance Review 2013-14 be noted

3 QUARTERLY INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications introduced Judith Bickerton, who was in attendance at the meeting as the representative from Baker Tilly, the Authority's appointed internal auditors. He advised Members that the report provided progress against the 2013-14 Internal Audit plan which was attached as an appendix to the report.

The Internal Auditor advised Members that since the last meeting of this Committee, four reports had been finalised in the areas of Community Safety, Governance, Project Management and National Fraud Initiative. She confirmed that all assurance work completed during 2013/14 to date had resulted in a positive 'Green' opinion. The recent reports had resulted in no 'high' priority recommendations and a medium recommendation in each of the Community Safety and Project Management areas. She confirmed that all recommendations made had been accepted by management.

The Internal Auditor advised that during a recent follow-up audit carried out by Baker Tilly, progress had been assessed against a total of 25 outstanding recommendations. She concluded that 21 recommendations had been fully implemented or superseded with the remaining 4 reported as Annex 2 attached to this report.

A Member queried the reasons for the reforecast dates that had been reported in respect of the 4 outstanding recommendations detailed within Annex 2. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the recommendations referred mainly to the Transport and Workshops department and had been included in the larger review that was currently underway following the appointment of a new Fleet Manager.

RESOLVED: That

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

4 AGE UK PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE

Mr Ken Clemens, CEO, Age UK Cheshire was in attendance at the meeting and introduced this report to Members which provided an update on the local performance in relation to Age UK Cheshire's partnership with the Service.

He confirmed that the use of data was very important to Age UK Cheshire to assist in continuing to maintain robust relationships with its partners. He advised this report provided evidence of the good news story of its partnership with the Service. He concluded that the challenge for the partnership was how it developed further to meet the growing demands of an ageing population in future years.

A Member thanked Mr Clemens for the detail provided in the report and commented that the aim of the Service was to keep people safe in their homes, whilst the local authorities aim was to keep older people in their homes longer. She highlighted that only 18% of direct calls received by Age UK Cheshire were about home care needs following a contact assessment being carried out by the Service. She suggested that, due to the safety aspects of older people staying in their homes longer, consideration should be given to the development of its work in partnership with the Service to bring these aspects together. Mr Clemens confirmed he would be interested in considering how Age UK Cheshire could widen its approach to its work with the Service.

The Chief Fire Officer provided Members with a strategic overview of how the Service linked with the health agenda which had been discussed initially with the Sub Regional Leadership Board and Management Board. He confirmed that a Public Sector Transformation Programme Board had been set up and that he was the Chair. This Board considered the Community Safety and Health agenda and he confirmed that resources were currently being allocated to consider the links between health and community safety.

The Chair asked Members if they would like to request any additional information to be included in future reports provided by Age UK Cheshire. Members proposed that some work could be carried out in the Service's

partnership with Age UK Cheshire in relation to HSA checks and contact assessments to raise staff awareness of the aim of local authorities for keeping people in their homes for as long as possible and progress on this work could be included in future reports. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that he would raise this with the Deputy Chief Fire Officer for him to discuss further with Age UK Cheshire.

RESOLVED: That

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

5 WHEELIE BINS FIRES / UPG REPORTS

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications introduced the Business Intelligence Manager who was in attendance at the meeting to present this report.

The Business Intelligence Manager advised Members that this report had been provided following a request at a recent Fire Authority meeting for information on how the Service used data on Wheelie Bins fires to target priority areas for prevention and protection activity. He explained that the report provided a breakdown of the volume of refuse related incidents across the four unitary areas in 2013 (with only 38 small refuse container and wheelie bin incidents occurring in Cheshire East). He referred to the number of callouts to secondary fires which represented a large percentage of operational activity and was the number one incident type in Winsford and Widnes. He concluded by stating that unitary-focussed reports of deliberate fires were currently produced and presented each quarter at Unitary Performance Groups. Based on these statistics he proposed that future reports be provided to Cheshire West and Chester (CWAC), Halton and Warrington with a 12 month unitary level analysis of wheelie bin and recycling container fires.

A Cheshire West and Chester Member noted that his unitary area was not performing well and asked whether these incidents were occurring in certain areas and also whether the incidents were residential or commercial. The Business Intelligence Manager confirmed that incidents in Winsford and Ellesmere Port were higher than other areas and that a high number of incidents in CWAC were wheelie bin fires.

Members queried what action could be taken within their own authorities to reduce these incidents. The Arson Reduction Manager, who was also in attendance at the meeting, advised Members that different prevention initiatives had been tried and some progress on the reduction in numbers had been achieved in CWAC's unitary area. He explained that he would like to carry out further prevention work with local authorities so that they review the cost of wheelie bin fires and report these as crimes to the Police with a view to potential prosecution.

Members questioned whether the fortnightly collection of refuse had any impact on wheelie bin fires and if more frequent collections have any impact. A Member also commented that Cheshire East had communicated a message to

residents advising them not to put their bins out until 7am on the morning of collection of waste. The Arson Reduction Manager confirmed that that these messages would help and added that Halton had been successful in putting bins back after collection which had also assisted.

Members asked what benefits would be realised from the local authorities reporting the wheelie bin incidents to the Police. The Arson Reduction Manager replied that if there was more involvement by the Police he felt it would raise the profile of these incidents. He suggested that he could initially discuss this initiative with Halton to potentially trial and bring back the results to a future meeting of this Committee.

The Chair suggested that this issue should be included on the agenda to be discussed at three relevant Unitary Performance Group meetings.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the 12 month unitary level analysis of Wheelie bin / recycling container fires be presented at the next UPG meetings as part of the deliberate fire analysis for Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington.

6 CORPORATE EQUALITIES AND INCLUSION STRATEGY AND EQUALITIES ACTION PLAN

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications introduced this report which provided Members with an update on progress made in relation to equalities and presented the Service's revised Equalities and Inclusion Strategy and associated Action Plan which were attached as appendices to the report.

He reminded Members that the Service had achieved Excellence in September 2011 against the requirements of the bespoke Equality Framework introduced for the national fire and rescue services. He explained that it was important for the Service to continue to maintain these standards for equality and the Strategy had recently been revised and acted as a basis for all the Services' external accreditation.

The Equality and Inclusion Officer, also in attendance at the meeting, continued by explaining that the Strategy included new census data and equality monitoring data captured internally. This data had been analysed and key priority areas for the Service identified and captured in an Action Plan, attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

She confirmed that work undertaken to complete the Action Plan would be monitored by the Service's Equality Task Group and reports presented to this Committee bi-annually. She summarised a number of the actions detailed within the plan and confirmed that a number of initiatives were taking place to address these issues. One of these initiatives included a planned conference on hidden disabilities to raise awareness.

A Member commented that this was an excellent report and queried whether there was a target in place for the employment of female firefighters and

whether there were any barriers in place deterring females from applying. The Equality Officer confirmed that there was a recruitment target of 10% for female firefighters. She stated that part time contracts were also available as feedback received from females expressed concerns about childcare arrangements when working 12 hour shifts. She continued that these barriers would continued to be addressed in communications in future on-call recruitment campaigns. The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications added that research had shown that the physical nature of the role of a firefighter was perceived as a barrier for females and the new on-call recruitment POD included the ability to try some of the physical tests prior to application.

The Chief Fire Officer explained to Members that previously there had been national targets in place for the recruitment of female firefighters but these had been removed and the responsibility was now managed locally. Therefore, the Service had maintained a target of 10% for new recruitment and he felt there may be more scope in the future on-call recruitment to attract female firefighters to apply.

The Equality Member Champion commented that he felt the Service was focussed on the right areas. He highlighted the importance of the sensitive approach required when dealing with invisible disabilities to ensure that the Service responded to individual's needs without drawing attention to them unnecessarily.

The Equality Officer explained that the planned conference on hidden disabilities was in response to feedback from staff and confirmed that Members would be invited to attend this conference later this year.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Corporate Equalities and Inclusion Strategy and Equalities Action Plan be noted and progress against the Action Plan be monitored.

7 UPDATE ON INCOME AND CHARGING

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services explained that the initial work on income and charging had been concerned with producing the Service's income and charging policy. He confirmed that following input from Members it was possible to draft the main elements of the policy (although some of the detail would need further work with Members). 'Income and Charging' had been elevated to a project and allocated to the Heads of Legal and Democratic Services and Finance. There was a perception that work on income and charging had ceased but this was not the case. Proposals were being developed and debated by officers.

At a previous meeting, Members of this Committee had requested further information on any progress made with proposals for income generation. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed a number of discussions had taken place and ideas proposed which had included making greater use of the Incident Command Training Suite for external training and providing fire cover to industry. He explained that if an opportunity arose the Service would pursue

a proposal and a business case would be prepared initially. However, a separate entity may need to be set up (such as a charity, social enterprise or mutual).

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services explained that high profile IRMP projects such as the new Safety Centre at Lymm and North West Fire Control provided opportunities to consider income generation opportunities. He informed Members that a report would be presented to the Fire Authority once full consideration had been given to the best operating model for the Safety Centre. He concluded that there was potentially also an opportunity for expansion at North West Fire Control by the company taking on responsibility for other authority's calls and this would be explored in the future.

A Member suggested that there may be benefit in having a cafe or shop at the Safety Centre. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed that discussions were already taking place about how the Safety Centre would be developed. Sponsorship was also being considered.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the Service was aligned to monitor other fire and rescue services that had enterprises in place, to monitor whether they were able to achieve a profit, such as Humberside that had been successful in securing a contract to provide fire safety for an industry. He explained that any revenue streams which were being considered would be reported to Members for approval if the business case was sufficiently robust.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the verbal update on income and charging be noted.

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

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

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications summarised progress on the Emergency Response Programme (ERP) in relation to the acquisition of the four new fire stations. The public consultations were taking place for Alsager and Penketh with any feedback from residents and staff being included in the planning applications. He confirmed that the Safety Centre proposal was currently being finalised to move this project forward.

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications summarised the Sprinkler and Smoke Alarm campaigns which had received overwhelming support locally. The Service was taking the lead on the national consultation for these campaigns and would submit them to the Government with the hope that they would be taken forward.

In conclusion, he provided Members with an update on the North West Fire Control project which had been delayed with revised transition dates for each of the services currently being finalised.

Members requested an update on the Primary Authority Scheme. The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications confirmed that the Head of Community Fire Protection had been in discussion with other fire services to consider working in collaboration and he would gain an update for Members in relation to any progress and report back in due course.

RESOLVED: That

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

9 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed that Members had suggested the analysis report relating to Wheelie Bins fires be added to the three Unitary Performance Group meetings agendas.

He queried whether Members required a report following the discussion in relation to the agenda item 4 - 'Age UK Partnership Performance' in relation to 'keeping people in their homes' and how this work could be developed in the partnership work between Age UK and the Service. Members felt a report was not required at this stage but requested the Service liaise with Age UK Cheshire to look into developing this area. It was suggested that an update be brought to the next meeting as part of the agenda item to approve the minutes.

No further items were identified.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer drew Members attention to the agenda item – Asset Management Strategy Update which was currently scheduled for the October meeting of the Committee. He requested that this item be removed as a standing item from the agenda as the Asset Management Strategy was now fully embedded and there were no further major changes to report. Members agreed to the removal of this agenda item.