



MINUTES OF THE PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE held on 10 April 2013 at Lecture Theatre, Fire Service HQ, at 10:00am.

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Shauna Mallinson, representative from RSM Tenon

PART 1 – MATTERS CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors M Simon and J Weatherill.

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 6 February 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

D MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE

The meeting scheduled for 20th March 2013 was cancelled

ITEMS REQUIRING DISCUSSION

2 QUARTER 3 (Q3) FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2012-13

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications introduced this report which provided Members with an account of organisational performance against plan as at the end of quarter 3 of the 2012/13 financial year.

The Head of Finance informed Members of the Authority's financial position, which was provided as an appendix to the report. This included the latest anticipated outturn against the revised budget which showed overall that there would, as previously reported, be a significant underspend. He advised Members that the underspend was in preparation for the delivery of IRMP10, in particular the decision endorsed by the Authority at its meeting on 13th February

to review the shift systems and the change to the crewing of special appliances. He stated that the staff vacancies in preparation for IRMP10, along with lower than anticipated on call costs, was partially responsible for the underspend. The Head of Finance summarised other areas that had resulted in the overall underspend, which included vacant posts in Human Resources and Finance and increased income as a result of interest earned on larger than anticipated cash balances. He brought Members attention to the overspend in the Procurement budget which included the budget for uniforms. He explained that in the past underspends on the budget for uniform had been transferred to reserves to allow the smoothing of costs of the impact of future uniform replacement. He explained that this practice would be continued, even though, when added to the budgetary impact of the decision made recently to increase the amount of kit issued to firefighters, this would lead to an overspend against the Procurement budget.

The Head of Finance explained that the underspend in 2012-13 would be used to enhance the IRMP reserve and reminded Members that the purpose of this reserve was mainly to enable the Service to smoothly deliver the savings from the implementation of IRMP proposals against the Service's predicted retirement profile.

The Head of Finance drew Members attention to appendix 2 of the report which detailed the spend to date against the 2012-13 Capital Programme. He advised that the Macclesfield Day Crewing Plus scheme had not progressed and had been removed from the programme.

Members referred to the underspend and queried whether there was an overly cautious approach to budget setting being taken by the Service. The Head of Finance responded that the uncertainty regarding future budget funding and the need to realise savings to meet the Medium Term Financial Plan, determined the approach to setting budgets. Cuts to fire and rescue service budgets were "back loaded" in the current Government Comprehensive Spending Review, and the Service had prepared itself in the first two years to accommodate this. He confirmed that he would be reviewing the Medium Term Financial Plan as the Service delivered IRMP 10.

The Member Champion for Finance confirmed that he was comfortable with the budget position which he felt was understandable as the bulk of the savings were due to the increased number of staff vacancies in preparation for IRMP10 proposals. He suggested that the impact of increased vacancies upon the service standards and performance needed to be monitored to manage any potentially adverse impacts.

Members asked about the bad debt position which had continued to remain static. The Head of Finance confirmed that the Service's main doubtful debt, which had been outstanding for some time, was in relation to an ongoing insurance issue, which was the subject of continuing legal correspondence.

Members queried whether there was an up to date workforce development plan which allowed for effective succession planning. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed that workforce monitoring and planning took place but that there was no formal plan in place. He suggested that the Head of Human Resources

could provide the Committee with a presentation on the service's workforce and succession planning at a future meeting. It was agreed to add this to the forward work programme.

Members also commented on the increased costs of leased cars and insurance and queried how often this was reviewed. The Head of Finance responded that a review was due to be undertaken. He suggested that a report on the car leasing scheme could be provided to the Committee at a future meeting. A Member confirmed that as part of the budget setting process an assurance had been given that these costs would be reviewed.

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications summarised the Service Performance at the end of Q3 which was detailed in the report and was accompanied by the Corporate Performance Scorecard attached as appendix 3. He highlighted that the number of primary fires projected for the year-end total for 2012-13 would be the lowest level ever seen in Cheshire which was extremely positive. He added that the number of deliberate fires had remained low throughout the year which had been assisted by poor weather conditions which continued to be a factor.

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications highlighted the importance of performance management to allow the identification of shortfalls in performance and enable actions plans to be put in place to address any issues. He drew Members attention to a number of areas where a shortfall had been reported in the previous quarter and how the resultant action plans had proved successful in improving performance to allow the Service to meet year end targets. These included targets for the delivery of Home Safety Assessments, the number of young people completing a youth programme, the delivery of thematic inspections and fire safety audits of non domestic premises.

He brought Members attention to the headline summary provided for each department within the Service. He confirmed that they provided an update on progress of the key IRMP and cross departmental projects.

Members discussed a number of the performance targets reported on the Corporate Performance Scorecard. They queried the percentage of average days lost to sickness as to whether this was effectively presented due to the fact that all staff were included. Staff with high attendance reduced the statistics of the small numbers of staff who had more regular sickness. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised Members that the Service had an Attendance Management process which monitored staff with regular and/or long term sickness to manage them back into the workplace.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the issues presented in the Quarter 3 (Q3) Financial and Performance Review 2012-13 be noted

3 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2012-13 PROGRESS REPORT

The Internal Auditor, Shauna Mallinson, a representative from RSM Tenon who was in attendance at the meeting, introduced this report which provided

Members with a status report on progress against the 2012-13 Internal Audit plan prepared by RSM Tenon.

She provided Members with a summary of progress since the last quarterly update, the Key Financial Controls audit and Follow Up audit that had taken place and both had resulted in a positive assurance. She confirmed that the Key Financial Controls audit had resulted in one new medium priority recommendation which related to the process for signing off month-end reconciliations. The Follow Up Audit had identified two medium priority recommendations from 2011-12 which were yet to be fully implemented but confirmed that work was being carried out on the refresh of the Financial Regulations and Scheme of Delegation. She informed Members that the target dates for completion of the work contained in the recommendations was September 2013.

The Internal Auditor confirmed that all the internal work undertaken by RSM Tenon during 2012/13 had resulted in a positive outcome where an assurance level had been provided and the Service's senior management had agreed all recommendations provided.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Internal Audit Plan 2012-13 Progress Report be noted.

4 ON-CALL CONTRACTS OF EMPLOYMENT

The Head of Service Delivery introduced this report which provided an update on the position of the revised On-Call contracts of employment and the changes made in managing On-Call staff. He advised that the changes included the alignment of two officers to manage the On-Call staff as the recent IRMP10 changes agreed by the Fire Authority would provide a heavier reliance on On-Call staff. This meant that managing On-Call staff availability and ensuring their contracts were consistent was essential. He informed Members that a review had been undertaken of the contracts of employment for On-Call staff and that the new contract aimed to: provide clarity of their responsibilities; ensure compliance with Employment Legislation; apply a consistent approach; improve working practices and provide consistency.

The Head of Service Delivery explained that drafts of the new contracts of employment had been provided to the Unions for consultation and feedback had been received with some minor changes required to the wording. The revised contracts of employment should now be finalised.

The Head of Service Delivery explained that the revised contracts of employment included a declaration of availability which provided the base data for the new staffing system, Gartan. He explained that this new system had been rolled out across the On-Call stations and was planned to be introduced across the wholetime stations. He introduced the Administration Manager, Debbie Quaille who was in attendance at the meeting to provide Members with a demonstration of the system. She gave an overview of the functions within the system and summarised the benefits which included the improvements in recording the availability and skill sets of On-Call staff, compared to the

previous paper based systems. She explained that the system could provide a breach alert to station managers of On-Call stations if there wasn't the availability of On-Call staff to mobilise an appliance. This allowed issues with availability to be managed more effectively. The Head of Service Delivery confirmed that this breach alert would be set up for all On-Call station managers.

Members asked whether there was any flexibility within the revised On-Call contracts of employment with regard to the number of hours of availability required. The Head of Service Delivery responded that a minimum or maximum number of hours could be specified but that some flexibility needed to be applied to ensure that the Service was in a position to recruit the numbers required to meet the increasing requirements of On-Call staff. He added that the new system improved the management of availability of staff and would identify any issues where the revised contracts had not been met.

Members queried whether it was the Service's responsibility to ensure that Working Time Regulations were met. The Head of Service Delivery confirmed that for employed staff who had other jobs it was the Service's responsibility and this could be managed more effectively within the Gartan staffing system as the hours worked in other employment would be added to the system.

Members suggested that it would be useful to have a live demonstration of the Gartan staffing system on the rise of a future meeting to better understand its responsiveness.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the content of the On-Call Contracts of Employment report and demonstration of the new Staffing System (Gartan) be noted.

5 AGE UK CHESHIRE REPORT

The Head of Community Safety presented this report to Members which provided details of the Age UK Cheshire's Supporting You service (Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester) which was aimed at people aged 55+ with low to moderate needs and provided support to enable them to live independently at home. He explained that Cheshire Fire and Rescue (CFRS) delivered a simple contact assessment during a Home Safety Assessment (HSA) which allowed older people to access a range of services, e.g. the provision of information and support. He explained that, following a CFRS home visit to carry out a HSA, referrals to the Supporting You service were followed up by Age UK Cheshire who carried out a comprehensive assessment of their needs.

The Head of Community Safety described the success of the well established partnership with Age UK Cheshire and explained that CFRS provided the highest number of referrals. The partnership had also resulted in the appointment of a jointly funded advocate, currently a dementia advisor across Cheshire West and Chester. He summarised the outcomes/services delivered following a CFRS referred contact assessment and advised that the most significant increase had been in the payment of benefits. He explained that it

would be beneficial to receive more detailed performance management data and evidence from Age UK Cheshire with regard to the outcome of the contact assessments referred by CFRS.

Members queried whether these referrals also took place across the areas of Warrington and Halton. The Head of Community Safety confirmed that there were similar models which worked with separate partners for each area and confirmed that similar outcomes were achieved.

The Chair advised Members of the Committee that Councillor Simon, who had sent her apologies for the meeting, had asked for her comments in respect of the report to be presented to the Committee. She suggested that the Committee request a more detailed report from Age UK Cheshire (twice yearly) which included the following information:

- the number of people CFRS have referred to Age UK Cheshire;
- how Age UK Cheshire make contact with referrals;
- how many of the referrals take up the offer of help from Age UK Cheshire;
- the different ways that Age UK Cheshire have been able to help; and
- how many people have had financial benefit as a direct result of a referral

Members agreed that more data should be provided by Age UK Cheshire to CFRS and agreed with the suggestions made by Councillor Simon. They also suggested the following be included:

- how CFRS referrals are prioritised by Age UK Cheshire; and
- how Age UK Cheshire determine which contact method is appropriate for CFRS referrals.

Members agreed with Councillor Simon's suggestion that twice yearly performance management reports were received by the Committee and that a representative from Age UK Cheshire attend the Performance and Overview Committee meetings to present the report.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the Age UK Cheshire report be noted; and**
- [2] a bi-annual report 'Age UK Cheshire Performance Management' be presented to the Committee by a representative of Age UK Cheshire.**

6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY UPDATE

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications informed Members that a number of update reports had previously been received by this Committee which had highlighted progress made by the Service in relation to equality and diversity. He advised Members that this report provided a six

monthly update on the work that had taken place against the Equalities Action Plan 2011 – 2013 which was attached as an appendix to this report.

He introduced the Equality and Diversity Officer who was in attendance at the meeting. She summarised the key areas of work that had been undertaken since the previous update in particular with regard to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender network (LGBT). These included; the Service's achievement in recently reaching number 45 in the Stonewall's Top 100 Employers 2013; involvement in the planning of the first ever Warrington Pride event and taking part in the parade; and being part of the group planning a series of events in the run-up to Chester's first Pride event in October 2013. She confirmed that work would be progressed on the outstanding action from the Equalities Action Plan, to improve the ability to demonstrate the impact of the Service's prevention and protection work in reducing the risk of fires amongst vulnerable groups.

She provided Members with more details of the 'Managing Banter Conference' being hosted by the Service on the 25th April 2013 which would be aimed at the Service's managers and would explore the impacts of low level banter on employees in minority groups.

Members commended this conference and enquired whether Members could attend. The Equality and Diversity Manager confirmed that she would provide details of the conference to Members who wished to attend.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Equality and Diversity performance update on performance be noted.

7 STAFF SATISFACTION SURVEY UPDATE

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications explained that, as part of the Authority's commitment to excellence, it had been agreed to carry out comprehensive staff satisfaction surveys. He advised that the surveys were carried out every two years to allow time for the organisation to implement and embed its responses to any key issues which needed to be addressed. He explained that the 2011 staff survey was the third to be carried out by the Service and that a number of issues had been highlighted as potentially requiring further improvement. This resulted in an action plan agreed by this Committee in November which included the proposed responses in those areas identified as well as assigning responsibilities and outlining timescales. He summarised the headlines issues from the original action plan and provided an updated commentary.

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications informed Members that the fourth staff satisfaction survey was due and it was proposed that the survey follow the same process used previously and be carried out in June/ July 2013. He proposed that the questions remained consistent to enable trend analysis to be carried out and that the same approach would be adopted in sourcing an external supplier to carry out the work. He advised that the response rate for staff taking part had remained consistent over the past three surveys and the focus would be to increase the rate of response this year. He

added that work time would be allocated to on-call staff to complete the survey as there had been issues with low responses from on-call staff in previous surveys.

Members queried whether previous response rates of around 50% provided an accurate representation of responses and the Head of Planning, Performance and Communications confirmed he was confident that it did.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the progress against the Staff Satisfaction Survey action plan be noted and the proposed approach for the 2013 survey be accepted.**

8 IRMP10 PROGRESS UPDATE

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications provided Members with an update on the progress made with regard to the IRMP10 proposals. He advised Members that the Fire Authority meeting agenda and supporting papers for the meeting scheduled for 17th April 2013 had been printed and despatched. These papers included IRMP10 documents 'Proposals for 2013 – 14 and beyond' and the 'Integrated Risk Management Plan 2013-14 Summary Report'. He explained that the summary report provided a summary of the feedback received on the proposals and an indicative timetable for the implementation of the emergency response review proposals. He advised that one of the agenda items on the Fire Authority agenda was 'Acquisition of Sites and Design and Build of New Fire Stations outlined in IRMP10' which would provide all Members of the Authority with an update on progress made in identifying sites for the new fire stations.

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications advised Members that the IRMP proposals were being internally managed by a number of project boards which all reported to IRMP Programme Board.

Members suggested that it would be useful to have a regular verbal or written update on progress of the IRMP10 proposals at each meeting of the Performance and Overview Committee.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the update on IRMP10 progress be noted; and**
[2] a standing agenda item 'IRMP10 progress' be added to the Performance and Overview Committee work programme

9 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Monitoring Officer advised that it had been suggested as part of the quarterly performance report that further detail be provided on the types of injuries sustained in primary fires. He confirmed it had been agreed that a presentation on the Service's workforce planning would be provided to the Committee at a future meeting.

The Monitoring Officer also confirmed that agenda items 'Car leasing scheme', and 'Age UK Cheshire Performance Management' had been identified earlier in the meeting and would be added to the forward work programme.

He confirmed Members had requested a live demonstration of the benefits of the new staffing system, Gartan, on the rise of a future meeting of the Performance and Overview Committee.