



MINUTES OF THE PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE held on 2 July 2014 at Lecture Theatre, Fire Service HQ, at 10:00am.

PRESENT: Councillors D Flude, P Harris, B Livesley, A Tate (Chair), J Weatherill, N Wright and S Wright. Independent Member: Mr M McBride

PART 1 – MATTERS CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE

Members were asked to note the appointment of a Chair, Deputy Chair and membership of the Committee for 2014/2015, as agreed by the Fire Authority at its annual meeting on 18 June 2014 and listed below:

Councillors:

A Tate – Chair
D Flude
P Harris – Deputy Chair
M Simon
J Weatherill
N Wright
S Wright

Independent Member:

Mr M McBride

Substitute Members:

Cllr B Livesley
Cllr T Sherlock

B APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / SUBSTITUTE(S)

Apologies were received from Councillor M Simon. Councillor B Livesley attending as Councillor M Simon's substitute

C DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of Members' interests.

D 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 26 March 2014 be confirmed as a correct record.

E MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That

the minutes of the Meeting of the Policy Committee held on Wednesday 25 June 2014 be received, for information.

ITEMS REQUIRING DISCUSSION

2 END OF YEAR FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2013-14

The Head of Finance introduced this report which provided Members with the end of year position in respect of organisational performance against Service plans and budget.

The Head of Finance drew Members' attention to Appendix 1 of the report which showed the outturn position for the Authority for 2013-14 and compared this to the revised budget. He advised Members that the Authority's draft accounts had recently been reported to the Closure of Accounts Committee at its meeting held on the 25th June 2014. He summarised the financial performance of each department including Service Delivery and Community Safety which had reported underspends due to continued staff vacancies. Human Resources and Planning, Performance and Communications also reported underspends due to posts being held vacant pending the outcome of the value for money reviews which had now concluded.

The Head of Finance referred Members to other costs which included an underspend on non distributed employee costs resulting from lower than anticipated ill health pension costs and some reductions in mileage costs. He reported that overall, the Authority had an underspend against its revised budget of £809k. He advised that the intention would be to transfer the year end underspend into the IRMP reserve to smooth the impact of savings required for the Emergency Response Programme (ERP) and this would be formally recommended to the Authority at its meeting in September when approval of the final accounts would be sought.

The Head of Finance concluded by summarising the position in relation to the capital programme details of which were attached as Appendix 2 to the report. He confirmed that the majority of schemes detailed had been completed, and whilst the ERP reported an underspend, Members would continue to be informed as progress was made with the purchase of sites and the development of the plans.

In conclusion, the Head of Finance referred to the Authority's debts which stood at £802k at 31st March 2014. He advised that of this amount, £208k had been paid by the end of May 2014, with the majority of the outstanding balance of £594k related to the Prince's Trust, other FRSS or Fire Service College and North West Fire Control all of which were being pursued.

A Member referred to the percentage of invoices that were paid within a month of being raised, reported as 63%. She enquired how long it was taking for the

remaining 27% of invoices to be paid. The Head of Finance responded that he could bring this information to the next meeting of the Committee.

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications continued by presenting those sections of the report that related to the Service's performance which included the end of year position against targets for the Service's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These were detailed in the accompanying Corporate Performance Scorecard attached as Appendix 3 to the report.

He summarised the headline performance confirming that progress had continued to be made in the reduction of fires with all primary fires, accidental fires and deliberate primary fires either achieving or exceeding their targets.

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications highlighted areas where targets had not been met including the average on call availability where the target was 85% but only 70% was achieved, although he confirmed that this was an improvement from 2012-13 and that going forward more accurate recording of this data would be provided with the new staffing system recently implemented. He referred to 47% of malicious calls not attended against a target of 60% and advised that the effectiveness of call challenge would continue to be monitored following the recent move of the control function to North West Fire Control.

He concluded by advising Members that Appendix 4 provided a summary from each department within the Service and reflected the end of year position against departmental plans for 2013-14.

Members referred to the on call availability target and the Service's recruitment of additional on call firefighters to manage the ERP due to its increased importance to the Service. A Member queried how the Service would manage on call availability to ensure it met the performance target set. The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications agreed that this was a critical area and the recruitment process had been reviewed to minimise the risk of availability not being achieved. He confirmed that the new staffing system, Gartan, enabled more effective monitoring and recording of availability.

A Member asked how many people did the reported arson conviction rate of 12% refer to. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised Members that this information could be sought and reported back to the Committee. Members confirmed this information would be useful and requested that the location of arsons was also included.

Members commented on the achievement of the prevention team in meeting key performance targets and wished to record their thanks to the staff and officers involved for the tremendous effort made to deliver against them.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the end of year Financial and Performance Review 2013-14 be noted.

3 QUARTERLY INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT (Q4)

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications introduced this report which provided Quarter 4 progress against the 2013-14 Internal Audit plan and included headline findings of the internal audits undertaken by Baker Tilly since the last meeting of this Committee. He commented that the Appendix to the report had been produced by Baker Tilly, the Authority's previous internal auditors. He explained that Mersey Internal Audit Agency were the Authority's new internal audit provider who were in attendance at the meeting.

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications summarised the main headline findings on the audits that had been carried out in quarter 4. He advised that there were 2 'high' priority recommendations, one in each of the New Staffing System On Call and Management of ICT Assets audits. He confirmed that action plans had been put in place to address all recommendations and would be progressed by management.

A Member referred to one of the high priority recommendations which highlighted that a contract was not currently in place with an IT company. He queried whether once the contract had been put in place this would mitigate the risk. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the contract was currently being progressed and that its completion would remove this risk.

RESOLVED: **That**

[1] the Quarterly Internal Audit Plan Progress Report (Q4) be noted.

4 CHANGES TO PLANNING RULES AND THE CONVERSION OF COMMERCIAL PREMISES TO DOMESTIC USE

Station Manager Kay presented this report following the Committee's request at a previous meeting for further information on the impact of changes to the planning rules which allowed the conversion of commercial premises for use as domestic premises without the need for planning permission. He provided Members with an overview of the changes and the implications for the Service.

He explained that, in August 2013, the Government published a document which allowed domestic development to take place in certain types of commercial premises without the requirement for planning permission. This impacted several types of premises which he advised Members were detailed in the report.

He summarised the impact of the changes to the Service which would mean that consultation would not take place with Fire Protection officers at the planning stage in certain circumstances. He advised Members that the changes did not negate the requirement for a full building regulations application and consultation with the Service would take place at this stage which would mean that relevant recommendations would still be made by officers.

He concluded by confirming that the change of use of office premises was a recognised concern for fire protection officers and confirmed that officers were

often made aware of conversion proposals by regular engagement with planning officers. He advised Members that fire protection officers would continue to use enforcement powers under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 if deficiencies in relation to fire safety were identified in commercial premises.

Members commented that it would be beneficial for the Service to be engaged as early in the process as possible, as it would be more difficult and costly for the owners to make changes to a building once it was occupied. Station Manager Kay confirmed that, where applicable, the Service still had the right to comment on the building regulations application.

A Member asked whether fire officers would be consulted if a large office building was converted into bedsits. Station Manager Kay confirmed that since the new regulations had been in force the Service would be consulted at the building regulations application stage of the process rather than the planning application stage.

RESOLVED: **That**

[1] the changes to planning rules and the conversion of commercial premises to domestic use be noted.

5 MERSEY GATEWAY PRESENTATION

The Head of Operational, Policy and Assurance made a presentation to Members on the Mersey Gateway project which detailed the operational implications for the Service resulting from the project and how the Service was addressing them.

He commenced his presentation by showing Members a short video which detailed the scale of the building work involved in the project over the next few years.

The Head of Operational, Policy and Assurance advised Members that the Service had set up an officer working group, Mersey Gateway Risk Information Group, which would regularly meet and review the project to understand the risks and impact on the Service. He explained that the initial issues would include traffic management and access for fire appliances which had already been assessed by the Service. Certain areas had been identified as being impacted because of potential difficulties in securing access. In order to mitigate the risk of access problems, actions were currently taking place in those areas e.g. Home Safety Assessments were being pursued on all residential properties and fire protection officers were carrying out audits of commercial premises.

He confirmed the Service was also regularly reviewing the building construction site and fire safety checks would be carried out on the accommodation being provided to the contractors working on the project. He concluded by advising Members that the working group would continue to meet regularly to assess the risks and specific problems that this project may raise for the Service. He would report to the Committee with a further update at a future meeting.

A member queried whether the construction company would be providing a boat for rescue purposes and the Head of Operational, Policy and Assurance confirmed that this would be the case.

Members asked what the impact on the Service would be if the existing bridge was closed and the Head of Operational, Policy and Assurance responded that this would cause some difficulties to the Service. However, he assured Members that this potential problem was covered by contingency plans.

The Chair confirmed that the Committee looked forward to a further update at a future meeting.

RESOLVED: **That**

[1] the Mersey Gateway presentation be noted.

6 INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2013-14 (IRMP10) – 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 2013-14 (IRMP10). 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.

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications confirmed that all value for money reviews had now taken place within the support areas and that a report would be presented to the Committee at its next meeting.

He advised Members that the North West Fire Control (NWFC) project had now gone 'live' and he explained that meetings were currently taking place with NWFC to consider the data and information required by the Service to adequately monitor performance.

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications concluded by providing details of the progress made on the ERP in relation to the sites of the four new fire stations. He informed Members that planning permission had been agreed for the Alsager site and the planned opening for this station was June 2015. He explained that planning applications for the Lymm and Penketh sites had been submitted and consultations had taken place for the Penketh and M53/M56 site.

RESOLVED: **That**

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

7 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services confirmed that performance reporting for North West Fire Control would be added to a future agenda of the Committee, which had been discussed earlier in the meeting.

He referred to a Members request for further information regarding the arson conviction rate which was discussed in relation to item 2 – 'End of Year Financial and Performance Review 2013-14', he confirmed that this would be added to the Forward Work Programme.

No further items were identified.