



MINUTES OF THE PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE held on 7 April 2010 at Lecture Theatre, FSHQ at 10:00.

PRESENT: Councillors T Sherlock, K Musgrave, A Needham, S Nelson, C Oliver, M Simon (Chair), N Wright and Independent Member W Ravenscroft

PART 1 – MATTERS CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies of absence.

B Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of Members interests

C Minutes of the Meeting of the Performance and Overview Committee held on Wednesday 3 February 2010

RESOLVED: That

[1] the minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 3 February 2010 be confirmed as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

- (i) Councillor D Bateman was not in attendance at the meeting
Councillor T Sherlock was in attendance.

ITEMS REQUIRING DISCUSSION

2 HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENT OF CHESHIRE SAFER ROADS PARTNERSHIP

The Head of Community Fire Safety presented Members with a paper on the history of the development of the Cheshire Safer Roads Partnership. The paper provided Members with an appreciation of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service's contribution to road safety partnership working, the history and the continuing development of joint working in the area of road safety.

Members were advised that in 2000, the Government set road traffic collision casualty reduction targets for Local Authorities. The targets required Local Authorities to achieve a 40% reduction in the number of people killed and seriously injured, a 50% reduction in the number of children killed and seriously

injured and a 10% reduction in the slight casualty rate. It was noted that the target had to be achieved by 31 December 2010.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the report be noted.

3 LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICE AGREEMENT 2 (TARGET 8) PROJECT CLOSING REPORT

The Head of Community Fire Safety presented Members with a closing report on the Local Public Service Agreement 2 (Target 8) Project which concluded on 31 December 2008. The aim of the assessment target and associated partnership project was to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on the roads of Cheshire. The report summarised the outcomes achieved on completion following validation of the data.

Members were advised that there were three partners responsible for the delivery of the project, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service, Cheshire Constabulary and Cheshire County Council. Our performance against the LPSA 2 target was also identified

RESOLVED: That

[1] the report be noted.

4 WORK PLAN ITEM: PROGRESS REPORT FOR REDUCING DEATHS AND INJURIES ON THE ROADS OF CHESHIRE

The Head of Community Fire Safety presented Members with a progress report on the reduction of deaths and injuries on the roads of Cheshire. The paper provided progress against the Governments road safety targets for the end of 2010 within the Cheshire Safer Roads Partnership delivery area.

It was noted that in 2000 the Government published a Safety Strategy 'Tomorrow's Roads Safer for Everyone' setting national targets seeking significant road traffic collision casualty reduction by the end of 2010. Figures from the 1994-1998 period were selected against which to measure future improvement.

The targets outlined were as follows; by the end of 2010 killed and serious injuries to be reduced by 40%; children killed and seriously injured to be reduced by 50%; and slight injuries to be reduced by 10%. Members were also informed that by the end of 2009 the performance had reached a 48.5% reduction in the number of casualties killed or seriously injured, 54.3% reduction in the number of Children killed and seriously injured and 37% reduction in the number of casualties slightly injured.

Members discussed the graphs that were appended to the reports and it was advised by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer that performance should be observed

over a number of years as this was more representative of trends albeit the most recent years data was exceptional. Members commended the work that had been completed.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the report be noted.

5 WORK PLAN ITEM: STAFF SICKNESS

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented Members with a report on Staff Sickness absence for the year April 2009 – March 2010. The paper gave details, in light of the objective that was included in the Integrated Risk Management Plan 2009-10, to reduce the incidence of staff sickness to 6 days lost per person per annum during 2009-10.

Members were informed that Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service regarded the careful management of its employees attendance crucial to its ability to deliver cost effective, efficient, value for money services. Good attendance at work was also essential for positive employee morale and performance.

Furthermore it was noted that the current Attendance Management Policy was agreed with the recognised Trade Unions and had become effective from 1 January 2009. The policy provided a clear framework and guidance to enable managers at all levels to work with their staff to minimise absence. It was highlighted that there had been over a 20% reduction in the number of short term sicknesses and a 14% reduction in the number of long term sicknesses in the previous year.

Members discussed the paper and it was suggested that the figures were distorted by the inclusion of employees that did not take any sickness through the year. Members also raised the issue of trigger points and questioned whether employees would become familiar with these and become aware of the stages and when their attendance would be queried. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised Members that figures showed operational wholetime staff had the best attendance performance and the monitoring of employee attendance was constant, defined and well understood by employees and implemented by managers. In addition it was highlighted that those employees with the most significant absence periods were referred to the Attendance Management Board chaired by the service Director of Human Resources. Members were also informed that the Service acknowledged employees that did not take sickness absence through the year.

Members raised the retained Fire Fighter sickness figures from within the report and noted that there had been an increase in the number of sickness absences. It was suggested that action needed to be taken to reduce this figure. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised Members that a Retained Liaison Officer had been appointed and provisions had been put into place as an alternative to sickness leave. Firefighters that were not fit for operational duties could undertake light duties where possible. In addition, this would be the focus area for the coming year.

Following the discussion on the staff sickness, detailed in the work plan, Members discussed other procedural and work plan items. It was requested by a Member of the Committee that the Call in procedure be debated at a future meeting of the Committee as the current procedure was perceived as restrictive. The Monitoring Officer advised that the Committee could examine this part of the Constitution within its terms of reference and the Committee could call for a Report on its application to be brought to a future meeting for the Committees consideration. Members of the Committee agreed that a report on the call in procedure should be brought to the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the progress on the performance against the objective included in the IRMP for 2009-10 “to reduce the incidence of staff sickness to 6 days lost per person per annum during 2009-10” be noted; and
- [2] a report be presented to the next meeting, in July, of the Performance and Overview Committee on the Call In procedure.

6 STAFF SATISFACTION SURVEY ACTION PLAN

The Head of Communications presented Members with a report detailing the Staff Satisfaction Survey Action Plan. As part of the Service’s commitment to developing an excellent organisation it had previously been agreed to carry out comprehensive staff attitude surveys. These would provide an objective method of evaluating progress in listening and responding to employee concerns and of ensuring staff involvement in the development of the organisation.

A report on the findings of the 2009 survey had been presented to the meeting of the Policy Committee in January. The results showed an improvement in staff satisfaction in all areas covered in the online questionnaire in comparison to the initial survey carried out in 2007.

The Head of Communications highlighted that one key issue was consistency of team briefing throughout the organisation. Members were informed that a Core Brief was now being produced as an action to this issue. A Core Brief was produced after each Service Management Team containing information on the key issues discussed. The briefing would be circulated to Heads of Department and Directors for cascading through their managers throughout the organisation. Copies are available to employees via the Intranet using a Blog to allow staff to comment.

Members were notified of the work programme for the next 12 months and three fundamental points were outlined. The first was 14 programmed workshops and corporate roadshows giving feedback to staff on the survey results. The second, the development of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service values and key behaviours and the third, the Ethics and Governance roadshow to highlight the role of the Fire Authority.

Members discussed the 14 programme workshops for staff and agreed that this would be an excellent exercise and would have a positive impact on staff. The

Core Brief was debated and details of information that would be covered were requested. The Head of Communications advised that clear guidance on policies and procedure would be covered.

The Fire Brigade Union representative addressed Members confirming that the work plan was positive and assured employees that action would be taken to resolve areas of concern. However, it was suggested by the FBU that the staff satisfaction survey undergo a similar form of scrutiny as the appraisal process does.

The Chair of the Committee summarised that there were a number of items for review in the work plan and questioned how they would be monitored by Members. The Head of Communications confirmed that all action would be presented to the Leadership Board and then presented to Members through the Policy and Performance and Overview Committee. The Chair stated that items should be presented to Members for approval before they are implemented.

Members reiterated the importance of ensuring employees were kept informed of decisions and changes. The Chair requested that copies of all Core Briefings produced following Service Management Team meetings be circulated to Members for information. The Head of Communications confirmed that this would be done electronically.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the action plan be noted;
- [2] the key actions contained within the action plan are presented to Members before they are implemented; and
- [3] copies of the Core Brief be distributed to Members electronically for information.

7 ALTERNATIVE STAFFING SYSTEMS PROPOSALS – UPDATE

The Head of Unitary Performance presented Members with an update on the Alternative Staffing System proposals for fire stations with the whole-time duty system. Members were reminded that the original project was the introduction of a 12 hour shift duty system however, following recommendation by Members the scope of the project was previously widened to include a number of alternative options. The paper outlined areas for improvement within the current whole-time duty system and summarised the findings of the research following consultation with other Fire and Rescue Services who operate alternative staffing systems.

Furthermore the report contained an overview of three potential duty systems that would enable the service to improve productivity, efficiency and the flexibility of resource requirements as well as providing potential financial efficiencies.

The report noted that following the completion of the research it had become clear that although some Services had introduced new staffing systems, the

benefits in terms of productivity and cashable efficiencies from some of the shift patterns were not always clear. The research had identified that there were a number of advantages from a more flexible duty system. The Head of Unitary Performance advised that the adoption of any single system used by another Service in its existing format would not be recommended and instead further consideration should be given to developing a new shift system taking the positive aspects from a number of systems and integrating it into one.

The three possible options were presented to the Members and Members were informed that further research would be conducted on the three options and presented to a meeting of the Performance and Overview Committee.

Members raised the newly implemented 12 hour shift system that had been implemented in Wilmslow and suggested that further monitoring and evaluation of the system should be conducted before it was implemented at other stations.

The Head of Unitary Performance advised Members that the current research for an alternative staffing system was to be considered for the seven wholetime stations that had the highest level of activity within the Cheshire area. It was also advised that these stations would not be considered to run the same system as that at Wilmslow. At present in Cheshire there were four different shift systems across the Service.

Members requested that a report on the monitoring of the new duty system at Wilmslow be presented to Members to allow them to see the benefits that had been achieved by implementing the system.

Members debated the cost of implementing a new staffing system against the savings that would be achieved. It was felt that there needed to be a balance and assurance that the implementation of a new staffing system created efficiencies. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer highlighted the savings that could be made through the change in shift systems however also advised that change was not always accepted as a positive.

The Director of Finance and Corporate Planning informed Members that savings of approximately £4.5 million needed to be made over the next four years.

Members suggested that the contracts of new employees should be aligned to accept the possible future change in staffing systems and that this should be considered as part of the project. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised contractual changes to shift systems would need to accord with the Grey book requirements if the service wished to remain in the NJC.

Members questioned whether the 10/12 hour shifts systems could be considered discriminatory and would prevent females from applying to the Service. It was felt that more flexibility should be given to prevent such issues and would also benefit the Service when aligning its resources. The Head of Unitary Performance added that a self rostering system would be looked into to provide stations with flexibility as required.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] a verbal update report be provided at the next meeting of the Performance and Overview Committee and a further detailed report be provided to the meeting in October.

8 2009 BONFIRE REPORT

The Head of Community Fire Protection presented Members with the 2009 Bonfire Report that updated Members on the effectiveness of the Service's 2009 Bonfire initiatives. The report gave Members an analysis of the number of bonfire incidents attended by the Service compared to those attended over the last two years.

Members were informed that the bonfire season of 2009 had seen a dramatic decrease in the number of incidents attended by 24%. Members commended the work done to achieved the reduction and agreed that the report highlighted the positive work completed by the Service.

The Chair of the Committee raised the issue of attacks on Fire Fighters and questioned what could be done to prevent attacks taking place. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised Members that attacks in Cheshire were extremely low compared to neighbouring services which had higher indices of social deprivation. In addition the service undertook considerable work in areas where attacks happened to engage with the community to prevent further attacks.. Nonetheless it was the aspiration of the Service to reduce the number of attacks that took place to zero. Members were informed that the calculation of the statistics included a number of categories such as, intimidation, verbal attacks and physical attacks within the heading of 'attacks on firefighters'.

Members commented that police engagement should be imperative following an attack and the information should be publicised to make the public aware of the penalties of attacking Fire Fighters. Furthermore it was noted that CCTV was on all vehicles in high risk areas.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the report be noted.

9 CARBON MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer presented Members with a report on the Carbon Management Programme. Members were informed that Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service were awarded a place on the Local Authority Carbon Management Programme in April 2009. Overseen by the Carbon Trust the programme assisted participating organisations with the development of a five year Carbon Management Plan. The implementation of the plan would ensure that the Service met its 30% CO₂ reduction target and would deliver revenue savings through the effective management of carbon based utilities. It was noted that the estimated revenue savings amounted to approximately £1 million.

Members were advised that the plan had been endorsed by the Carbon Trust, Carbon Management Team and the Environment Programme Board.

Members raised the issue of conversion from oil to gas and suggested that the Service needed to have resilience to assumptions made through forward planning. There needed to be a balance and the fluctuation of gas prices would be difficult to monitor. The Director of Finance and Corporate Planning advised that a conversion would be risk assessed and environmental benefits would also be considered.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the report and Carbon Management Plan be noted.

10 PROGRESS REPORT ON 2009-10 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN

The Director of Finance and Corporate Planning introduced the representative from RSM Tenon to Members. The representative presented Members with a progress report against the 2009-10 Internal Audit Plan. Members were advised that positive assurance had been received for the 9 reports that had been produced.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the progress update against the 2009-10 Internal Audit Plan be received.

11 PEER REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PLAN

The Director of Finance and Corporate Planning presented Members with the Peer Review Recommendations and Action Plan. The report provided a summary of recommendations made by the Peer Review team who undertook the Operational Assessment of the Service in May 2009.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the report be noted; and

[2] a presentation of the action tracking database be provided to the next meeting of the Performance and Overview Committee meeting to enable scrutiny of progress against the recommendations.

12 USE OF RESOURCES RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PLAN

The Director of Finance and Corporate Planning presented Members with a report on the Use of Resources Recommendations and Action Plan. The report provided Members with a summary of the recommendations made by the Audit Commission following their Use of Resources assessment of the Authority during 2009.

Members discussed the recent, water rescue exercise that had taken place and commended the Service for the efforts that were taken when conducting such

realistic training exercises. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised Member that the Water Rescue exercise was one of a number the Service conducted however, the water rescue event involved a number of partnering organisations. He agreed to the presentation of an annual report highlighting the levels of training and any analysis of trends.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that Members should be invited to future training events to help provide information into the work of front line staff.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the report be noted;
- [2] a presentation of the Use of Resources action tracking database be provided to the October meeting of the Performance and Overview Committee to enable scrutiny of progress against the recommendations.