

## **POLICY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting of the  
POLICY AND PERFORMANCE  
COMMITTEE held in the Fire Authority  
Rooms, Fire and Rescue Service  
Headquarters, Nissan Way, Barmston  
Mere, Sunderland on MONDAY 30 APRIL  
2012 at 10.30 a.m.

### **Present:**

Councillor N. Forbes in the Chair

Councillors Ahad, M. Forbes, Heron, Mulvenna and Padgett

### **Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **Declarations of Interest**

None.

### **Minutes**

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Committee held on 30 January 2012 (circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **End of Year (April – March) Performance Report 2011/12**

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Fire Officer to present the end of year (April – March) performance of the Authority against the targets for 2011/12. Members of the Performance and Policy Advisory Committee

were requested to consider and scrutinise the contents of the report and provide comments.

The Chairman welcomed Chris Lowther, Area Manager, Nina Wilson, Area Manager and Mark Hedley, Corporate Development Manager to the Committee and invited them to present the report.

Members were reminded how the report was structured and the graphical information presented.

The performance of each indicator was colour coded to reflect the following:

- Forecasted performance against the end of year performance for the previous year
- Forecasted performance against the end of year target

A traffic light system was used to highlight the performance related to each of the indicators:-

Where the target is likely to be missed by more than 2.5%, the colour was red;

Where the projected figure was within - 2.5% of the target, the colour was yellow;

Where the target is forecast to be achieved the colour was green.

Where no target has been set the cell remained white.

The report also contains action plans based on commentary provided by the relevant head of service. This will enable members of the committee to scrutinise the delivery of services in relation to performance and provide those delivering the services to highlight what is being done to improve and react to performance.

The report was supported by Appendix B that provided greater detail on the performance of the Authority in relation to the outcome of all the measures against their targets and previous performance.

The performance report was divided into Service Led Priorities and Local Priorities sections in order to provide a comprehensive overview based on national and local priorities.

The Service Led Priorities were considered in turn:-

#### **Number of primary fires per 100,000 population (LI 29):**

- The Authority attended 175.5 (1,942) primary fires per 100,000 population during 2011/12; this is 9.3% (199) less than in 2010/11.
- This saw the Authority achieve the target of 190.3 (2,105) and record its lowest ever figures.

- This performance saw the Authority remain below the average of the Metropolitan FRS and within the best quartile, reflecting the positive comparison of performance.
- Only Gateshead District saw an increase when compared to last year.
- North Tyneside District reported a reduction of 28.2% (49) compared with the same period in 2010/11.
- As a result of the 1,942 incidents 231 victims received injuries.

### **Number of fatalities due to primary fires per 100,000 population (LI 2):**

- During 2011/12 there were 3 fatalities caused by primary fires, 2 of these as a result of accidental dwelling fires. This was the same figure that was reported in 2010/11.
- Based on the end of year performance of 0.27 (3) fatalities due to primary fires per 100,000 population, the Authority failed in its aim to record no deaths from such incidents.
- As throughout previous years, the Authority continued to report performance below the Mets FRS average figure reported of 0.6 fatalities per 100,000 population and remain below the best quartile. This reflects the performance reported in other key indicators.

Chris Lowther gave further background to the fatalities. The first fatality had been a 47 year old male who had been smoking in bed with a history of accidental dwelling fires. The smoke alarms had been deactivated and he had been recently discharged from hospital for self harm. The reasons as to why a referral had not been instigated due to his vulnerability were being looked into.

The second fatality occurred due to a gas explosion and involved an 87 year old female in the early stage of dementia. Work with partners to address prevention issues continued.

Referring to the second fatality, Councillor M. Forbes enquired whether causes of fatalities were widely circulated to other parts of the country. Chris Lowther advised that information was shared with local partners but not nationally.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that a lot of joint work had taken place nationally regarding high risk groups.

### **Number of all deliberate fires per 10,000 population (LI 33):**

- The Authority recorded 54.1 (5,985) deliberate fires per 10,000 population during 2011/12, a decrease of 1.4% (82) compared to 2010/11.
- This performance was supported by a 7.5% (69) reduction in the number of deliberate primary fires.

- The Authority narrowly missed the target of 54 (5,977), but performance was within 2.5% variance of the target.
- Performance had improved significantly over recent years but remained outside the average for the Met FRS and it was above the worst quartile. Only Merseyside FRS reported a greater number (68.9) of such incidents in 2010/11.
- Gateshead and Newcastle districts saw increases of 19.5% (189) and 2.6% (42) in 2011/12; the other districts reported decreases.

#### **Number of deliberate secondary fires per 10,000 population (LI 16):**

- The Authority recorded 46.5 (5,143) deliberate secondary fires per 10,000 population in 2011/12, 13 less than 2010/11.
- As a result of this the target was achieved.
- Compared to the Met FRS, performance remained in the worst quartile.
- Sunderland recorded the highest number (1,755) of such incidents in 2011/12 when compared against the other districts. However, this was a decrease of 3.2% (57) when compared against the same period in 2010/11.
- Gateshead and Newcastle districts saw increases of 20.7% (169) and 3.8% (51) respectively. The other three districts all surpassed their targets.

The Chairman enquired whether there was any apparent correlation between the recession and an increase in the number of deliberate fires. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised that caution should be exercised in making assumptions regarding reasons for the increase and she advised that if the Committee agreed then evidence based study could be carried out on its behalf as to why increases had occurred in certain districts.

The Committee agreed that a piece of work based on qualitative and quantitative research would be extremely useful to assess any emerging or changing policy priorities.

The following Local Priorities were considered in turn:-

#### **LI 4 Number of injuries from accidental dwelling fires**

- The Authority recorded 177 injuries from accidental dwelling fires in 2011/12, 5 less than in 2010/11 and surpassing our target of 179 injuries by 2.
- This performance was supported by the reduction reported elsewhere in the report for the number of accidental dwelling fires attended.
- In total 41% (73) of such injuries resulted in the casualty being admitted to hospital, an increase of 6 on last year.
- Only 5 of the 177 injuries from accidental dwelling fires were classified as serious.

- The average age of a fire victim was 50 years old with 51% (91) female and 49% (88) male. The average age of a casualty suffering from serious injuries resulting in hospital treatment was 47 years old with 51% (37) casualties being male.

Chris Lowther commented that it was important to recognize that only having 5 serious injuries was an outstanding achievement.

In response to his question, the Chairman was advised that the average age for accidental dwelling fires was the 30 to 40 age group and a significant number were alcohol related. Fatalities tended to occur in the older age group.

### **LI 8.1 Number of accidental fires in dwellings per 10,000 dwellings**

- The Authority attended 12 (571) accidental dwelling fires per 10,000 dwellings in 2011/12, a decrease of 12.4% (79) compared with the previous year, continuing to reflect the lowest number of such incidents historically reported.
- As a result of this performance exceeded the target was exceeded (13.5) for by 11% (70).
- The majority of such incidents occurred in the kitchen (61.3%), with South Tyneside (68.8%), accounting for the highest percentage of incidents occurring in the kitchen at district level.
- North Tyneside reported the largest percentage of accidental non kitchen fires with a total of 45% (41).
- The wards of Walker (18), Hendon (14), Westgate (13), and Millfield (12) accounted for 10% of the Service's total accidental dwelling fires.

Discussion ensues in relation to causes of accidental fires. The Committee was advised that only 6% was smoking related, and messages appeared to be getting through regarding the hazards. There was a slight increase in accidental fires due to faulty wiring.

The Chairman enquired whether the tenure of property such as the private rented sector presented more of a risk, and, if so what the Local Authority could do to mitigate problems. Chris Lowther agreed try to weave such details into the report.

### **LI 31 % of fires attended in dwellings where a smoke alarm was fitted**

- 74.3% (513) of dwelling fires attended had a smoke alarm was fitted with 74% (381) alarms activating and 132 not activating. In addition, only 13.3% (132) operated and failed to raise an alarm to the fire.
- South Tyneside reported the highest percentage of such incidents with 75% (63) alarms activating and 21 failing to do so.
- Gateshead reported the lowest percentage with 62.6% (61) alarms activating and 23 failing to do so.

- This indicator was introduced in 2011/12 to reflect the overall level of smoke alarm ownership regardless of an alarm activating. Through using this measure we are able to demonstrate a clearer link between the successful delivery of HSC and reduced risk to the community.

### **LI 21 Number of malicious false alarm calls attended**

- The Authority attended 259 malicious false alarm in 2011/12, 4.5% (12 calls) fewer than in 2011/12.
- Despite reporting the lowest ever number of such incidents the target of 243 was not achieved. This positive performance is due effective call challenge procedures that are now embedded in the Service.
- Traditionally Q3 was the busiest period for this indicator (linking to the Bonfire period) however last year we recorded an overall reduction in calls of 29.7% (22) in Q3 compared to the previous year and an increase in calls of 39.3% (22) in Q1.
- Gateshead and Newcastle recorded increases of 29.7% (11) and 8.3% (8) respectively when compared to last year. The other districts recorded decreases with Sunderland recording the greatest decrease with 30% (25) fewer calls.

### **LI 22.1 Number of false alarm calls due to automatic fire alarms from non domestic premises per 1,000 non domestic premises**

- The Authority attended 98.6 (3,094) false alarms from non domestic premises in 2011/12, reflecting a reduction of 10% (342) on last year's figure.
- As a result of this performance the target of 103.5 (3,249) was surpassed by 4.7% (155).
- Despite Newcastle accounting for 41% of all FAA it has reported an overall reduction of 16.5% (248) compared to 2010/11. 20.4% (257) of FAA in Newcastle were from hospitals.
- Hospitals were the main premises type throughout the Service for such incidents accounting for 20.1% of all FAA in 2011/12.

### **LI 86 % of workforce from a black, Asian minority ethnic community**

- Although the Authority did not achieve the target by a small margin, this represents an improvement of 8.3% compared to last year's performance.
- This performance reflects a total of 31 staff from a workforce of 1,194.66.
- There were 19 operational members of staff within the organisation who are from an ethnic minority community, reflecting 2.1% of the operational workforce.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that as the organisation was reducing and there had been a recruitment freeze then Indicators LI86 and LI85 would become more challenging.

### **LI85 % of workforce who are women**

- The percentage of women working for the organisation currently stands at 20.6%, an increase of 0.3% compared against the performance reported at the end of 2010/11.
- Based on this performance, we were within the variance of the target of 21.1%, based on current staffing levels this equates to a shortfall of 7 women.
- This performance reflects 246 employees out of a total workforce of 1,194.66posts, reflecting an increase on the number (240) reported at the end of 2010/11.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised that an impact on the indicator was inevitable given the reduction in back office staff and the administrative function. However a new Diversity Strategy was being implemented.

### **LI 82 Proportion of working days/shifts lost to sickness absence by all staff**

- The proportion of working days/shifts lost to sickness absence by all staff during 2011/12 was 5.6. This reflects a reduction of 0.9 days when compared to 2010/11.
- This positive performance meant that the Authority exceeded the target of 6 for the first time.
- Despite all districts reporting figures that surpassed their targets only South Tyneside and Sunderland districts reported reductions on last year's figure.
- Sunderland District showed the greatest improvement of 51.3% (3.02 days) when compared to 2010/11.

RESOLVED that the content of the report is noted.

### **ICT Strategy 2012-2015**

Due to time constraints, the Chairman proposed and it was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting of Committee.

RESOLVED that the above item be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee.

(Signed) N. Forbes  
Chairman