

POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE held in the Main Authority Room, Fire and Rescue Headquarters, Nissan Way, Barmston Mere, Sunderland on MONDAY, 28TH JULY, 2008 at 10.30 a.m.

Present:

Councillor Wright in the Chair

Councillors Bollands, Boyes and Cooney.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jordan.

Appointment of Vice-Chairman

1. RESOLVED that Councillor Cooney be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the forthcoming year.

Minutes

2. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd March, 2008 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Road Traffic Collisions – Future Policy and Strategy

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report (circulated) outlining a proposal to adopt a comprehensive policy to in respect of the Authority's approach to road traffic accident collisions (RTC's).

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Members were informed that the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 places a duty on Fire and Rescue Services to respond to road traffic collisions but no such duty to work with other organisations to prevent accidents occurring in the first instance.

Kevin Hepple, Area Manager – Community Safety stated that whilst the duty to engage in preventative activity did not exist there was clear encouragement from central government to do so.

For example, preventative work aimed at reducing the number of RTC incidents had been recognised within the latest version of the Fire and Rescue National Framework 2008-2011. The 'Changing Lanes' report, published by the Audit Commission in February 2007, also included a recommendation for Fire and Rescue Services to become fully involved in the road safety agenda. Furthermore, in March, 2008, the Department for Community and Local Government (CLG) issued policy and planning guidance on road traffic collisions for use by Fire and Rescue Authorities.

In light of this information Mr Hepple proceeded to set out the proposed Framework for an Authority Road Traffic Collision Policy, with particular emphasis placed on the proposal to engage in preventative work in a structured manner. There was also a strong emphasis placed on partnership working at a local, regional and national level as it was considered this would support the prevention of RTC's through educational projects and programmes across Tyne and Wear.

An opportunity was then given for Members to ask questions and make comments.

The Chairman expressed his view that the numbers of road traffic collisions were likely to increase in future years, due to the volume of traffic on the roads rising at such a rapid pace, therefore it was certainly appropriate to start putting preventative measures in place. Also speeding on the roads was highlighted as a key issue that contributed to the numbers of fatalities year on year.

Councillor Boyes enquired whether the statistics on the numbers of people who die each year on the roads had been broken down into the relevant causes. In response, Mr. Hepple advised that the numbers were indeed broken down into a number of different categories including the time of the day that the incident took place, the age of the fatality, the cause of death etc. All of this was measurable data.

Councillor Bollands commented that intervention at a local and national level would hopefully have a great impact and be successful. However he hoped that the preventative activities regarding road traffic collisions would not result in the fire safety message being lost.

The Chief Fire Officer responded to Councillor Bollands advising him that various organisations were already active in the RTC Policy field and that the Fire Authority would ensure that they involve themselves in those elements of such work which will have the largest impact. This would not have a detrimental impact on fire safety activity.

Councillor Cooney then commended the Fire Authority for its hard work, stating that the safety of young people in particular was of great concern to him and that support should be given to roll out the Road Traffic Collision Policy.

Members, having discussed the report:-

3. RESOLVED to:-

- (i) endorse the contents of the report; and
- (ii) receive further reports as appropriate.

Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006

At the instance of the Chairman, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 the public be excluded during consideration of the remaining business as it is considered to involve a disclosure of information relating to consultations/negotiations in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the Authority and employees of the Authority (Local Government Act 1972) Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, (Schedule 12A), Part 1, Paragraph 4).

(Signed) T. WRIGHT,
Chairman.

Note:-

The above minutes comprise only those relating to items during which the meeting was open to the public.

Additional minutes in respect of other items are included in Part II.