

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 27 JULY
2009 at 10.30 a.m.

Present:

Councillor T. Wright in the Chair

Councillors N. Forbes, Mortimer and Renton.

Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor Boyes.

Declarations of Interest

None.

Minutes

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings of the Performance Review Committee held on 27 April 2009 and Policy Advisory Committee held on 12 January 2009 (circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

End of Year Q4 (April – March) Performance Report of the 2008/09 Corporate Targets

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) providing the Quarter 4 (April – March) and end of year performance of the Authority against the targets for 2008/09.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. C. Maude noted that the 2008/09 report reflected positive performance for the Authority within a number of key performance indicators against its previous performance and its targets set for 2008/09. Through measuring performance against targets that were based on previous performance and the risk of incidents occurring, the Authority was able to demonstrate improvement.

Through the effective delivery of services, improved management of performance and more robust evaluation of initiatives the Authority had continuously demonstrated improved performance throughout 2008/09 resulting in:-

- 78% of Best Value Performance Indicators exceeding their target
- 67% of Best Value Performance Indicators improving on the previous year

This positive performance had been achieved through a joint approach and the Authority had seen noticeable reductions compared with the previous year within a number of key areas including:-

- 23% reduction in the number of injuries arising from accidental dwelling fires (BV 143ii)
- 36% reduction in the number of accidental fires in dwellings (BV 142iii)
- 29% reduction in the number of deliberate secondary fire (BV 206iii)
- 13% reduction in the number of malicious false alarm calls attended (BV 146ii)
- 4% reduction in the number of false alarms due to automatic fire detection in non domestic properties (BV 149i)
- 33% reduction in the number of fires in non domestic premises (BV 207)
- 0.5% increase in the percentage of women fire-fighters (BV 210)
- 1% increase in the percentage of uniformed staff from ethnic minority (BV 17a)

As a result of Service Delivery working in partnership at a local level, the Authority had been able to identify and target specific risk to its district and station areas. This had resulted in the effective use of resources and improved reporting of performance, identifying priorities and related actions.

The Authority continuously aimed to improve its performance and recognised that there were areas requiring further attention. The measures indicated below reflected some key areas of performance that needed improving throughout 2009/10:-

- 8% increase in the percentage of fires attended in dwellings where no smoke alarm was fitted (BV 209iii)
- 6% increase in the number of non domestic property fires started deliberately (Part 1 of BV 207)

- 0.05 days increase in the number of working days/shifts lost to sickness absence by all staff (BV 12b)

The following key issues were also highlighted:-

BV 142iii Number of Accidental Fires in Dwellings per 10,000

The end of year figure for the “Number of accidental fires in dwellings per 10,000” dwellings was 14.9 (710 fires). This represented a decrease of 36% on the 2007/08 end of year figure of 23.4 (1110 fires) and as a result of this performance the Authority had exceeded its 2008/09 target of 22.51 (1069 fires) by 34%. Communication of Prevention and Education and holistic fire safety messages via Home Safety checks had continued to demonstrate their value in addressing this incident type and would continue to be used to address this issue.

Councillor N. Forbes commented that all of the performance indicators were symptomatic of a well run and good performing organisation. He looked for assurance that the Authority would use resources in areas which would have the biggest impact. He asked that the use of resources be used most efficiently and effectively and that the Authority be effective in terms of value for money. He stated that the biggest challenge was what would happen over the next couple of years in poorer economic times and suggested that the Authority needed to look ahead to make sure it was not setting unachievable targets.

BV 210 Percentage of Women Fire-fighters

The end of year figure for the percentage of women fire-fighters was 4.82%. This represented an improvement of 7.3% on the end of year 2007/08 figure and as a result of this performance the Authority had exceeded its target.

Councillor T. Wright noted that false alarm call outs to hospitals in the North East was worse than other areas such as Liverpool and Manchester. Joy Brindle, Assistant Chief Fire Officer noted that it was difficult to get comparative data with other Fire Authorities that was up-to-date and it was usual to wait until the year end to get the final figures for 2008/09 to make comparisons with other Metropolitan Authorities via the Metropolitan benchmarking group.

Mr. C. Maude noted that over the last 5 years this indicator had steadily reduced and Station Managers had worked hard with colleagues in hospitals to reduce attendances at hospitals.

Councillor N. Forbes suggested that the Authority look at the impact of Comprehensive Area Assessment and targets relevant to the Authority. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the relevant national indicators would be monitored.

2. RESOLVED that the contents of the Performance Report be noted.

Q1 Performance Report 2009/10

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) providing the Quarter 1 (April – June) performance of the Authority against the targets for 2009/10.

The revised format focused on the priorities of the Authority and showed current performance, trend data and comparison with Metropolitan Authorities on one graph.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The following issues were highlighted:-

NI33i Number of all Deliberate Fires per 10,000 Population (L133)

There had been an increase of 5% on the 2008/09 YTD figure of 17.2 compared against the same period in 2009/10.

As a result of this performance the Authority was above the worst quartile for the Metropolitan Fire and Rescue Services by 15%.

The district of Sunderland had the greatest proportion of such incidents based on the population figure, with 34% of the Service total.

Initial analysis pointed to the incidents attended in Sunderland being the result of a series of vehicle fires ignited by arsonists who had since been arrested.

The Chief Fire Officer reported that information would be fed back through the Districts for their action.

LI13.1% of Fires attended in Dwellings where no Smoke Alarm was Fitted

This indicator highlighted the performance of the Authority in relation to the number of accident dwelling fires attended by the FRS where no smoke alarm was fitted. This LI only included where there was no smoke alarm present. There were additional local indicators that focused on smoke alarm ownership, regardless of them activating or not.

The percentage of fires attended in dwellings where no smoke alarm was fitted at the end of Q1 2009/10 was 31.1% (69).

Based on the performance recorded at the end of Q1 2009/10 (31.1) and in line with the Authority's intentions to have this indicator as low as possible, the Authority was expected to exceed its 2009/10 target (40.69) by 9.6%.

A forecast had not been set for this indicator as it was not possible to forecast an end of year figure on incidents which had not occurred.

Compared to Q1 2008/09 (42.69) the number of fires attended in dwellings where no smoke alarm was fitted had reduced by 11.8% in Q1 2009/10.

At the end of Q1 2009/10 Gateshead had attended the highest number of dwelling fires where no smoke alarm was fitted accounting for 43.2% of such incidents.

South Tyneside attended the lowest percentage of fires in dwellings where no smoke alarm was fitted.

A draft report on smoke alarm ownership and their distribution was currently being finalised which would assist with understanding this issue and developing initiatives.

The Chief Fire Officer reported that the injuries were in small pockets of highly deprived areas and Gateshead had the highest proportion of high rise flats.

Councillor N. Forbes commented that a breakdown of information from the system on housing tenure such as owner/occupier, rented or council owned properties where accidental fires had occurred would be beneficial.

Councillor Renton stated that the number of Council properties with smoke alarms had improved over the last couple of years and the Chief Fire Officer advised that smoke detectors were compulsory in residential buildings.

Councillor Renton referred to a campaign in Byker to increase smoke alarm ownership and suggested that a comparison of fires attended in Council owned properties compared to the other housing sectors would be useful. The Chief Fire Officer undertook to investigate if this information could be requested in the future.

LI21 Number of Malicious False Alarm Calls Attended

The indicator reflected the number of malicious false alarm calls despatched to by the FRA. A call was defined as being malicious when a call was made with the intent of getting the FRA to attend a non-existent event (both fire and special service).

At the end of Q1 2009/10, the Authority attended 78 malicious false alarm calls.

Compared to the same period in 2008/09 (149) the number of malicious false alarm calls attended had reduced by 48% (71).

As a result of the performance recorded at the end of Q1 2009/10, the Authority was forecast to exceed its target of 579 by 46%.

Compared to the performance recorded at the end of 2008/09 (596) the Authority's end of year 2009/10 (312) forecasted performance had reduced by 48%.

Newcastle had attended the highest number of malicious false alarm calls per 1,000 per population, attending 31% (24) of all calls.

Both South Tyneside and North Tyneside districts attended the lowest number of malicious false alarm calls, accounting for 22% of all malicious calls.

Councillor N. Forbes commented that control room staff needed to have the ability and level of experience and belief to challenge people regarding false alarms.

Councillor N. Forbes stated that the Authority had a higher level of false alarm calls than other Metropolitan Authorities and asked if other Authorities had voice recognition. Mr. C. Maude stated that he could investigate that information from the Metropolitan Authorities Benchmarking Group.

3. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the contents of the report be noted and endorsed; and
- (ii) the publication of the Performance Report be agreed.

District Plans 2009/10

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) on the process undertaken to complete the District Plans 2009/2010 together with the proposed date of publication of the Plans.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The District Plans set out the delivery of the two fire related NI's (deliberate fires and primary fires, deaths and injuries) and was the core business of every District. The focus of attention in each District was determined by understanding of local risk and current performance. Taken together, the targets set for each District would ensure that the service as a whole met its NI targets.

Each District would be supplied with 150 copies of their District Plan to distribute between their partner agencies, Local Authority and Councillors.

Councillor T. Wright suggested that Members of the Authority be given contacts for District fire stations.

4. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the contents of the report be noted; and
- (ii) the publication date of the District Plans 2009/10 be noted.

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

At the instance of the Chairman, it was:-

5. 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 was 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.