

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 22
OCTOBER 2012 at 10.30 a.m.

Present:

Councillor N. Forbes in the Chair

Councillors Mc Atominey, Mulvenna and Padgett

Appointment of Chairman

1. RESOLVED that Councillor N. Forbes be appointed as Chairman for the ensuing year.

Appointment of Vice Chairman

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

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ahad and M. Forbes.

Declarations of Interest

None.

Minutes

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

End of Q2 (April – September) Performance Report 2012/13

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Fire Officer to present the end of Q2 (April – September) performance of the Authority against the targets for 2012/13. Members of the Performance and Policy 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 report was divided into Service Led Priorities and Local Priorities sections in order to provide a comprehensive overview based on national and local priorities.

Chris Lowther advised that based on Quarter 2 performance data, the Authority was maintaining its overall trajectory of improvement and was set to meet the majority of the targets set for the current financial year. This included, based on a comparison with 2011/12,

- 12% fewer Primary Fires
- 36% fewer Deliberate Fires
- 42% fewer Deliberate Secondary Fires
- 6% fewer Accidental Kitchen Fires

The Service Led Priorities were considered in turn:-

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

- The Authority attended 79 (874) primary fires per 100,000 population by the end of Quarter 2 2012/13; this was 12% (119) less than in the same period in 2011/12.
- The Authority was forecast to attend 164.9 primary fires per 100,000 population in 2012/13 meaning it will surpass the target by 3.7%.

- This performance sees move into to best quartile when comparing the Authority's performance to the other Metropolitan FRS.
- North Tyneside District saw a 7% (9) increase when compared to last year.
- Newcastle District reported the greatest reduction of 26.8% (77) compared with the same period in 2010/11.
- As a result of the 874 incidents 71 victims received injuries.

Councillor Mulvenna queried why there had been an increase for this indicator in North Tyneside and was advised that as this equated to 9 fires it was difficult to ascertain a particular trend.

In response to a question from Councillor Mc Atominey, Chris Lowther advised that telephone charges tended to give rise to incidents when they were defective or placed on an inappropriate surface. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer 'Community Safety' also commented that the use of hair straighteners had also led to an increase in incidents in recent years.

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

- There were no fire related fatalities by the end of Quarter 2 2012/13. There were 3 for the same period last year.
- Based on forecasted end of year performance the Authority expect no fatalities due to primary fires per 100,000 population, achieving our aim to record no deaths from such incidents.
- As throughout previous years, we continue to report performance below the Mets FRS average figure of 0.45 fatalities per 100,000 population and remain in the best quartile.
- We have the lowest figure for this indicator reflecting our positive performance.

Chris Lowther advised that there had been an incident recently which could have very easily resulted in a fatality and owing to the swift response of the Authority the situation was resolved.

The Chairman acknowledged that the Authority was not complacent with regard to this indicator.

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

- The Authority recorded 17.56(1,946) deliberate fires per 10,000 population by the end of Quarter 2 2012/13, a decrease of 36.7% (1,129) compared the same period in 2011/12.
- This performance was supported by a 39.8% (1,051) reduction in the number of deliberate secondary fires.

- Based on this performance the Authority was forecast to surpass the target of 53.2 by 17.3% (9.2).
- Performance has improved significantly over recent years but remains outside the average for the Met FRS and it is within the worst quartile.
- All districts reported significant reductions for this indicator.

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.

LI 4 Number of injuries from accidental dwelling fires

- The Authority recorded 87 injuries from accidental dwelling fires by the end of Quarter 2 2012/13, 4 more than last year.
- This was despite a slight reduction in the occurrence of accidental dwelling fires in the same period.
- Based on this performance the Authority was forecast to be within the 2.5% tolerance of our target.
- 41 of the injuries resulted in the victim going to hospital and 9 were classified as serious injuries.
- Only Sunderland District saw a reduction during this period, reporting 3 fewer injuries than last year.
- The average age of a fire victim was 41 years old with 41.5% (17) female and 58.5% (24) male.

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

- The Authority attended 5.78 (274) accidental dwelling fires per 10,000 dwellings by the end of Quarter 2 2012/13, 4 fewer incidents than the previous year.
- Based on this performance the forecast was to be within the 2.5% tolerance of our target.

- The majority of such incidents occurred in the kitchen (59.8%).
- Newcastle District reported the largest percentage of accidental non kitchen fires with a total of 49.3% (37).
- The wards of Walker (13), Hendon (9) and Byker (8) accounted for almost 11% of the Service's total accidental dwelling fires.

LI 21 Number of malicious false alarm calls attended

- The Authority attended 136 malicious false alarm calls by the end of Quarter 2 2012/13, 3.5% (5 calls) fewer than in the same period last year.
- Despite continuing to forecast the lowest ever number of such incidents this will not achieve the target of 235. This positive performance is due to effective call challenge procedures that are now embedded in the Service.
- Newcastle was the only district to report an increase in this indicator. There were 70 false alarm calls by the end of Quarter 2 as opposed to 62 an increase of 12%.
- All other districts reported reductions in this indicator.

In response to a query from the Chairman, Chris Lowther advised that the perpetrators tended to a hardcore group of children or adults with mental health issues.

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 43.1 (1,354) false alarms from non domestic premises per 1,000 non domestic premises by the end of Quarter 2 2012/13, a reduction of 3.8% (61) on last year's figure.
- If this positive performance continues we are forecast to surpass the target of 95.7 (3,003) by 5.1% (154 calls).
- Newcastle district accounted for 40.6% (548) of all AFA but it has reported an overall reduction of 17.1% (113) compared to 2011/12. 16.7% (92) of AFA in Newcastle were from hospitals.
- Hospitals remain the main premises type throughout the Service accounting for 15.4% of such incidents by the end of Quarter 2 2012/13.

Chris Lowther confirmed to the Chairman that incidents at main hospitals tended to occur when they were heavily populated.

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

- This performance reflected an increase of 0.4% (5) when compared to Quarter 1 of 2011/12. There has been an increase in the overall total number employed, increasing by 1.6% (19.51).
- This performance reflected a total of 31 staff from a workforce of 1,194.66.
- There were 17 operational members of staff within the organisation who are from an ethnic minority community, reflecting 1.9% of the operational workforce.

In response to a question from Councillor Mc Atominney it was confirmed that there were no people from black, Asian minority ethnic community in the higher echelons of the organisation but the equality impact assessment would be able to identify who was accessing training and promotional opportunities.

It was agreed to circulate a copy of the Equality Strategy to members of the Committee.

LI85 % of workforce who are women

- The percentage of women working for the organisation currently stood at 21%, an increase of 0.5% compared against the performance reported at the end of Quarter 1 2010/11.
- Based on this performance, the Authority were within the variance of the target of 21.1%, based on current staffing levels this equates to a shortfall of 1.2 women.
- This performance reflected 251 employees out of a total workforce of 1,194.66 posts, reflecting an increase on the number (241) reported at the end of Quarter 1 2010/11.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer 'Policy and Performance' advised that the coming months would allow a more accurate prediction of whether the Back Office Review would have an impact on these statistics.

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 by the end of Quarter 1 2012/13 was 1.28. This reflected a reduction of 12.3% (0.18 days) when compared to Quarter 1 2010/11.
- This positive performance was reflected in the end of year forecast of 5.42 days which would mean we would exceed the target by 3.2%.

- Only Newcastle and Sunderland districts reported reductions when compared to the same period last year. 'Other' which is used for staff not under the responsibility of a District Manager also showed a reduction.
- Sunderland District showed the greatest improvement of 47.5% (0.47 days) when compared to the same period last year.
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The Assistant Chief Fire Officer 'Policy and Performance' commented that the policy and Performance Committee presided over looking at improvement but equally they served an important role in determining any early warning risks.

RESOLVED that the content of the report is noted.

ICT Strategy 2012-2015

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Fire Officer to seek the views of the Policy and Performance Committee on the revised Information Communication Technology (ICT) Strategy 2012 -2015.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that the ICT strategy was a key corporate document which outlines how the Authority intends to optimise the use of ICT in order to achieve its objectives. It is underpinned by the ICT element of the Asset Management Plan which sets out in detail the ICT assets owned by the Authority and the use made of these.

As part of the back office review of ICT, it was recommended that the ICT strategy was reviewed and updated to ensure a clear position on how ICT will be used as an enabler, and the level of investment required to support this over the coming years.

Nina Wilson gave a presentation detailing the purpose of the Strategy in more detail.

In response to a number of question from Councillor Mulvenna, who enquired whether the organisation had also spoken to the Police Authority regarding their HR ICT arrangements, Nina Wilson advised that as both systems were in-house they would both experience similar challenges.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer 'Policy and Performance' stated that they were unsure whether the system currently in place was marketable elsewhere. Work had been undertaken with Hitachi and IBM but both were prohibitively expensive and value for money was extremely important.

There was a criteria regarding providers and using local businesses was quite low down the list. However, elsewhere, such as building works, local contractors were given priority.

The Chairman commented that any investment in new ICT and would require a level of training and capacity of staff and he enquired what the human cost and training implications would be.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer 'Policy and Performance' advised that the Strategy would impact on every part of the organisation and the back office staff had been gearing up to the changes for some time.

Having enquired about data protection issues with regard to sharing information with other providers, the Chairman was informed that a lot of work had been undertaken on this and Sunderland had developed an action plan and was planning a full audit in the New Year. Data share agreements were also in place.

It was acknowledged that data sharing issues still existed with health partners.

The Committee agreed that it would be useful to receive occasional policy updates for discussion.

RESOLVED that the contents of the ICT Strategy be noted.

(Signed) N. Forbes
Chairman