

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
JANUARY 2012 at 10.30 a.m.

Present:

Councillor N. Forbes in the Chair

Councillors M. Forbes, Heron, Mulvenna and Padgett

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor Ahad.

Declarations of Interest

None.

Minutes

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Committee held on 24 October 2011 (circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

End Quarter 3 (April – December) Performance Report 2011/12

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Fire Officer to present the Q3 (April – December) performance of the Authority against the targets for 2011/12. Members of the Policy and Performance Committee were requested to consider and scrutinise the contents of the report and provide comments.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chairman welcomed Nina Wilson, Area Manager to the Committee and invited her to present the report.

Nina Wilson explained how the report was structured and the graphical information presented.

She reminded Members that 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 performance report had been divided into the following sections in order to provide a comprehensive overview based on national and local priorities:-

Service Led Priorities -

These reflect the service led indicators as previously defined by CLG and remain to be used as a priority by the FRS.

Number of primary fires and related fatalities and non-fatal casualties (excluding precautionary checks):

- Total number of primary fires per 100,000 population (**LI 29**)
- Total number of fatalities due to primary fires per 100,000 population (**LI 2**)

Arson Incidents:

- Total number of deliberate primary and secondary fires per 10,000 population (**LI 33**)
- Total number of deliberate secondary fires per 10,000 population (**LI 16**)

Local Priorities –

These reflect our local priorities based on previous performance and the goals of the organisation.

Emergency Response:

- **LI 4** Number of injuries from accidental dwelling fires
- **LI 8.1** Number of accidental fires in dwellings per 10,000 dwellings
- **LI 31** % of fires attended in dwellings where a smoke alarm was fitted

- **LI 21** Number of malicious false alarm calls attended
- **LI 22** Number of false alarms due to automatic fire detection from non domestic properties per 1000 non domestic premises.

Diversity and Equality:

- **LI 86** % of workforce from black minority ethnic communities
- **LI 85** % of workforce who are women

Absence and Retirement:

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

Environmental:

- **EM 5** CO₂ reduction from local authority operations (reported at end of year)

Based on Quarter 3 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 includes, based on a comparison with 2010/11,

- 10% fewer **Accidental Dwelling Fires**
- 7% fewer **Deliberate Fires**
- 6% fewer **Deliberate Secondary Fires**
- 11% fewer **Accidental Kitchen Fires**

Nina Wilson then took the Committee through each National and Local Priority in turn.

Number of Primary Fires per 100,000 population (LI29):

The Authority attended 133.6 (1,478) primary fires per 100,000 population by the end of Q3 2011/12. This reflects a reduction of 8.8% (142) when compared against the same period in 2010/11.

Based on the forecasted end of year performance of 180.5 (1,997), the Authority were set to achieve a target of 190.3 (2,105) primary fires per 100,000 population by 5% (108).

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 the same period last year.

North Tyneside District reported a reduction of 25% (62) compared with the same period in 2010/11.

As a result of the 1,478 incidents there were 174 victims.

Chris Lowther advised that there were two specific ward areas in Gateshead that were causing problems. A significant resource had been deployed in the area to address the issues which were also being tackled through LMAPS. The issues centred on the refuse policy and empty properties.

In response to an enquiry from the Chairman, Chris Lowther advised that the reduction in North Tyneside could be attributed to empowering front line staff to tackle issues and by working closely with all stakeholders in the community.

Councillor Mulvenna emphasised the importance of a proactive home safety checks policy even on new housing estates.

Councillor Padgett commented that Sunderland Councillors carried out walk-about within the ward to identify hot spot areas.

Tom Capeling, Assistant Chief Fire Officer informed the Committee that walk abouts had been undertaken in the past and it was apparent within corporate risk where different local authorities were making changes.

Number of fatalities due to primary fires per 100,000 population (LI2):

The Authority had reported 3 fatalities reported from primary fires by the end of Q3 2011/12, with 2 of these as a result of an accidental dwelling fire. By the end of Q3 2010/11 there had been 1 fatality reported.

Based on the forecast end of year performance of 0.54 (6) fatalities due to primary fires per 100,000 population, therefore the Authority will fail in our 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.

The fatalities occurred in Gateshead and Sunderland districts and the casualties were 2 males and 1 female.

Chris Lowther reported that of the two fatalities in Gateshead, one had been suicide and the other had resulted from an oxygen therapy unit catching fire. The issue was exacerbated by the fact that an individual using such equipment would have low capacity lung function. The Sunderland fatality was an elderly lady who had left her gas hob on.

Number of all deliberate fires per 10,000 population (LI33):

The Authority recorded 42.6 (4,637) deliberate fires per 10,000 population by the end of Q3 2011/12, a decrease of 7% (351) compared to the same period in 2010/11.

This positive performance was supported by a 12% (87) reduction in the number of deliberate primary fires by the end of Q3 2011/12.

As a result of this the Authority were forecast to achieve the target of 54.0 (5,977), the forecast anticipates achieving a further reduction of 4.5% (270) less than the target.

In addition, the performance would result in a reduction of 6% (361) compared to 2010/11.

The forecast end of year performance remained outside the average for the Met FRS and it is above the worst quartile. Only Merseyside FRS reported a greater number (68.9) of such incidents in 2010/11.

Gateshead and Newcastle Districts saw an increase of 10.7% (86) and 0.4% (6) respectively at the end of Q3 2011/12 compared to the same period 2010/11

Number of deliberate secondary fires per 10,000 population (LI16):

The Authority recorded 36.7 (3,995) deliberate secondary fires per 10,000 population by the end of Q3 2011/12, reflecting a reduction of 6% (260) on the figure reported at the end of Q3 2010/11.

As a result of the forecasted end of year 2011/12 performance, the Authority is forecast to achieve the target of 46.6 (5,128), with a further reduction of 5% (246).

Compared to the Met FRS, the forecast performance remained above the average but below the worst quartile, only Merseyside FRS reported a higher number (50.8) in 2010/11.

Sunderland continues to record the highest number (1,316) of such incidents by the end of Q3 2011/12 when compared against the other districts. However, it reported a decrease of 10.9% (161) incidents when compared against the same period in 2010/11.

All districts have made reductions in this indicator when compared to the same period last year except Gateshead, which has seen a 9% (63) increase.

LI 4 Number of injuries from accidental dwelling fires

The Authority recorded 136 injuries from accidental dwelling fires by the end of Q3 2011/12, a slight increase of four injuries when compared with the same period in 2010/11.

This performance was supported by the reduction reported elsewhere in the report for the number of accidental dwelling fires attended.

As a result of this performance the Authority was forecasting 186 injuries meaning the target of 179 injuries might not be achieved.

In total 44% (60) of such injuries resulted in the casualty being admitted to hospital.

Average age of a fire victim was 47 years old with 53% (71) male and 47% (64) female. The average age of a casualty suffering from serious injuries resulting in hospital treatment was 46 years old with 52% (31) casualties being female.

Chris Lowther advised that the indicator was difficult to quantify as there was different levels of smoke inhalation and fire fighter policy was to always ring an ambulance.

LI8.1 Number of accidental fires in dwellings per 10,000 dwellings

The Authority attended 9.1 (431) accidental dwelling fires per 10,000 dwellings by the end of Q3 2011/12, a decrease of 10.3% (50) compared with the same period in 2010/11, continuing to reflect the lowest number of such incidents reported by the Authority.

As a result of this performance the Authority was forecast to exceed the target (13.5) for 2011/12 by 6.9% (44).

The majority of such incidents occurred within the kitchen (61.6%), with South Tyneside (66%), accounting for the highest percentage of such incidents occurring in the kitchen at district level.

Newcastle reported the largest percentage of accidental non kitchen fires with a total of 41% (48), reflecting the targeted Home Safety Check initiatives carried out within the area.

The wards of Walker (14), Westgate (11), Hendon (11) and Riverside (10) accounted for the majority of such incidents with 10.7% of the service total.

The Chairman noted that there was a strong correlation between deprivation and incidents.

Chris Lowther advised that it was still a challenge to speak to and educate the most vulnerable people in the community. He confirmed that private rented properties posed the greatest difficulty to access.

Given that Councils were now looking at the registered landlord scheme, Councillor Heron suggested that it would be a good opportunity for local authorities to encourage landlords to make their properties as safe as possible for their tenants.

Tom Capeling commented that some private landlords would rely on the Fire Authority to install smoke detectors.

In response to a question from the Chairman regarding landlord obligations and liability with regard to fire safety, Tom Capeling advised that regulations varied depending on the type of property. Unless a dwelling was multi occupancy then there was no legal requirement to provide fire extinguishers or smoke alarms. Landlords were under a common law duty of care to ensure that the property they provide is safe.

The Chairman commented that this could be a lobbying platform for the Committee.

Councillor Mulvenna suggested that an awareness raising leaflet could be distributed to all households with council tax bills.

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

The Authority attended 72% (376) of dwelling fires where a smoke alarm was fitted with 74% (280) alarms activating and 96 not activating. In addition, only 12.7% (48) operated and failed to raise an alarm to the fire.

South Tyneside reported the highest percentage of such incidents with 80.8% (59) alarms activating and 17 failing to do so.

Gateshead reported the lowest percentage with 69.2% (63) alarms activating and 17 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 the Authority were able to demonstrate a clearer link between the successfully delivery of Home Safety Checks and reduced risk to the community.

LI21 Number of malicious false alarm calls attended

The Authority attended 192 malicious false alarm calls by the end of Q3 2011/12, 1.5% (3 calls) fewer when compared against Q3 2011/12.

Despite forecasting that the Authority will reduce the number of such attendances by 1.8% (5) they were set not to achieve the target of 243 such incidents. However, the forecasted figure will result in the Authority reporting the lowest ever number of such incidents.

The Authority attended 18.8% (12) fewer malicious false alarm calls in Q3 when compared to Q2 despite Q3 traditionally reporting higher anti social behaviour related incidents. One less incident was attended in Q3 when compared to Q3 last year.

Newcastle and Gateshead recorded increases of 23.8% (15) and 14.3% (5) respectively when compared against Q3 2011/12. The other districts recorded decreases with Sunderland recording the greatest decrease with 32% (20) fewer calls.

In response to a question from Councillor Heron regarding call out rates for public buildings, Chris Lowther advised that hospitals remained the highest for call out rates and this was a massive drain on service resources. However, this had decreased following the completion of new building programmes as dust and debris had been a major contributing factor in activating alarms.

Councillor Padgett enquired what was being done to educate people about the consequences of malicious calls.

Tom Capeling advised that the control room staff were trained to operate a call challenging policy which has reduced the number of malicious calls attended.

Ongoing education in schools and the community was also important.

In response to a further question from Councillor Padgett regarding court prosecutions due to malicious calls, Chris Lowther advised that the most recent prosecution had involved a lady with mental health issues. Mobile phone companies were also assisting by switching off mobile phones of perpetrators.

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 47.6 (1,595) false alarms from non domestic premises by the end of Q2 2011/12, reflecting a reduction of 6% (99) compared against Q2 2010/11.

As a result of this performance the Authority was forecast to improve on the 2010/11 performance, however it is set to fail to achieve the target of 103.5 (3249).

Despite Newcastle accounting for 42% of all FAA to the end Q2 2011/12 it has reported an overall reduction of 10% (72) compared to the same period in 2010/11. 25% (166) of FAA in Newcastle were from hospitals.

Hospitals were the main premises type for such incidents accounting for 21% of all FAA up to the end of Q2 2011/12.

In total 259 properties were attended more than once by the end of Q2 2011/12, an increase of 3% (8) when compared against the same period in 2010/11. This reflects the fact that attendance to premises on a single occasion have reduced.

LI 86 % of workforce from a black minority ethnic community

The performance of this indicator by the end of Q3 2011/12 would result in the Authority being within 2.5% variance of the 2.7% target.

This performance reflected a total of 29 staff from a total workforce of 1128.19, a slightly higher figure when compared with the same period in 2010/11

There were 19 operational staff within the organisation who were from a black minority ethnic community, reflecting 2.2% of the operational.

LI85 % of workforce who are women

The percentage of women working for the Authority currently stands at 20.4%, a decrease of 0.7% compared against the performance reported at the end of Q3 2010/11.

Based on this performance, the Authority was within 2.5% variance of its target of 21.1%, based on current staffing levels this equates to a shortfall of 8 women.

This performance reflects 230 employees out of a total workforce of 1128.19 posts, reflecting a reduction on the number (248) reported at the end of Q3 2010/11.

LI82 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 Q3 2011/12 was 4.32. This reflects a 6.3% (0.29days) reduction on the same period in 2010/11.

The forecasted performance of 5.76 days / shifts reflects an increase of 0.3 compared to 2010/11, continuing the positive performance reported.

Based on current performance the Authority were forecast to exceed the target for the first time.

The Chairman commented that it was very pleasing to see progress was still being made despite the current financial strains.

A New Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

The Committee considered a joint report by the Chief Fire Officer to brief Members on the draft Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, published in December 2011, and its potential implications for TWFR.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised that The National Fire Framework has been a key statutory driver of FRS activity in recent years, linked to the implementation of the 2004 Fire and Rescue Services Act, the removal of national standards of fire cover and moves towards local determination of the most effective response to life risk.

The Framework was a vehicle for ensuring compliance by FRAs with the general policy direction of the Government of the day. Thus all but the first and last of the ‘musts’ set out above have fallen by the wayside as the Coalition has moved away from regionalisation; halted RCC and removed Firebuy in the “bonfire of the quangos”; and reduced its specific requirements on FRAs in terms of equality and diversity.

The new draft Framework was out for consultation until 19th March 2012. It had three themes:

- Community safety
- Accountability to communities
- Assurance

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer gave more detail regarding the themes.

FRAs should make provision for independent scrutiny of these statements.

There had been much debate about how operational assurance were to be provided and given the lack of an independent Inspectorate the Audit Commission would fulfil this role; this debate was also happening in local government and relates to the potential impact of less coordinated, independent assessment of service quality.

In general terms, the framework reiterates the commitment to locally based decisions about how services were designed to take account of local risk through IRMPs. This approach has served the Authority well over a number of years, coupled with improved understanding and targeting of risk. The continuation of such an approach was to be welcomed.

There may be a need for further debate at the national level as to what was meant in terms of identifying “all risks” in this process.

There remained some lack of clarity on the national governance arrangements which would be in place for national resilience, and TWFR staff will engage in discussion on these through CFOA.

In terms of accountability, TWFR was compliant with existing guidance but may wish to consider its approach to scrutiny should the Framework be agreed.

The consultation document asked the following questions about the framework.

- a. *Is the content of each chapter clear, specific and proportionate?***
- b. *Does the draft Framework set clear and appropriate expectations of FRAs? If not, how could it be improved?***
- c. *Are the respective roles of FRAs and Government set out clearly? If not how could they be improved/made clearer?***
- d. *Do the requirements on FRAs on scrutiny, access to comparable performance data and assurance go too far or not far enough?***

Members' views were sought on the draft Framework to inform further debate and any potential response, based on the implications outlined.

The Chairman commented that the biggest risk was that the framework was unclear as to what the Authority may or may not do. If peer assessment and review would be the way of working in the future then the Authority needed to know how they would contribute to it.

Members also queried how the Scrutiny arrangements would work.

Having considered the report it was:-

RESOLVED that

- i. The content of the report is noted, and
- ii. The Chief Fire Officer be authorised to provide feedback to the consultation

(Signed) R. Heron
Chairman

