

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
13 SEPTEMBER 2010 at 10.30 a.m.

Present:

Councillor N. Forbes in the Chair

Councillors Huscroft and Jordan.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Boyes and Wright.

Declarations of Interest

None.

Minutes

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Committee held on 7 June 2010 (circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Quarter 1 (Q1) (April – June) Performance Report 2010/11

The Committee considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer on the Q1 (April – June) Performance of the Authority against the targets for 2010/11.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised that the Q1 (April – June) performance continued to improve.

Chris Maude outlined the report on the performance in relation to the National Indicators and local indicators which reflected organisational priorities:-

NI49 Number of Primary fires and related fatalities and non fatal casualties (excluding precautionary checks):

- **NI49i** Total number of primary fires per 100,000 population
- **NI49ii** Total number of fatalities due to primary fires per 100,000 population
- **NI49iii** Total number of non fatal casualties (excluding precautionary checks) per 100,000 population

NI33 Arson Incidents:

- **NI33i** Total number of all deliberate fires per 10,000 population (LI33)
- **NI33iii** Total number of deliberate secondary fires per 10,000 population

Emergency Response:

- **LI5** Number of injuries from all fires
- **LI8.1** Number of accidental fires in dwellings per 10,000 dwellings
- **LI12.1** % of fires attended in dwellings where a smoke alarm was fitted but did not activate
- **LI21** Number of malicious false alarm calls attended
- **LI22.1** Number of false alarm calls due to automatic fire alarms from non domestic properties per 1000 non domestic premises

Diversity and Equality:

- **LI86** % of workforce from ethnic minority communities
- **LI85** % of workforce who are women

Absence and Retirement:

- **LI82** Proportion of working days/shifts lost to sickness absence by all staff

The following key issues were highlighted:-

NI33iii Number of deliberate secondary fires per 10,000 population (LI16)

The Authority recorded 17.3 (1888) deliberate secondary fires per 10,000 population by the end of Q1 2010/11 and reflected an increase of 13% (221) on the performance reported in at the end of Q1 2009/10. As a result of the 2010/11 performance, the Authority was set to miss its target (47.9) by 5% (272).

In reply to a question from Councillor Huscroft regarding links with Local Strategic Partnerships and street wardens, the Assistant Chief Fire Officer reported that a number of initiatives (outlined in the Performance Report) with Northumbria Police and street wardens were being undertaken in each District to tackle the issues and reduce the number of deliberate fires.

LI21 Number of Malicious false alarm calls attended

The Authority attended 82 malicious false alarm calls by the end of Q1 2010/11, a decrease of 1% (1 call) when compared against performance in 2009/10. As a result of this performance the Authority was set to miss its target of 237 calls by 19% (44 calls).

It was noted that re-offenders received letters and visits from Fire Authority staff.

LI22.1 Number of false alarm calls due to automatic fire alarms from non domestic premises per 1,000 non domestic premises

The Authority attended 24.9 false alarm calls due to automatic fire alarms from non domestic premises per 1,000 non domestic premises during Q1, a decrease of 1% (9) when compared against the same period in 2009/10.

It was noted that the Authority worked closely with hospitals and universities to reduce such attendances to false alarm calls.

The Committee welcomed the Performance Report and noted that the Authority compared well with other Fire Authorities.

Councillor Forbes stated that many of the targets were challenging and beyond the immediate control of the Authority and he welcomed the joint initiatives with partners throughout the Districts.

2. RESOLVED that the Committee:-

- (i) note and endorse the contents of the report; and
- (ii) agree to the publication of the Performance Report.

Regional Management Boards and the Equality and Diversity Agenda

A report was submitted by the Chief Fire Officer on changes in respect of the Coalition Government's approach to two key areas of work contained within the Fire and Rescue National Framework Document, namely Regional Management Boards and the Equality and Diversity agenda.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer reported that there would no longer be a requirement for Fire and Rescue Authorities to work through Regional Management Boards (RMB) to deliver the various elements of the National Framework that fell within the RMB remit.

The continuation of the RMBs was now a decision for the constituent Fire and Rescue Authorities, although there would still be a Government expectation that Authorities would collaborate where it was beneficial to do so.

The RMB in the North East had provided a vehicle for discussion and for the delivery of some collaborative projects, such as the provision of fire appliances and uniform, and it continued to be a useful forum for discussing issues surrounding the FireControl project.

The RMB was not a statutory decision making body, therefore its formal structure and terms of reference could be considered to be overly complicated given its lack of formal authority and a more informal means of discussing issues of common interest might be more appropriate for the region.

Furthermore, recent issues within the RMB itself would also suggest that it was now appropriate to review the future of the Board and consultation would need to be undertaken with colleagues from the Fire and Rescue Services of the North East in order to ascertain their views as to whether the RMB should continue or whether there were other, more effective methods of collaborating.

In respect of the Equality and Diversity requirements contained within the National Framework document, the Minister Bob Neill, had stated that the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) would no longer monitor Fire and Rescue Authority compliance within the Equality and Diversity Strategy, nor would the Department look to monitor or enforce the recruitment, progression or retention targets that currently existed in individual services.

Instead the onus would be on individual Fire and Rescue Authorities to determine how they would pursue the Equality and Diversity agenda and subsequently decide whether to retain a target-based approach in line with a performance management framework.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer suggested that the Committee consider retaining the performance measures in place and that performance against these continue to be reported to the Authority, regardless of the fact that there would no longer be a requirement to report the information to CLG.

This would ensure that the subject continued to be seen by everyone as a key priority of the Authority and, in practical terms, the targets would help to focus attention on the need to continue developing and implementing initiatives that would help to broaden the diversity of the workforce.

The Committee were of the opinion that it was important that the Authority as an employer should reflect the communities that it served and that the Equality and Diversity targets were helpful in maintaining the focus on this.

The Committee welcomed a review of the role of the Regional Management Board.

3. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the comments of the Committee be taken forward to the consultation on the RMB; and
- (ii) the Equality and Diversity performance measures be retained.

Fire Futures: Strategic Review of the Fire and Rescue Service

The Committee considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer on the National Strategic Review of the Fire Service that was currently being undertaken by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG).

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Review was set in the context of the emerging social, economic and physical challenges facing the fire sector, and it was noted that the sector: “must proactively change to meet these challenges to maintain its effectiveness in serving communities and to represent value for money to the public purse. Along with this was an expectation from Government that the service reflected localism, decentralisation, transparency, accountability and the big society in what they do”.

The Review focused on four key areas each with a workstream group consisting of civil servants and FRS representatives. The four themes were Role and Delivery Models, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Productivity, Localism and Accountability and National Interest.

The Review was in its early stages and CLG had indicated that all comments would be welcomed.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer stated that the Authority had been asked to consider and comment on the issues to feed into a meeting of the Chief Fire Officers’ Association at the end of September 2010.

The Committee considered the report on the Review and in the course of discussion highlighted the following:-

Role and Delivery Models

- The Committee were of the opinion that survey work had shown that residents in the Districts had a great deal of trust in the Fire and Rescue Service which had a very good track record, history and reputation, and the current model was right for Tyne and Wear. Some potential approaches such as privatisation or outsourcing could undermine trust.

Efficiency, Effectiveness and Productivity

- Through the performance management that was now embedded as part of the organisation, the impact of preventative work on community outcomes had been shown. The Authority should not lose sight of the importance of prevention as well as response work.
- The Authority had an Integrated Risk Management Plan to identify efficiencies linked to evidence of community risk, and should continue this approach. Employees and Trade Unions also signed up to the approach, which was important.
- Tyne and Wear felt like a cohesive area and if the Authority was to expand into Durham and Northumberland this raised issues such as rural areas which could lead to difficulties in achieving response times. A larger area could cause issues with delivery; smaller areas could reduce value for money.
- The issue of charging for a public service would be problematic in particular for prevention work.

Localism and Accountability

- Although the term Localism was open to interpretation, the service was well placed regarding localism, for example Community Fire Stations were an asset and very well used by the local community.
- Health and Safety work and work with the Prince's Trust already contributed to the Big Society Agenda.
- The Authority had a good governance framework, was accountable through the Councils in Tyne and Wear and had received good feedback from the Audit Commission which was also a form of independent information in terms of accountability.
- the Authority had robust partnership working arrangements with the Tyne and Wear Local Authorities.

National Interest

It was noted that the Authority had taken on New Dimensions assets with a commitment that they would continue to be nationally funded. There was need for some national role, and there were also links to the Local Resilience Forum.

4. RESOLVED that the above comments from the Policy and Performance Committee on the Strategic Review of the Fire and Rescue Service be submitted to the Fire Authority meeting on Monday 20 September 2010.

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) N. FORBES,
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.