

## **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 7 JUNE  
2010 at 10.30 a.m.

### **Present:**

Councillor N. Forbes in the Chair

Councillors Boyes, Renton and T. Wright.

### **Apologies for Absence**

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

### **Declarations of Interest**

None.

### **Minutes**

16. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Committee held on 11 January 2010 (circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

## **End of Year (April – March) Performance Report 2009/2010**

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) providing end of year performance information for the Authority against targets for 2009/2010.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised that the report looked backwards at performance during the year. It was noted that overall the Authority had experienced another successful year in terms of improvement and meeting targets set. She then went on to introduce Chris Maude who delivered a presentation detailing performance based on national indicators (as defined by Communities and Local Government) and local indicators (which reflected priorities of the Authority based on previous performance and the goals of the organisation): -

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

- **NI49i** Total number of primary fire 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 deliberate primary and secondary fires per 10,000 population (LI33)
- **NI33ii** Total number of deliberate primary fires per 10,000 population
- **NI33iii** Total number of deliberate secondary fires per 10,000 population

### **Emergency Response:**

- **LI3** Number of injuries arising from accidental fires in dwellings (excluding precautionary checks)
- **LI8.1** Number of accidental fires in dwellings per 10,000 dwellings
- **LI13.1** % of fires attended in dwellings where no smoke alarm was fitted
- **LI21** Number of malicious false alarm calls attended
- **LI22.1** Number of false alarms due to automatic fire detection 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

Having received detailed information regarding each of the above, members debated the year's performance.

Councillor Wright in enquiring why Sunderland had such low accident/injury rates in relation to the number of fires. It was advised that through the Performance Action group the Service Delivery team look at any particular issues relating to Districts and would explore this issue. It was noted that when comparing the number of fires that occur in relation to the 474,000 households in the City, the number of injuries is very small and the few injuries that are recorded are very rarely burns, instead it is usually smoke inhalation.

Councillor Wright enquired why in South Tyneside 11 injuries had been reported as a result of one incident. In response, the Chief Fire Officer explained that the particular incident had occurred in the common stairwell area of a low rise set of flats, where some residents had decided to vacate the building via the windows. The building was not of a great height nonetheless minor injuries were still caused to those who jumped.

Members were advised that since the event a number of fire safety initiatives had taken place in that area. Work had also begun in relation to reviewing the EU fire precautionary measures.

Councillor Wright commented that it would be useful to see performance at micro-level in order that information could be broken down into Wards. This would then allow Councillors to tackle problems and set up campaigns in specific areas to assist working towards achieving targets.

Chris Maude explained that a new system had recently been implemented whereby every month data is broken down into Ward level and shared with the respective local authorities. Councillor Boyes requested that she be informed of the contact officer holding that information at South Tyneside.

The Chief Fire Officer warned that sometimes the more information is broken down the harder it is to identify trends.

There was discussion of equality targets and the challenges of continuing to meet these in periods when little recruitment is taking place.

Councillor Renton in referring to 'LI22.1 Number of false alarm calls due to automatic fire alarms from non domestic premises per 1,000 non domestic premises' stated that the figures for Newcastle appeared to be impacted upon negatively due to two hospitals being located within the district and enquired why this was the case. Chris Maude responded advising that Fire Authorities were working with all the major hospitals to try to reduce the number of false alarms, and in time Members should see a difference.

The Chief Fire Officer added that the number of fire detectors on the sites of hospitals was high and that work was being undertaken to look at incidents per detector head to monitor any trends.

Councillor Renton enquired further if the Fire Authority received less calls from the Inland Revenue building that was located in close proximity to the Freeman Hospital. The Chief

Fire Officer advised that this was the case but that there were also particular issues for hospitals where the risk of fire to non ambulant patients makes staff very aware of fire risk.

Councillor Boyes commented on the other hand, sometimes dementia sufferers in residential homes can be the cause of fire alarms without understanding what they are doing. The Chief Fire Officer explained that the Fire Authority was working with partners to discuss this.

In relation to a question from Councillor Renton in relation to sickness recording, The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that long term and short term sickness absence was indeed recorded separately.

Councillor N. Forbes in enquiring how sickness absence was calculated within Headquarters was advised that it was managed on a team by team basis. Chris Maude then stated that information of this type could be included in future reports if required.

Councillor N. Forbes stated that overall the report was very pleasing and that it was good to see that trends were reducing in many areas. He also stated that it was useful to see that comparisons had been made with other Metropolitan authorities and also at district level, which he encouraged should continue, in particular performance monitoring, learning from each others positive experiences and sharing initiatives that have worked well for others.

He went on to suggest further that in terms of taking matters forward, it would be useful for the Main Fire Authority to have a discussion around partnership working and how effective it is at continuously monitoring and improving performance. The Chief Fire Officer agreed that partnership working was an excellent way of sharing good practice and explained that a report on partnership working could indeed be taken to a future meeting of the Main Fire Authority.

Following detailed discussion and questions from Members, it was:-

17. RESOLVED to:-

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

### **The Coalition Programme, The Queen's Speech and In Year Savings 2010/2011**

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report (copy circulated) setting out for Members the key features of the Coalition Programme as far as they were currently known with regard to their relationship to the Fire and Rescue Service.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer drew Members' attention to the fact that following the General Election in May 2010, a Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition Government was established and had begun to set out a shared agenda through:-

- a Coalition Programme;
- the announcement of in year savings on 24<sup>th</sup> May, to be followed by an emergency budget on 22<sup>nd</sup> June and a full Spending Review in the Autumn “following consultation with all tiers of Government and the private sector”; and
- the announcement of a comprehensive programme of legislation in the Queen’s Speech on 25<sup>th</sup> May.

The report then described the main impact this could potentially have on the Fire and Rescue Service and the Assistant Chief Fire Officer provided a verbal update on the most salient points as they related to local government (including FRS) and police services. In particular, Members notes the strong emphasis on reducing the deficit through public sector reform and efficiency.

It was recommended that Members note the content of the report as a statement of the position to date, and receive further reports in future.

Detailed discussion then took place on the report, with Members noting that the coalition programme had wide ranging implications for the organisation in terms of potential financial implications; impact of potential changes in public sector structures including at regional level; and impact on the management of performance and improvement.

Given the role of the Policy and Performance Committee, the discussion focused upon issues relating to performance management and in particular the abolition of Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) and lack of clarity about the future nature of audit of public bodies.

Members agreed that in relation to this:-

- They would wish to reiterate their commitment to evidenced-based decision-making;
- Continued comparison and benchmarking with other Metropolitan Authorities and sector led approaches to improvement, are desirable; and
- Independent scrutiny of the organisation to assist towards making improvement should continue in a proportionate way.

Members of the Committee then thanked the Assistant Chief Fire Officer for her report and requested that these discussions continue at a future meeting of the Main Fire Authority.

Upon consideration, it was:-

18. RESOLVED to:-

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

(Signed) N. FORBES,  
Chairman.

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

At the instance of the Chairman, it was:-

19. 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 I, 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.