

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 24
OCTOBER 2011 at 10.30 a.m.

Present:

Councillor Heron in the Chair

Councillors Ahad and Mulvenna

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors M. Forbes, N. Forbes and Padgett.

Declarations of Interest

None.

Minutes

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Committee held on 10 January 2011 (circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

End of Q2 (April - September) Performance Report 2011/12

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Fire Officer to present the Q2

(April – September) performance of the Authority against the targets for 2011/12. Members of the Policy and Performance Committee are requested to consider and scrutinise the contents of this report and provide comments.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chairman welcomed Mark Hedley, Corporate Development Manager to the Committee and invited him to present the report.

Mark Hedley explained how the report was structured and the graphical information presented.

He 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 ethnic minority 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 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 includes, based on a comparison with 2010/11,

- 20% fewer **Accidental Dwelling Fires**
- 14% fewer **Deliberate Fires**
- 14% fewer **Deliberate Secondary Fires**
- 13% fewer **Accidental Kitchen Fires**

Mark Hedley advised that the local priorities would be reviewed and agreed on an annual basis to take into account the changes in performance and the needs and requirements of the Authority. He then took the Committee through each National and Local Priority in turn.

NI49i Number of Primary Fires per 100,000 population (LI29):

The Authority attended 89.8 (993) primary fires per 100,000 population by the end of Q2 2011/12. This reflects a reduction of 11% (127) when compared against the same period in 2010/11.

Based on the forecasted end of year performance of 181.8 (2,011), the Authority were set to achieve a target of 190.3 (2,105) primary fires per 100,000 population by 5% (248).

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 26% (45) compared with the same period in 2010/11.

As a result of the 997 incidents there were 118 victims.

Chris Lowther advised that Gateshead had reduced its number of street wardens due to financial pressures as reflected in the statistics. In response to an enquiry from Councillor Ahad regarding what was being done to mitigate the effects of having less wardens, Chris Lowther advised that as they were aware of the situation, resources were being reorganised accordingly.

NI49ii Number of fatalities due to primary fires per 100,000 population (LI2):

The Authority had reported 4 fatalities reported from primary fires by the end of Q2 2011/12, with 3 of these as a result of an accidental dwelling fire. By the end of Q2 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, we 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 within Gateshead, Sunderland and South Tyneside districts and the casualties were 2 females and 2 males.

Chris Lowther reported that when a fatality occurred an immediate case study was undertaken. Case conferences with partners sought to share intelligence about vulnerable people. Partnership working allowed smart targeting of at risk groups and individual agencies to implement preventative measures. This way of working would also extend to near miss cases.

In response to a question from Councillor Mulvenna, Chris Lowther advised that only one of the fatalities had smoke alarms fitted. The incident of the particular individual had been exacerbated by the fact he was using oxygen.

Councillor Heron enquired whether particular hot spots where smoke alarm take up was poor were targeted. Chris Lowther advised that data protection issues had prevented the ability to share information about vulnerable people. It was necessary to try to engage further with care services regarding this.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised that an evaluation day had recently taken place and the issue of engaging care providers in Newcastle had been considered. Good progress was being made but there was still some way to go. She agreed to bring a report to a future meeting of the Committee regarding the work that was being undertaken with carers and care providers.

NI33i Number of all deliberate fires per 10,000 population (LI33):

The Authority recorded 27.8 (3,075) deliberate fires per 10,000 population by the end of Q2 2011/12, a decrease of 14% (501) compared to the same period in 2010/11.

This positive performance was supported by a 18% (94) reduction in the number of deliberate primary fires by the end of Q2 2011/12.

As a result of this the Authority were forecast to achieve the target of 54.0 (5,977), reflecting a forecast reduction of 7% (410). In addition, this performance would result in a reduction of 8% (501) 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 District reported the highest number of such incidents despite a 7% (27) reduction.

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

The Authority recorded 28.9 (2,638) deliberate secondary fires per 10,000 population by the end of Q2 2011/12, reflecting a decrease of 14% (410) on the figure reported at the end of Q2 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 (5,156), a reduction of 8% (410).

Compared to the Met FRS, Sunderland's 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 (828) of such incidents by the end of Q2 2011/12 when compared against the other districts. However, it reported a decrease of 21% (215) incidents when compared against the same period in 2010/11.

North and South Tyneside districts have made noteworthy reductions in this indicator of 27% (108) and 25% (89) respectively when compared to the same period last year.

Councillor Mulvenna queried how many deliberate fires were linked to insurance claims. Chris Lowther advised it was very difficult to ascertain, and many could be linked to anti social behaviour.

LI 4 Number of injuries from accidental dwelling fires

The Authority recorded 83 injuries from accidental dwelling fires by the end of Q2 2011/12, a slight decrease of one injury when compared with the same period in 2010/11.

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

As a result of this performance the Authority was forecast to achieve its target of 179 injuries. In total 45% (15) of such injuries resulted in the casualty being admitted to hospital.

Average age of a fire victim was 47 years old with 52% (44) male and 48% (40) female. The average age of a casualty suffering from serious injuries resulting in hospital treatment was 49 years old with 52% (20) casualties being female.

Newcastle reported the highest number (23) of injuries from accidental dwelling fires, with the average age of a casualty being 35 years of age.

Newcastle and South Tyneside reported a greater number of such injuries by the end of Q2 2011/12 when compared against the same period in 2010/11. North Tyneside recorded a 47% (9) reduction during the same period.

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

The Authority attended 5.9 (278) accidental dwelling fires per 10,000 dwellings by the end of Q2 2011/12, a decrease of 11% (35) compared with the same period in 2010/11, continuing to reflect the lowest number of such incidents reported by the Authority.

A total of 69 people were either injured or rescued from the 278 incidents, with 32% (22) occurring in a single occupancy purpose built flat.

As a result of this performance the Authority is forecast to achieve its target (13.5) for 2011/12 by 4% (28).

The majority of such incidents occurred within the kitchen (63%), with Gateshead (69%), accounting for the highest percentage of such incidents occurring in the kitchen at district level.

Sunderland reported the largest percentage of accidental non kitchen fires with a total of 41% (27), reflecting the targeted Home Safety Check initiatives carried out within the area.

The wards of Walker (10), Westgate (9), Deckham (9), Lobley Hill and Bensham (8) and Millfield (8) account for the majority of such incidents with 16% of the service total.

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

The Authority attended 72% (242) of dwelling fires where a smoke alarm was fitted with 71% (173) alarms activating and 29% (69) not activating. In addition, only 11% (26) operated and failed to raise an alarm to the fire.

Gateshead continued to report the lowest percentage of such incidents, reflecting the number of attendances to such incidents in 2010/11. South Tyneside reported the highest percentage (6%) of such incidents with 67% (24) alarms activating and 33% (12) 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 successful delivery of Home Safety Checks and reduced risk to the community.

LI21 Number of malicious false alarm calls attended

The Authority attended 141 malicious false alarm calls by the end of Q2 2011/12, 3% (4 calls) fewer when compared against Q2 2011/12.

Despite forecasting that we will reduce the number of such attendances by 1% (3) we are set not to achieve the target of 243 such incidents. However, the forecasted figure will result in us reporting the lowest ever number of such incidents.

Newcastle reported the greatest number (61) of such incidents by the end of Q2 2011/12, an increase of 53% when compared against Q2 2011/12. Westgate Ward accounted for the greatest number (21%) of any ward.

Sunderland recorded the greatest decrease in these incidents with 47% (25) fewer call when compared against Q2 2011/12.

Historically we have reported the greatest number of such incidents during Q1, reflecting the increased number of deliberate fires reported during this period.

In response to a question from Councillor Heron regarding specific times of the year when the instances of malicious calls went up, Chris Lowther advised that they tended to peak during the lighter nights. Next year there would be a concerted effort to identify and disrupt 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.

Councillor Mulvenna commented on the number of false alarms that occurred in hospitals due to the positioning of alarm buttons and stated there was a need to revolutionise these alarm systems.

Councillor Heron enquired how many factories had sprinkler systems installed and was advised by Chris Lowther that there was no statutory requirement to install such expensive systems and therefore there would not be many in the area.

Councillor Mulvenna queried what the role of the authority was with regard to inspecting businesses for maintenance and compliance. Chris Lowther advised that the legislation regarding fire safety regulations in business premises had changed. It was the responsibility of the owner occupiers to make sure the workplace reached the required standard. The requirement for businesses to have fire certificates had been abolished. Inspections would still be carried out on high/ medium risk properties and local fire and rescue authorities were responsible for enforcing the Fire and Safety Order in most premises.

In response to an enquiry, Councillor Mulvenna was advised that the FRA were consulted when an application for a hot food establishment with living accommodation above it was received.

Referring to the table of actions, Councillor Mulvenna complimented the excellent work that had been carried out with the Schools Education Programme Initiative to reduce malicious false alarms.

LI 86 % of workforce from an ethnic minority community

The performance of this indicator in 2011/12 reflects that achieved at the end of 2010/11 and will result in the Authority being within the variance of the 2.7% target.

This performance reflects a total of 28 staff from a total workforce of 1175.15. This is a reduction in the overall total number employed, reducing by 13% (4) when compared with the same period in 2010/11.

There were 19 uniformed staff within the organisation who are from an ethnic minority community, reflecting 1.9% of the uniformed workforce.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Ahad, Chris Lowther confirmed that the Young Firefighters Association did actively encourage the BME community to become involved.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised that due to the current economic climate, the ability to increase staff from this community would be limited. There had been a period of shrinkage which made it difficult to influence the balance of staff during the period of retrenchment.

Councillor Ahad suggested that the title of the performance indicator was changed to '% of workforce from a Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic community'.

LI85 % of workforce who are women

The percentage of women working for the Authority currently stands at 20.5%, an increase of 0.2% compared against the performance reported at the end of 2010/11.

Based on this performance, the Authority was within the variance of its target of 21.1%, based on current staffing levels this equates to a shortfall of 7 women.

This performance reflects 241 employees out of a total workforce of 1175.15 posts, reflecting a reduction on the number (254) reported at the end of Q1 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 Q1 2011/12 was 1.46. This reflects a slight increase of 0.1 days compared with the same period in 2010/11.

The forecasted performance of 6.06 days / shifts reflects an increase of 0.01 compared to 2010/11, continuing the positive performance reported.

Despite the target for all staff to be exceeded the targets for both wholetime uniformed and rider staff are forecast to be achieved based on the Q1 2011/12 performance.

The district of Newcastle reported the highest level of sickness for any district, reporting an increase of 0.08 days / shifts when compared to the end of Q1 2010/11.

The 'other' members of staff reflect the highest number of days / shifts lost to sickness across the Authority, with 2.36 days / shifts by the end of Q1 2011/12.

Chris Lowther advised that a significant factor in sickness was musculoskeletal injuries, however if the injury was such that a firefighter could be redeployed on a different project during their recovery then this was done.

Councillor Mulvenna enquired how many corporate staff were sick due to stress related illness. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised that there was an awareness that there could be an increase in stress related illness in staff

due to the current period of uncertainty. This would be minimised by involving staff as much as possible during reviews.

RESOLVED that the Committee

- i) Note and endorse the contents of the report, and
- ii) Agree to the publication of the performance report

Local Government Resource Review

The Committee considered a joint report by the Chief Fire Officer and the Finance Officer to brief Members on the Government's consultation paper on future funding of local authorities including business rate retention; and to seek Member approval of our position on this review.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised that at present, all businesses pay National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR, also known as business rates) at a rate set by Government. These rates are collected by Councils, pooled nationally and then redistributed as part of the Government funding of local authorities, including FRAs. Some local authorities with larger business rates bases receive less through this than they collect; whilst others with smaller tax bases receive more than they raise.

TWFRA currently receives 40% of its funding (£23.749m in 2011/12) from Council Tax and 60% (£32.191m) from Government grant. Of this amount, £7.601m is revenue support grant and £24.590m is redistributed NNDR.

In July 2010, Government produced a consultation paper on proposed changes to the funding arrangements for local government; this was supported by a set of technical papers published in August. proposed to fundamentally change local government finance by allowing local authorities to retain a significant proportion of the business rates raised locally.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer outlined the seven components to the proposals:-

- Setting the Baseline
- Tariffs and Top-Ups
- The Incentive Effect
- Disproportionate benefit
- Adjusting for Revaluation
- Resetting the system
- Pooling

In the original consultation paper, it was proposed that Police and Fire Authorities should, for 2013-14 and 2014-15, be funded without being impacted by the new business rates retention scheme which is to become

operational from 1st April 2013. This would mean that total funding for the Police and Fire services would be at the levels set out in the 2010 Spending Review, but beyond that there will be a full review of future funding arrangements for Police and Fire authorities. In parallel with this, Government will consider more closely aligning the functions and responsibilities of local authorities with business rate income.

However, one of the technical papers published in August deals specifically with proposals for those authorities which do not collect Business Rates (“non billing authorities”), and this includes Combined and Metropolitan (“single purpose”) FRAs. County FRAs are assumed to be part of their host County Council and as such would be included in that Council’s funding arrangements.

Members were asked to consider whether:

- (Option A) Single purpose FRAs should also be funded through business rates (a percentage share of each District Council’s business rates baseline subject to tariff and top up)
- (Option B) Single purpose FRAs should have guaranteed funding for 2013-14 and 2014-15 based on the levels agreed in the 2010 Spending Review (which would mean making an adjustment to the forecast national business rates). This would be in line with proposals for Police Authorities.

From a FRA’s perspective, it could be argued that we have a limited role in promoting economic growth and therefore being exposed to the risks of fluctuating business rate income is not desirable. Under this arrangement our future funding would, to a large degree, become dependent upon the success, or otherwise, of the district councils that cover its area to be able to foster economic development and growth.

It was therefore suggested that TWFRA’s position on this matter should be as set out in the following paragraph:

The Authority favours option b. The Fire Authority understands the need for the LGRR to be all encompassing but would agree with the proposal to exclude them from the initial system until 1st April 2015. The government may want to consider the funding arrangements for the Police and Fire Authorities as a separate case and permanently exclude them from the new retained business rates system altogether, as they do not directly generate business rate income and are dependent upon the district councils they are located within; they therefore have little influence over the growth / reduction in business rate in their area. However it is important that the method of grant allocation to FRAs is further exemplified and agreed as soon as possible to assist them in longer term financial planning both in the interim, and for beyond 2015/16..

There remains a lack of clarity about whether the current grant distribution and floor damping arrangements would remain in place. As noted in section

3.6 above, this of itself could have an impact on our Formula Grant funding position for 2013/14 and 2014/15.

The proposals include the continuation of the New Burdens principle which has seen additional funding being made available where Government places specific new responsibilities on local authorities. There is a need for transparency on what this might mean for Fire in terms of the future funding of national resilience capability.

Members stated that it was important the system was fair and that moves towards the localisation of business rates must take into account the differences between individual authorities. Councillor Mulvenna raised concerns that government proposals were being instigated too quickly without any real consideration of the implications in years to come.

The Assistant Chief Fire officer commented that as a Fire Service they had to work within the policies of the Government at the time. The full details of either option were still not known.

Councillor Heron advised that it was important the Authority had continuity year on year.

Having considered the report it was:-

RESOLVED that

- i. the content of the paper is noted and the position set out in paragraph 4.5 is endorsed, and
- ii. Receive further reports as appropriate.

(Signed) R. Heron
Chairman