

## **POLICY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting of the POLICY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE held via Microsoft Teams on MONDAY 22 FEBRUARY 2021 at 10.30 am

### **Present:**

### **Item 3 (ii)**

Councillor N. Forbes in the Chair.

Councillors Dodds, Duggan, Purvis, Pickard and Samuels.

### **Apologies for Absence**

An apology for absence was submitted to the meeting on behalf of the Chief Fire Officer.

### **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **Minutes**

4. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Committee held on 9 November 2020 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **Quarter Three Performance Report 2020/2021**

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (the Clerk to the Authority), the Finance Director and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report to provide the Policy and Performance Committee with information relating to Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS) performance for Quarter Three (Q3) 2020/21.

Members were reminded that the Q3 Performance Report 2020/21 provided a comprehensive overview of the organisation's performance in relation to key performance indicators for 1 April 2020 to 31 December 2020.

The Service had achieved or were within, 10% of achieving 13 of the 16 performance indicator targets.

AM Clark and AM David Leach delivered a presentation which detailed the following for Members' information:

- There had been 0 deaths from accidental dwelling fires;
- There had been 1 death from all fires which had occurred from a road vehicle in April last year. The outcome of the Coroner's Inquest was awaited;
- Injuries from all fires had increased by 41% and a 55% increase in injuries from accidental fires had been seen;
- 32% of victims with injuries from dwelling fires who went to hospital were over the age of 60 with the main origin being the kitchen or smoking in the bedroom. There were therefore ongoing campaigns, further supported by crews from Marley Park who produced a video for social media;
- 52% of injuries from accidental dwelling fires had occurred in the Kitchen (mainly caused by cooking), with Members being asked to be mindful that residents were currently spending more time in their homes due to the COVID-19 Pandemic;
- Whilst the target of injuries from all fires had increased and therefore the target had not been met, Members were advised one incident in Sunderland and one incident in Gateshead, accounted for 11 of the recorded injuries;
- The number of fire calls had reduced by 2%;
- 72% of primary fires in road vehicles were deliberate fires. The Service had therefore recently appointed a Fire Investigation Manager who would work with Partners and try and bring cases to Court;
- 53% of accidental dwelling fires required no Firefighter action or were extinguished by small means;
- In 21% of dwelling fires a smoke alarm was fitted but did not activate. In 30% of dwelling fires no smoke alarm was fitted;

The Chair commented that targeted work had been undertaken for the last decade including partnership work with Social Housing Associations to ensure working smoke alarms were installed and questioned the type of properties and also the demographics.

AM Clark responded by advising that a piece of work had been commissioned through the Data Team to understand this further and help the Service focus further on where prevention work needed to be directed.

The Chair then asked whether if they were rental properties, whether appropriate enforcement would be undertaken and was advised that the Service would forward the relevant information across to the Local Authority's Environmental Health and also Housing Teams for appropriate action to be undertaken.

DCFO Heath provided Members with assurance that where a crew attended a property and no smoke alarm was fitted, the Service did fit a smoke detector, in a habitual property, with the owners consent, prior to leaving.

The Chair summarised the two key points in that smoke alarms were key in fighting fires and therefore a targeted approach was imperative and also that if Landlords were not abiding by rules and ensuring that smoke alarms were fitted and in working order, a tough approach needed to be undertaken and that this needed to be communicated to Landlords.

In addition, the Chair expressed his concerns in relation to any delays for this targeted work to be undertaken.

Members were assured that this work was already ongoing and that a risk based approach and inspection programme was already in place. This particular piece of work would determine where tweaks needed to be made to targeting to proactively identify premises and embed rethinking.

DCFO Heath agreed to provide Members with an electronic monthly update, which was welcomed. The Chair commented that information in relation to how many cases requiring regulatory action and how many resulted in action be undertaken would also be useful.

- There had been 5218 call for fire attendances which was a reduction on previous years;
- All primary fires totalled 1285 which was a slight reduction on previous years;
- Across the service TWFRS were within 10% of its target with a 5% increase in accidental dwelling fires, with 380 in Q3, up from 363 incidents in the previous year;
- Due to the pandemic the Service had continued to be innovative with its prevention activities using social media, utilising seasonal messages to highlight dangers in the home from fire. One social media campaign that had been ran highlighting incidents in kitchens, had returned over 50,000 hits and led to the introduction of leaflets with the top ten risks within the home;
- Also during this period an off duty Firefighter responded to a smoke alarm actuating at an neighbours house due to a fire in the kitchen. A social media campaign was ran following a video made by the Firefighter promoting Smoke alarm ownership and reacting to a sounding smoke alarm;
- The Service had seen an overall reduction in deliberate secondary fires of 13% across the service area which was pleasing as this was inclusive of the Bonfire period;
- The total number of incidents was 2,911 which was a reduction of 430 from the previous year;
- 22% of AFAs occurred at Hospital and medical care premises, 29% due to a fault (66), 7% were attributed to vaping;
- 7% of AFAs were at Education Premises, a 49% reduction on the same period last year. Members were asked to note that it was difficult to measure the impact of the introduction of the RBAP due to school closures during Covid-19 pandemic;
- 382 automatic false alarms in non-domestic premises were due to faulty alarms;
- The Service had seen a 10% decrease in automatic false alarms from domestic premises;

- The total number of incidents attended across the Service area had seen an overall reduction of 8%. All of the districts achieved their targets;
- There had been a reduction in the number of Home Safety Checks carried out to high risk households. Members were asked to note that undertaking HSC's during the Pandemic had been extremely difficult, however the Service had focused on the most vulnerable; and
- The average attendance time was 6 minutes.

DCFO Heath summarised by explaining that the key themes for Members to consider was that throughout the whole year TWFRS had remained fully resilient. Whilst HSC's had been challenging to undertake, the most vulnerable had been targeted. Members were assured that the Service still had the fastest response and that education continued to be of paramount importance to reduce the number of fires.

5. RESOLVED that:

- (i) The contents of the report be noted and endorsed; and
- (ii) Further reports be received as appropriate.

### **Service Assurance and Improvement Plan Update**

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (the Clerk to the Authority), the Finance Director and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report to provide Members with an update on the progress made against the Service Assurance and Improvement Plan.

AM Clark advised Members that despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, positive progress had been made against the Plan since November 2019. The highlights and key updates being:

- The Annual Audit Letter and Internal Audit confirmed good assurance activities in the Service, and identified no major improvement actions;
- The HMICFRS COVID-19 Thematic Inspection, carried out in October 2020, confirmed the Service responded well to the initial phase of the pandemic and were well prepared further report around March;
- Investors in People (IiP) conducted a full reassessment in December 2020 and indicated the Service was making good progress and had retained the Gold IiP status;
- The Service's approach to staff surveys were currently being reviewed, to improve the process and move towards a more regular, targeted 'temperature testing' of staff satisfaction and engagement. This would be complemented with all other survey activity, including HMICFRS staff survey, themed surveys, and IRMP consultation, to ensure a joined up approach;

- In July 2020, the Service was awarded the prestigious Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) Gold Award; and
- The Service achieved the North East Better Health at Work Gold Award level in October 2020. The Service was now working towards achieving the next award of “Continuing Excellence”.

With regards to service assurance and new activities for 2021/22, Members were advised that in November 2020, the Executive Leadership Team approved the introduction of a programme to ensure progress against key improvement actions, support preparation for HMICFRS inspection, and drive continuous improvement. In addition to this, HMICFRS had announced that TWFRS would be inspected in Tranche 2, and this was expected to be carried out in Autumn 2021/22.

In relation to Service improvements, 10 of the 14 formal Areas for Improvement identified by HMICFRS had been recorded as completed. Reality testing of these improvements had commenced, and progress would continue to be monitored.

AM Clark explained that some ‘areas for focus’ by the Service had been highlighted as a result of the thematic inspection, and would be included in the COVID-19 Action Plan and progress monitored by the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Group.

New actions had also been added to reflect the following improvement activities in 2021/22, which included:

- Review of the Corporate Risk Management Group structure and process;
- The introduction of the new Environmental Task Group which would be considering how to reduce the carbon footprint of the organisation; and
- Enhancement of activities to improve inclusion and diversification of workforce. AM Clark was pleased to advise that the new Inclusion Advisor had commenced her new employment that day.

6. RESOLVED that:

- (i) The contents of the report be noted and endorsed; and
- (ii) Further reports be received as appropriate.

### **National Fire Incident Response Times: 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020**

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (the Clerk to the Authority), the Finance Director and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report to provide members with an overview of the latest Home Office ‘Fire Incident Response Times’ for financial year 2019/20 (1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020) and to provide a comparison of Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS) performance to other Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) in England, and the other Metropolitan (MET) FRSs in the family group.

Members were reminded of the previously approved draft 'response standards' which drive the response performance and were referred to the detail at section 2.3 of the report.

Members were asked to recall that 'Pre-Alerting' technology was introduced in TWFRS in April 2019 with the main aim being to provide a quicker attendance to members of the public summoning the assistance of the Fire & Rescue Service. The results from this had been extremely positive.

AM Clark explained that the Home Office data showed that TWFRS were the top performing FRS in England in response to primary fires, dwelling fires and road vehicle fires and were within the top three best performing FRS's in England in response to other types of fire.

Members were then advised of the following:

The average total response time to 'primary fires' in England in 2019/20 was 8 minutes and 43 seconds, a decrease of 6 seconds since 2018/19. TWFRS were the fastest FRS in the country in response to primary fires with an average total response time of 6 minutes 29 seconds, a decrease of 23 seconds from 2018/19.

The average total response time to 'dwelling fires' in England in 2019/20 was 7 minutes 45 seconds, a decrease of 2 seconds compared with 2018/19. TWFRS were the fastest FRS in the country in response to dwelling fires with an average total response time of 5 minutes 55 seconds, a decrease of 18 seconds from 2018/19.

The average total response time to 'other building fires' in England in 2019/20 was 8 minutes 37 seconds, an increase of 2 seconds from 2018/19. TWFRS were the 2<sup>nd</sup> fastest FRS in the country to other building fires with an average total response time of 6 minutes 43 seconds, a decrease of 24 seconds from 2018/19.

The average total response time to 'road vehicle fires' in England in 2019/20 was 9 minutes 40 seconds, a decrease of 3 seconds from 2018/19. TWFRS were the fastest FRS in England in response to road vehicle fires with an average total response time of 6 minutes 34 seconds, a decrease of 30 seconds from 2018/19.

Finally, the average total response time to 'other outdoor fires' in England in 2019/20 was 11 minutes 6 seconds, a decrease of 28 seconds from 2018/19. TWFRS were the 3<sup>rd</sup> fastest responding FRS in the country to 'other outdoor fires' and 3<sup>rd</sup> fastest MET with an average total response time of 8 minutes 40 seconds, a decrease of 26 seconds from 2018/19.

7. RESOLVED that:

- (i) The contents of the report be noted and endorsed; and
- (ii) Further reports be received as appropriate.

(Signed) N. FORBES  
Chairman