

## **POLICY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting of the POLICY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE held via Microsoft Teams on MONDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2020 at 10.30 am

### **Present:**

### **Item 3**

Councillor Dodds in the Chair.

Councillor Purvis, Pickard and Samuels.

Peter Heath was congratulated on his appointment as Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

### **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor Forbes and also David Leach.

### **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **Minutes**

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Committee held on 6 July 2020 be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the following amendments:

Page 2 Paragraph 3 to read 'Members were advised that the pilot was successful from a quantitative and qualitative data performance perspective and ELT agreed to implementation of Pre-Alerting as a business as usual way of working on 3 September 2019'.

Area Manager (AM) Phil Clark referred Members to page 3 of the minutes whereby Councillor Pickard had questioned how the total number of incidents (recorded at time of call) were collated and advised that LI32 recorded the total number of calls at the time of the incident, and that often duplicate calls were received, therefore at times no appliance was required to be deployed, whereas LI24, recorded the number actually attended. This could often be a 2:1 ratio, between the two.

## **Fire and Rescue National Incident Statistics April 2019 – 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 highlight the key findings from the latest Home Office Fire and Rescue National Incident Statistics April 2019 to March 2020.

The report also contained a comparison of Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS) performance to the other six Metropolitan (Met) Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) within the 'family' group and also nationally.

Prior to the explanation of the report, DCFO Heath advised Members that a piece of work was currently ongoing within the North East whereby statistics, especially in relation to deliberate and secondary fires, were being jointly commissioned with local universities, to ascertain why the North East were showing higher figures than the rest of the Country. Once findings had been received, Members would be further advised in due course.

AM Clark advised that for the next meeting of the Committee he intended to combine the national statistics provided by the Home Office into a presentation which illustrated what was happening, how the Service compared to its family group and also across the Country. This would therefore incorporate incident, operational response, prevention and workforce data.

Members were advised that nationally FRSs attended 557,299 incidents in 2019/20. This was a 3% decrease compared with the previous year (576,391). Of these incidents, there were 153,957 fires. This was a 16 % decrease compared with the previous year (182,915) with reductions in all types of fires but particularly driven by a 23 % reduction in secondary fires.

AM Clark explained that there were 243 fire-related fatalities in 2019/20 (the lowest number of fire-related fatalities in any fiscal year from 2010/11) compared with 253 in the previous year.

There were 68,677 primary fires (45% of the 153,957 fires attended). This was a 6% decrease compared with the previous year (73,278), a 3% decrease compared with five years ago (71,116) and a 32 % decrease compared with ten years ago (101,159). This highlighted the benefit of prevention works.

With regards to the position within Tyne and Wear, Members were advised that in 2019/20 the Service attended 16,776 incidents, a decrease of -3.39% (589 incidents) on the previous year.

Of the total incidents attended by TWFRS in 2019/20, 42% were fire incidents, a decrease of -6.94% when compared to the previous year. Nationally however, fires accounted for 28% of all incidents and there had been a decrease of -15.83% when compared to the previous year. Therefore the number of incidents that TWFRS attended that were fires, was greater than the national average.

AM Clark explained that TWFRS were positioned fifth out of the seven of the Met FRSs for the number of fire incidents attended. Greater London attended the largest number of fires with 17,748 incidents (17% of all incidents) and Merseyside attended the least with 5,646 (37% of all incidents).

When comparing TWFRS to the national average percentage change, Members were advised that the Service was performing better than the national average for non-fatal casualties recording a total of 156 in 2019/20. This was a 19.59% reduction compared a national average reduction of 3.53%.

Primary dwelling fires experienced a decrease although slightly lower than national average with a decrease of -3.12% compared to the national average of a -3.88% decrease.

## 2. RESOLVED that:-

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

## **2020/21 Quarter Two Performance Report**

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's (TWFRS) performance for Quarter Two (Q2) 2020/21 (April 2020 to September 2020).

AM Clark referred Members to the previously circulated report and also delivered a presentation to the Committee on the key findings. Members were reminded that in 2019, the target methodology was reviewed and agreed to be based on 3-year incident data, with a 10% tolerance. Of the 16 targets set, the Service had achieved 13 of these within the 10% tolerance.

AM Clark explained that whilst some data may look skewed, the consideration of the impact of the Pandemic also needed to be taken into account for the current year.

Members were advised that in Q2 2020/21, the Service received 14,436 emergency calls and attended 8,163 incidents, a decrease of 4% (635) emergency calls and a decrease of 8% (752) incidents attended compared to last year.

AM Clark advised that whilst there had been 0 fire fatalities in accidental dwelling fires, unfortunately there had been one fatality from all fires. This was in the Sunderland area in April, involving a single private vehicle with one occupant. The incident was investigated, and the findings of the Coroner's report were awaited.

Accidental dwelling fires had seen a slight increase in Q2 of 6 incidents. Just over half of all incidents (51%) were resolved by use of small means or required no

firefighting action. AM Clark reiterated the importance of the Service attending as soon as possible, in order to prevent the incident escalating.

Injuries from accidental dwelling fires had increased by 33% (4) when compared to 2019/20, and 50% (8) of injuries from accidental dwelling fires occurred in the bedroom, with 6 of these being smoking related. Focused education and prevention work was therefore taking place in relation to this.

Members were advised that the average response time for the first appliance was 6 minutes 1 second, which compared to 5 minutes 48 seconds in 2019/20. The national standard was around 8 minutes, therefore TWFRS were well within the target, however a piece of detailed analysis would be undertaken to ascertain why this had been the case.

Whilst 1,758 HSCs had been delivered, this was a reduction of 88% due to the Covid-19 restrictions and a prioritisation that the service focused upon the most vulnerable.

The Service had seen a rise in injuries from all fires, although in some cases there was more than one injury at some incidents. There had been 4 incidents where more than 1 person had been injured, with the common age group being over 60 years, and the common room of origin being smoking within the bedroom.

Of the 61 recorded injuries at incidents, 30 went to hospital with slight injuries, 9 with injuries being classed as serious, and 31 being given first aid at the scene or recommended to have a precautionary check. The Chief Fire Officer was therefore undertaking a piece of work to understand and compare how these were reported across the Country.

Members were advised that 24% of false alarms were to hospitals or medical settings and that these premises were exempt from the Risk Based Attendance Policy. The sharing of knowledge across Hospital Trust Fire Officers had seen reductions in the attendances to false alarms at a number of Trust sites with others to look at implementing some of the reduction measures, in due course.

Also, in relation to false alarms, 45% of calls related to cooking and burnt toast in domestic premises. The Service was aware that many of these calls related to Sheltered Housing Accommodation, therefore discussions were taking place with Sheltered Housing Scheme Managers.

With regards to deliberate fires, TWFRS had 15 qualified investigators who worked closely with the Police and Crime Scene Managers, as given that 70% of road vehicle fires were deliberate, arson was often difficult to combat via education programmes, if they were deliberate and malicious acts of behaviour.

AM Clark went on to say that in 18% of dwelling fires a smoke alarm was fitted but failed to activate, and in 28% of dwellings no smoke alarm had been fitted or there was no working smoke alarm in the dwelling. Work was therefore underway to understand why, and targeted strategies would be put in place. According to the

English Housing Survey, approximately 91% of properties had smoke alarms yet in Tyne and Wear, this was much lower, therefore further work was being undertaken.

With regards to deliberate fires, there had been a 19% reduction in deliberate secondary fires which was pleasing to note.

Members were assured that the statistics outlined above were constantly reviewed with education programmes and messages to the public being refined accordingly via social media, leaflet drops and working with Local Authorities. In addition to this, staff across the service were also involved the delivery of PPE, food parcels and the Nightingale Hospital, which had further strengthened relationships with partner organisations.

### 3. RESOLVED that:-

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

DCFO Heath then verbally updated Members of the Committee on Bonfire Night period.

In doing so, Members were advised that despite the unknowns due to the cancellation of organised events and Lockdown 2, this was still the busiest time of year for the Service.

Prior to the Bonfire period TWFRS had engaged in community education and fire safety activity, in attempt to identify issues before they arose with a lot of work being undertaken with Partners to remove materials or engage with them by providing advice to reduce the impact on services.

Fire Safety Teams had routinely audited premises, working with Trading Standards and where necessary, the Police, and approximately 277kg of explosive materials had been ceased.

Regrettably, there had still been attacks on fire crews, therefore the Chief Fire Officer, with support from Members of the Authority, continued to lobby on this issue.

It was pleasing to note that Body Worn Camera's (BWC's) were providing a positive impact and this investment had been well received amongst crews.

The Chairman queried whether any information had been received from Partners, given that organised displays had been cancelled and residents were often using their own gardens for fireworks, and was advised that no serious injuries had been reported. Members were asked to note that the teams had done extremely well in removing fireworks from illegal vendors.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that discussions were ongoing with the Fire Chiefs Council and that there would be a short video/news piece within the local and

national media. In addition to this, a letter had been written to the Justice Minister to ensure that lobbying continued to take place around the application of broader sentences.

The Chair thanked Officers for the update.

(Signed)     K DODDS  
Vice-Chairman