



## **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 9 JULY 2018 at 10.30 am

### **Present:**

Councillor Forbes in the Chair.

Councillors Perry and Taylor. .

### **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Dodds and Duggan.

### **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 19 February 2018 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

## **Quarter Four End of Year Performance Report 2017/2018**

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (the Clerk to the Authority) the Strategic Finance Manager 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 Q4 end of year 2017/2018.

Members were advised that TWFRS aimed to get to an incident as quickly as possible. At six minutes, the Service was the second fastest Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) in reaching accidental dwelling fires.

During Q4 2017/2018, 27,822 emergency calls were received and 17,801 incidents attended. An increase of 3,211 emergency calls and 1,612 incidents, when compared to the previous year. This being primarily due to deliberate fires.

The attention of Members was drawn to the following statistics within TWFRS:-

- The second lowest number of deaths from all fires amongst all metropolitan FRS'.
- The lowest number of injuries reported from accidental fires since 2009. This indicator had decreased by 14%. In 76% of cases, the origin was in the kitchen (which was now priority area for prevention).
- An increase in anti-social behaviour and deliberate fires.
- 4 fatalities from fires (2 in Gateshead and 2 in Sunderland).
- Accidental dwelling fires had decreased by 6% compared to the same period last year with accidental kitchen fires decreasing by 5%.
- There had been a 25% (1,131) increase in deliberate fires and a 28% (1,053) increase in deliberate secondary fires.
- An increase of 9% in fires in non-domestic premises
- False alarms in non-domestic premises had increased by 6%
- There had been a 16% reduction in false alarms to hospitals and medical care premises. This was the lowest recorded to these premises since 2009/2010.
- 31,107 HSC's had been delivered in Q4. 26,149 by TWFRS and 4,858 by partners. This compared to 33,315 in the previous year.

The Chairman questioned why there had been a reduction in in fires in all areas of Tyne and Wear except for in Newcastle and was advised that this was due to Newcastle being a densely populated area with a vast amount of buildings.

The committee was then advised of the education programmes which were in place and how these were focused and targeted to priorities within the service.

The Chief Fire Officer explained that the Fire Service was statutorily required to attend fire alarms but not false alarms and commented that it might be time to look at educational premises which were well staffed during the day and possibly not attend any false alarms.

Members were then referred to the LI overview and advised that five out of seven of the priority indicators had been achieved during 2017/2018 with the knock on effect being deliberate secondary fires and an increase in the number of incidents attended.

The Chairman commented that years ago a lot more 'greens' i.e. within target would have been seen within the report and commented that the Governments cuts in funding were having an impact on preventative work.

The Chief Fire Officer agreed and explained that whilst the service still attended incidents in excellent time, the number of incidents were increasing in a steady way. The service had unfortunately lost 131 Firefighters since 2010 and also 131 officers to carry out preventative work. Hence why the service was lobbying for Fire Services to be funded based upon risk as opposed to demand.

2. RESOLVED that:-

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

### **Improvement & Assessment Plan**

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (the Clerk to the Authority), the Strategic Finance Manager and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report providing Members with an update on the progress made against the Assessment and Improvement Plan (Appendix A of the report).

ACFO Baines advised the Committee that good progress had been made in relation to the improvement Plan. Since June 2017 the highlights and key updates were as follows:

- The Service had retained Investor in People Gold status following the interim reassessment in March 2018.
- The Service had achieved 4<sup>th</sup> place in the Inclusive Top 50 Employers Award and 59<sup>th</sup> place in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index, which were regarded as excellent results.
- In October 2017 the Service had achieved the Gold award for The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents – (RoSPA).
- Following a national tendering exercise, the cost of the Annual Audit as set out in the Assessment Plan, had been reduced by £7,046 for 2018/19, to £23,590.
- An action relating to data sharing protocols had been removed to become a business as usual activity, to be monitored by the Executive Leadership

Team. The protocols were being developed as part of the Service's GDPR action plan.

- Senior Officers were meeting with all staff to deliver the employee survey results and way forward. The visits had begun in April 2018 and were due to finish in September 2018. These had been well received so far.

The new programme of inspections of fire and rescue services in England would commence this year and the inspection of Tyne and Wear, which was expected to take place in Autumn/Winter 2018, was now reflected in the Assessment Plan. The FRS National Framework had placed a duty on all FRAs to publish any actions to be taken as a result of HMICFRS recommendations.

3. RESOLVED that:

- (i) the content of the report be noted; and
- (ii) further reports be received as appropriate.

### **Guidance to Support Temporary Change to a Simultaneous Evacuation Strategy in Purpose Built Blocks of Flats**

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (the Clerk to the Authority), the Strategic Finance Manager and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report to provide Members with a summary of the guidance released by the NFCC following the Grenfell Tower fire, to support a temporary change to a simultaneous evacuation strategy in purpose built blocks of flats.

Members were advised that the guidance provided fire safety advice in respect of purpose built blocks of flats where a 'Stay Put' policy was part of the original design, but was no longer considered appropriate due to significant risk issues, such as combustible external facades. Where such issues existed, a temporary change to a simultaneous evacuation strategy was likely to be necessary until the failings had been rectified.

The guidance was produced to support Fire and Rescue Services, building owners and associated fire safety specialists. It was principally intended for use in buildings over 18m in height, in which the appropriate means for satisfying the requirements of the Building Regulations, in relation to external fire spread, had not been satisfied. However, the 18m was not definitive and it may also be appropriate to apply the recommendations of the guidance more widely to other buildings and those which are close to this height, depending on the risks present.

For buildings constructed with a 'Stay Put' strategy, the principle was that only those directly affected by a fire in a flat would need to evacuate due to the fire protection in place. Consequently, it was common that detection and warning systems were not installed in communal areas as generally there was no requirement for other occupants to evacuate. This was with the exception of systems installed for other purposes, such as to operate smoke control systems.

ACFO Robson explained that the guidance was clear that whilst it may be appropriate to implement a simultaneous evacuation strategy in exceptional circumstances, this must only be a temporary measure and not a way of building owners avoiding the fire risks present being remedied; nor should it be the only option considered and adopted. It was the responsibility of building owners to adopt a holistic approach to the fire risks present and additional remedial action may also be required in addition to changing the strategy.

Members were referred to residential premises detailed at section 4 of the report, which were known to be clad in ACM, which had replaced their stay put policy and implemented a simultaneous evacuation strategy as part of their interim arrangements.

The Chairman commented that most of the buildings listed were built recently and asked whether sprinkler systems were in place.

ACFO Robson advised that whilst some did, some did not as this was not a building regulations requirement.

Councillor Forbes then went on to say that some of the issues for building owners housing students was that English was not their first language.

ACFO Robson agreed and commented that work was undertaken with universities to ensure that overseas students were provided with support.

4. RESOLVED that:

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

### **HMICFRS Inspection**

The Chief Fire Officer circulated a copy of the judgement criteria and explained that it was important for the Committee and the Authority to be fully involved in the process. Members were advised that in July 2017 the responsibilities of HMIC had been extended to include all Fire and Rescue Services in England and graded judgements would be provided (outstanding, good, requires improvement, inadequate).

The Inspection Programme was published in March 2018 and three pilot inspections at Suffolk, Staffordshire and West Yorkshire had been undertaken.

The aim was to promote continuous improvement, highlight success and be self-aware of any gaps.

The three pillars included effectiveness, efficiency and people and leadership.

Members were advised that the inspection methodology comprised:-

- Pre fieldwork
- Service Liaison Lead engagement visits including a notional data collection exercise
- Self-assessment (measuring against 11 diagnostics)
- Desktop review of documentation
- Staff survey
- Public survey
- Confidential reporting line
- Discovery visits
- Strategic briefing

Fieldwork comprised:

- A full week of onsite inspection (October 2018)
- A team of 11 inspectors
- Scheduled and unscheduled visits
- Interviews, focus groups, presentations and 'reality testing'

Post fieldwork:

- Debrief with the Chief Fire Officer on day five
- Report published after 17 weeks
- Moderated by HMICFRS Portfolio team
- Published on Inspectorate website
- Released to media
- Risk based follow up

The Chief Fire Officer explained that 14 authorities were in tranche one of the inspections taking place in the summer, 16 in tranche two (including TWFRS) and 15 in tranche three, likely to take place in Spring 2019.

The Chair commented that as a Committee, reporting should be structured around the inspection requirements so that it could be demonstrated that Members were aware of the regime and had a framework in place for looking at relevant data and information.

5. RESOLVED that the information be noted.

(Signed) N FORBES  
Chair