

## **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 5 JULY 2021 at 10.30 am

### **Item 3**

#### **Present:**

Councillor Dodds in the Chair.

Councillors Dick, Samuels and Woodward.

#### **In Attendance:**

Councillor Kilgour.

#### **Apologies for Absence**

An apology for absence was submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor Forbes, and also CFO Lowther and ACFO McVay.

#### **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 22 February 2021 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

DCFO Heath referred to the request for regular information and confirmed that all Local Authorities had been advised of properties which had been attended including address and type of property, where smoke alarms were not working on attendance.

#### **2020/2021 End of Year Performance Report**

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (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 end of year 2020/21.

Members were advised that the Q4 performance report 2020/21, provided a comprehensive overview of Service performance in relation to the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

The COVID Pandemic had dominated the work of the Service over the last twelve months and staff had all risen to the challenges, with many of the staff being temporarily redeployed to new roles to support the response to the pandemic and due to the lack of face-to-face access to our communities, the delivery of community safety activity had been impacted and had subsequently had an effect on the operational and organisational performance indicators.

AM Clark advised the Committee that the Service had achieved, or were within 10% of achieving, 14 of the 16 Operational targets.

Q4 2020/21 performance highlights were compared with Q4 2019/20 as follows:

- There had been 0 fire fatalities in accidental dwelling fires, however there had been one fatality from all fires. This was a fire within a road vehicle where sadly the casualty was deceased;
- Injuries from accidental dwelling fires had increased by 6%;
- 37% of the victims from accidental dwelling fires who went to hospital were aged 60 or over;
- 13% decrease in primary fires;
- 2% increase in accidental dwelling fires; and
- 16% reduction in deliberate secondary fires.

DCFO Heath commented that 0 fire fatalities in accidental dwellings was extremely pleasing to note, given that people had spent so much time in their homes due to the Pandemic.

Members were then advised that in March 2020 a Logistics Cell was established to support the community response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The purpose of the Cell was to manage requests for support from TWFRS departments and to work closely with the Local Resilience Forum where the Service took the lead role on the Tactical Co Coordinating Group for the Northumbria LRF region.

AM Clark explained that from 24/03/2020 to 29/03/2021 TWFRS staff volunteers:

- Administered 3000 lateral flow tests
- Carried out 5189 vaccinations, nearly 17,000 as of today
- Carried out 3890 deliveries of essential items and 724 food packages to vulnerable persons. All of these deliveries included fire safety literature.

The total number of emergency calls received (26,555) and total number of incidents attended (15,142) had both seen reductions in comparison to the previous years with calls reducing by 8% (2,193) and incidents reducing by 10% (1,621). Members were advised that the number of calls received was often as result of duplicate calls for the same incident.

Overall performance during Q4 2020/21 indicated that there were areas of significant positive performance such as the reduction in numbers of secondary fires, false alarms and primary fires.

In relation to Home Safety Checks, Members were advised that due to the need to triage requests for assistance, the Service carried out 4,888 which was a reduction of 82% for the same period, the previous year, attributed to restrictions put in place due to COVID-19. The Prevention and Education Teams had therefore adapted their ways of working and now carried out a pre-visit fire risk assessment over the telephone.

The Committee was then advised that it was believed that the overarching factor in the reduction in the number of deliberate secondary fires of 16% could be attributed to the lockdown measures introduced by the UK Government due to the Covid-19 pandemic which required the public only to travel and be outside for essential activities, with Police taking enforcement action if rules were broken.

All Districts had reported 'Loose Refuse' as the highest property type for deliberate secondary fires. The limited access to waste management/recycling facilities during the early stages of the pandemic led to an increase in the fly-tipping of refuse. Although these sites had since re-opened there remained restrictions on the number of items that could be disposed of and in many cases, appointments must be pre-booked. Work was therefore ongoing with Local Authorities, to address this issue.

AM Clark explained that whilst average response times for all incidents during the reporting period had increased by 10 seconds to 6 minutes 0 seconds when compared to last year; the response time was still 12 seconds quicker than the same period in 2018/19. The Service believed that this increase of 10 seconds related to the changes in crewing models and revised locations of the Targeted Response Vehicles. By focussing the response on Risk Level 1 incidents, the Service had become slightly slower responding to Risk Level 4 incidents. In line with the IRMP the Service still aimed to respond quicker to risk level 1 incidents than risk level 4 and still remained the fastest responding Service in Country.

Members were then referred to Section 6 of the report which detailed how TWFRS compared with other Metropolitan Fire and Rescue Services and were asked to note that it was difficult to make consistent comparisons with other Metropolitan FRS' as different areas of the Country were placed in different lockdown tiers during the Pandemic.

DCFO Heath explained that as TWFRS had seen the highest number of deliberate secondary fires, that they had commissioned through Newcastle University, a piece

of work to be undertaken to ascertain whether TWFRAs did have higher numbers, or it was the way in which the information was recorded.

Through the 2025 Programme TWFRS were transforming the way that data was presented to all staff across the organisation utilising Microsoft PowerBi Dashboards to enable staff to have access to up to the moment data that could be used locally to form intervention strategies at ward level. The Service was also adopting the 'Report IT' function to assist in working with partners to identify areas of Fly Tipping which was a huge step forward.

Members were advised that the Service had also recognised the increasing number of fires where the cause was believed to be deliberate and had now employed a dedicated Fire Investigation Arson Liaison Officer who would bring a new focus to deliberate fire setting and strengthen existing partnership working.

Recognising the number of incidents that occurred within the kitchen area of dwellings, the Prevention Teams would commence the issuing of Heat Detectors to be installed in these areas as part of the Safe and Well Visits which would assist in ensuring that the occupiers were made aware of fires in these areas in the early stages of the fire development whilst avoiding unwanted fire signals.

Referring to the performance summary, AM Clark explained that whilst the target for 0 deaths from all fires had not been achieved (LI02), this did fall outside of the targeting strategy as it involved a motor vehicle.

In addition, the target for the number of injuries from all fires had also not been achieved (LI05) as incidences often involved multiples injuries for example in a road vehicle or care home.

AM Clark explained that in 24% of dwelling fires a smoke alarm was fitted however did not activate. The main reason being that the fire was too far away from the detector or the fire not being in an area covered by the alarm system for example in a Wheelie Bin or garage.

DCFO Heath assured the Committee that whilst a reduction in Safety and Well Visits had been seen, a targeted approach had been in place to ensure that the right houses had been visited. In addition to this, during the Pandemic, the Service had continued to be inspected to ensure TWFRS was continuing to focus well on the services provided, which was evidence proven.

Councillor Woodwork referred to the target of 0 fire deaths from road traffic accidents and given that it was raised within the HMICFRS inspection report questioned whether this was something that the Service should be looking at. In addition, Councillor Woodwork referred to the Dashboard at Appendix 1 of the report and commented that this was an extremely positive piece of work and that staff should be congratulated for their exemplary work although as it was a 'glimpse', there was still some work to be done.

DCFO Heath thanked Councillor Woodward for his comments and explained that an action was to address how information was reported and in turn, presented to Members of the Committee so this could be revised accordingly to ensure Members had the information that they required.

Councillor Samuels referred to the appointment of the Fire Investigation Arson Liaison Officer and questioned what this would do to bring the Authority into line with others in terms of the number of deliberate secondary fires.

DCFO Heath responded by advising that whilst work was ongoing with partners around education, Fire Investigation Officers determined the cause of the fire, with the information generated being shared with for example Local Authorities to assist with education and uplifts.

Councillor Flynn welcomed the report and commented that in South Tyneside, Members went around their wards several times a week and reported any issues with a view to reduce the number of deliberate fires.

2. RESOLVED that:

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

(Signed) K. DODDS  
Vice- Chairman

