

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 6 JULY 2015 at
10.30am

Present:

Councillor N. Forbes in the Chair

Councillors Harrison, Lauchlan, Perry and Renton .

Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor Stockdale.

Declaration 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 23 February 2015 (circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

End of Year Performance Report 2014-2015

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report providing the end of year (April 2014-March 2015) performance of the Authority against the targets for 2014/2015. Members were asked to consider and scrutinise the contents of the report and provide comments.

Members were advised that the report had been structured to demonstrate the Authority's performance in relation to key performance indicators reflecting organisational priorities. The full suite of performance indicators was appended to the report.

ACFO Brindle and John Pratt delivered a presentation to the committee. They began with a comparison of key performance targets to 2013/14 as detailed below where there had been:

- 19% fewer injuries from Accidental Dwelling Fires
- 18.3% fewer Deliberate Secondary Fires
- 17.2% fewer Deliberate Fires
- 13% fewer All Fire Calls Attended

However there had also been:

- 5.8% more Malicious False Alarms Attended
- 3% more Non Domestic Automatic False Alarms Attended

The attention of members was then drawn to the following information:

During 2014/15 the Service attended 1575 primary fires which was a reduction of 1.5% from the same period last year and when comparing against other Metropolitan FRS, Tyne and Wear were currently the second best performing in terms of primary fires per 100,000 population. A huge reduction had also been seen in the number of deliberate fires with a 34.3% reduction over the last five years.

Whilst the number of false alarms had increased, members were reminded that a policy had been introduced to deal with these incidents more effectively and a reduction of 90 Automatic Fire Alarms had been seen in June. The introduction of this policy had also enabled the Service to allocate resources more effectively.

With regards to accidental dwelling fires, there had been a slight increase (0.9%) from the previous year. Of the 575 accidental dwelling fires, 69% had started in the kitchen. Preventative work therefore continued to reduce these numbers. A decrease however, had been seen in fires starting within other parts of the house.

Members were then shown a case study of an elderly resident in Gosforth, living in a private dwelling and due to poor health, living in poor conditions, particularly in relation to hoarding. TWFRS had worked in partnership with 'First Contact' and various other agencies to improve this individuals quality of life and also the safety of the dwelling.

Unfortunately there had been 3 fatalities from fires in 2014/15, in the areas of Sunderland, Gateshead and North Tyneside. Investigations were undertaken and the Service continued to take active steps to refine targeting of prevention and education work and by using data to understand and inform risk.

47 injuries were recorded from accidental dwelling fires in 2014/15 which was a 19% reduction from the previous year. Only 4 of these injuries were classed as serious.

With regards to the number of deliberate fires attended, a substantial reduction had been seen however TWFRS had the highest number of deliberate fires per 10,000 population when compared to other Met FRS which correlated to higher numbers of

reported anti-social behaviour. Partnership work was therefore undertaken in attempt to alleviate this problem.

The Service attended 256 malicious false alarms during 2014/15 which was an increase when compared with the previous year. Members were advised that TWFRS had the second highest number of malicious false alarm calls therefore works in relation to the wide schools education programme and the challenge procedure carried out by the Control Room, continued.

Questions were then invited from members of the committee.

In response to a question from Councillor Perry, the CFO explained the effective working relationships in place with for example, care agencies and the importance of this partnership working. It was felt that additional work could be carried out in relation to information sharing, particularly around duty of care and data protection issues, to further enhance the delivery of services.

Councillor Harrison agreed and commented that there was also further scope to work with local authorities to bring services together by way of identifying individual needs for example, when carrying out home visits and sharing this information with relevant partners.

Councillor Harrison then referred to targets which had not been met and questioned how targets were set for future years. ACFO Brindle explained that the Authority took the view that performance within one specific year did not set a trend and instead took a long term view. Targets were set annually by the management team to determine performance indicators based on the previous trajectory of individual targets. These targets were then closely monitored to determine and analyse trends and help set projections for future years.

The Chairman added that the IRMP was also extremely useful in terms of helping the Authority remain focused and manage identified risks.

The Chairman commended the service for their positive performance throughout the year despite the difficult challenges they had been faced with, and extended his thanks on behalf of the committee.

2. RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted and endorsed.

Corporate Risk Register

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report to present to Members, the current Corporate Risk Register for comment and scrutiny.

Members were referred to the summary of the current Corporate Risk Register, attached at Appendix A of the report. Of the 15 corporate risks faced by the Authority, the most significant risks were:

- Failure to effectively and safely deploy and manage operational staff and resources at incidents leading to staff and public being exposed

- to unnecessary risks
- Risk that spending and/or policy decisions of one of the partners had a negative impact on collaborative work and therefore a detrimental impact on the communities that were served
- Industrial unrest nationally and/or locally with regard to conditions of service (including on-going organisational change management programmes) resulting in industrial action and impacting on service delivery
- Risk that further budget cuts would mean that decisions had to be made that would detrimentally affect the delivery of front-line services
- Disruption to the operation of key ICT systems/ applications resulting in downtime

The Chairman commented that an additional risk which should be included within the Corporate Risk Register was the abolishment of Fire Authorities.

The committee agreed and requested that this item of business be submitted to the committee on an annual basis.

3. RESOLVED that the comments made in relation to the Corporate Risk Register be noted and endorsed.

Operational Assessment Peer Challenge 2014

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report to inform Members of the Operational Assessment Peer Challenge which took place from 30th September to 3rd October 2014 and presenting Members with an action plan based on the review.

Members were advised that the process consisted of a self-assessment against 7 Key Assessment Areas (KAAs), followed by an on-site peer review. The KAAs were as follows:

- Community Risk Management
- Prevention
- Protection
- Response
- Health and Safety
- Training and Development
- Call Management and Incident Support

Members were referred to the full Peer Assessment report, attached at Appendix 1. It concluded that TWFRS focused on understanding risk and planning to ensure that resources were targeted effectively and efficiently. This being reflected within the Service's IRMP.

The Service also clearly demonstrated how its work with partners and communities was based on achieving goals and adding value.

The Service demonstrated that it used its knowledge of its diverse communities in targeting campaigns and resources towards the most vulnerable. There was also high regard for the political and professional leadership of the organisation as with relationship with the Fire Brigades Union.

Staff attested to the positive experience of being employees of TWFRS and there was an effective buy-in to the future direction and the choices which had to be made.

Members were advised that other findings included the willingness of the Authority to take difficult decisions, based on options developed in an evidence based way.

In relation to Community Risk Management, it was suggested that TWFRS continue to encourage new ways of working. There remained some challenges in accessing and sharing data with key agencies, therefore this should be an area for focus in moving forward.

Finally, whilst there was a clear commitment to communicating with staff as clearly as possible, it was important that key messages from leadership were readily understood by staff.

As a result of the above findings, an action plan had been produced as attached at Appendix 2 of the report. An update on developments/improvement would be submitted to future meetings of the committee.

4. RESOLVED that:

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

(Signed) N. FORBES
Chairman

