

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 17 JUNE
at 10.30 a.m.

Present:

Councillor N.Forbes in the Chair

Councillors M.Forbes and Padgett

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gambling and Stockdale.

Declarations of Interest

None.

Minutes

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Committee held on 28 January 2013 (circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

End of Year (April – March) Performance Report 2012/2013

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Fire Officer to present the end of Year (April – March) Performance Report 2012/2013. Members of the Performance and Policy Committee were requested to consider and scrutinise the contents of the report and provide comments.

The Chairman welcomed Joy Brindle, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, John Baines, Assistant Chief Fire Officer and Mark Hedley, Corporate Development Manager to the Committee and invited them to present the report.

Joy Brindle advised the Committee that it has been a very successful year for the Authority. A number of issues for future closer monitoring were identified. With regard to accidental fires in dwellings, Gateshead and North Tyneside districts both recorded increases, however performance overall showed continued improvement.

The proportion of working days/shifts lost to sickness absence had also slightly increased and may be attributable to the recent back office review. Given the excellent progress previously made on this indicator, the committee was advised that this was not a significant concern but an indicator they might want to keep an eye on.

Mark Hedley reminded the Committee that the performance report was divided into Service Led Priorities and Local Priorities sections in order to provide a comprehensive overview based on national and local priorities.

The Service Led Priorities were considered in turn:-

Number of primary fires per 100,000 population (LI 29):

- The Authority attended 154 (1,701) primary fires per 100,000 population during 2012/13; this is 12.4% (241) less than in 2011/12.
- The Authority achieve a target of 171.4 (1,894) and record the Authority's best ever figures.
- This performance saw the Authority remain above the average of the Metropolitan FRS and better than the worst quartile.
- All districts except North Tyneside reported reductions compared to the previous year.
- Deliberate primary fires saw a 22.6% (189) reduction from 837 to 648, this reduction was reflected in all districts except South Tyneside where 14 more incidents were reported. The majority of this reduction was in the incidence of vehicles being deliberately set on fire.

The Chairman enquired why there had been a reduction in the incidence of vehicles being deliberately set on fire. John Baines advised that there was continuous work with partners on diversionary activities.

In response to a question from Councillor Padgett regarding why North Tyneside was the only Authority that had not reported reductions compared to previous years. The Chief Fire Officer advised that there needed to be further research regarding the reasons for this.

Number of fatalities due to primary fires per 100,000 population (LI 2):

- During 2012/13 there was one fatality caused by a primary fire, this was a result of a fire that was deliberately started.
- The incident occurred in South Tyneside.
- As throughout previous years, The Authority continue to report performance below the Mets FRS average figure reported of 0.09 fatalities per 100,000 population and remain in the top quartile. The Authority have the lowest figure for this indicator reflecting the positive performance.
- The Authority have not seen any accidental fire deaths in Tyne and Wear during 2012/13, this is the first time The Authority have ever achieved this.

Number of all deliberate fires per 10,000 population (LI 33):

- The Authority recorded 34.5 (3,807) deliberate fires per 10,000 population during 2012/13, a decrease of 36.4% (2,178) compared to 2011/12.
- The Authority surpassed the target of 53.2 (5,891) by 35.4% recording 2,084 fewer fires than the target was set at.
- This performance was supported by a 22.6% (189) reduction in the number of deliberate primary fires.
- The Authority's performance had improved significantly over recent years despite this The Authority still faced significant challenges, as demonstrated by Met benchmarking.
- All districts recorded similar significant decreases.

The Chairman enquired whether there was any change in the way statistics were collected and was advised that there was no change, however the weather had had an impact. John Baines advised that there had been a lot of intervention work with schools around dark/light night campaigns.

Discussion ensued regarding the statistics for the London area; Members agreed that it was important there was a level playing with regard to gathering statistics to achieve accurate benchmarking.

Number of deliberate secondary fires per 10,000 population (LI 16):

- The Authority recorded 28.6 (3,159) deliberate secondary fires per 10,000 population in 2012/13, 38.6% (1,984) less than 2011/12.
- As a result of this The Authority surpassed the target by 37.7% recording 1,910 fewer incidents than what the target was set at.
- All Met FRS have reported similar reductions in this area, the average reduction comparing 2011/12 to 2012/13 was 42.7%
- Compared to the Met FRS the Authority reported the highest number of deliberate secondary fires per 10,000 population in 2012/13.

- All districts recorded significant decreases.

The Chief Fire Officer commented that the performance indicator had always proved challenging for the Authority, however the Performance Action Group were looking at the reasons for this given the future reduction in resources.

John Baines advised that North Tyneside had significantly improved their statistics as they were trialing volunteer park patrols.

The Local Priorities were considered in turn:-

LI 4 Number of injuries from accidental dwelling fires

- The Authority recorded 180 injuries from accidental dwelling fires in 2012/13, 5 fewer than in 2011/12 and achieving our target of 180 injuries.
- This performance showed continued improvement despite the increase reported elsewhere in this report for the number of accidental dwelling fires attended.
- In total 38.3% (69) of such injuries resulted in the casualty being admitted to hospital, 4 fewer than last year.
- 11 of the 180 injuries from accidental dwelling fires were classified as serious, an increase of 6 on last year's figure. However 5 of these serious injuries occurred in one incident in Gateshead district.
- Gateshead and North Tyneside districts both recorded increases whilst the remaining three districts recorded reductions.

LI 8.1 Number of accidental fires in dwellings per 10,000 dwellings

- The Authority attended 12.4 (588) accidental dwelling fires per 10,000 dwellings in 2012/13, an increase of 14 compared with the previous year.
- As a result of this performance The Authority did not meet the target (11.8) by 5% (28).
- The majority of such incidents occurred in the kitchen (61%), with South Tyneside (65.7%), accounting for the highest percentage of incidents occurring in the kitchen at district level.
- North Tyneside and Sunderland reported the largest percentage of accidental non kitchen fires with approximately 41.8% each.
- Walker Ward accounted for almost 5% of the Service's total accidental dwelling fires by reporting 28 incidents.

Councillor M. Forbes enquired whether the scheme to replace chip pans with deep fat fryers had achieved an impact on the figures. John Baines advised that chip pans were still in existence, however a lot of them could be identified through the home safety programme and the number in relative terms were small.

The Chairman commented that it raised a number of issues regarding people's confidence to handle fire themselves and it was important they were equipped with the knowledge and expertise. He enquired how many were smoking related.

John Baines advised that smoking related incidents amounted to approximately 5%. Alcohol and cigarettes played a significant part in statistics; black market cigarettes took longer to burn and therefore posed a greater risk of accidental fire.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that whilst social housing must have alarms fitted, some people did remove them.

LI 21 Number of malicious false alarm calls attended

- The Authority attended 268 malicious false alarms in 2012/13, 3% (9 calls) more than in 2011/12.
- The reporting parameters for this indicator changed earlier in the year to include the malicious activation of fire call point/alarm, these false alarms accounted for 55.8% (149) of all malicious false alarms attended.
- This meant The Authority did not achieve the target of 235.
- The majority of incidents occurred in Newcastle District and 69% were from fire call point/alarm activations. These were mainly from city centre properties including Newcastle General Hospital.

The Chairman commented that the figure was improved compared to last year, he enquired what the proportion of calls attended were from the public compared to the private sector.

The Chief Fire Officer agreed to ascertain this information.

LI 22.1 Number of false alarm calls due to automatic fire alarms from non domestic premises per 1,000 non domestic premises

- The Authority attended 85.1 (2,671) false alarms from non-domestic premises in 2012/13, reflecting a reduction of 13.7% (423) on last year's figure.
- As a result of this performance The Authority surpassed the target of 95.7 (3,003) by 11.1% (332).
- Newcastle accounted for 40% of all FAA and reported an overall reduction of 14.5% (183) compared to 2011/12. 14.6% (157) of FAA in Newcastle were from hospitals.
- Hospitals remain the main premises type throughout the Service for these incidents but the ratio is decreasing. Hospitals accounted for 17.3% in 2012/13, this was over 20% I

John Baines informed Members that a significant number of calls could be attributed to the RVI refurbishment.

Joy Brindle advised that a detailed benchmarking exercise had been carried out with Merseyside and North Yorkshire Authorities as they had both seen a good reduction in this indicator.

The Chairman commented that the figures were dynamic not static and as the national context emerged it was important achievements continued to be made.

In response to a question from Councillor Forbes regarding the responsibility hospitals took for false alarm calls, John Baines advised that the Authority worked closely with safety managers and wardens in hospitals who were committed and aware of the impact that such calls had on their establishment.

LI 86 % of workforce from a black, Asian minority ethnic community

- Although The Authority did not achieve the target by a small margin, this represents an improvement of 8.3% compared to last year's performance.
- This performance reflects a total of 29 staff from a workforce of 1,093.54.
- There are 19 operational members of staff within the organisation who are from an ethnic minority community, reflecting 2.3% of the operational workforce.

LI85 % of workforce who are women

- The percentage of women working for the organisation currently stands at 21.3%, an increase of 0.7% compared against the performance reported at the end of 2011/12.
- Based on this performance, The Authority surpassed the target of 21.1%.
- This performance reflects 233 employees including 47 firefighters out of a total workforce of 1,093.54 posts.

LI 82 Proportion of working days/shifts lost to sickness absence by all staff

- The proportion of working days/shifts lost to sickness absence by all staff during 2012/13 was 5.93. This reflects an increase of 0.33 days when compared to 2011/12.
- Despite this increase the Authority's performance was considerably lower than the average local authority per person sickness day of 9.2 for the North East region as reported in the Municipal Journal on 10 Jan 2013.

- All districts reported reductions on last year's figures except Sunderland district which saw an increase.

The Chairman thanked the Management Team and staff of the organisation on their commitment and efforts to ensure excellent performance figures over what had been a difficult year.

3. RESOLVED that the content of the report is noted.

(Signed) N. Forbes
Chairman

