

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 7
JULY 2014 at 10.30 a.m.

Present:

Councillor N. Forbes in the Chair,

Councillors M. Forbes, Padgett, Perry and Stockdale.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor Harrison.

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 24 February 2014 (circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Performance Report 2013/2014

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report providing the performance of the Authority against targets for 2013/2014. Members of the Policy and Performance Committee were requested to consider and scrutinise the contents of the report and provide comments.

The Chairman welcomed Joy Brindle, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Nina Griffiths and John Pratt, Area Managers and invited them to present the report.

The report was based on applying performance management against Service wide targets that had been set for 2013/2014 as featured in the Strategic Community Safety Plan.

In order to reflect the delivery of services and performance at a lower level the report also contained data relating to district performance. Through the provision of such data it was considered that the Committee would be able to identify any issues that were contributing to the overall performance of the Service and take remedial action where necessary.

Members were advised that all incidents from 2009/10 to 2013/2014 highlighted that overall projectory was a downward trend. There was a low number of outdoor fires due to higher rainfall last year and Tyne and Wear had the lowest figures when compared to regional fire and rescue services.

Sadly, there had been five fatalities from all fires during 2013/2014. Three of which had occurred in Newcastle, one in Gateshead and one in South Tyneside. This meant that the target for this indicator had not been met, however despite that, Members were assured that Sunderland continued to have the lowest number of fatalities from all fires compared to the other fire and rescue services.

Members were informed that active steps were being taken to ensure the risk of deaths from accidental fires was reduced, including the refinement of targeting prevention and education work, improving the use of data to understand current risk by using community advocates, volunteers and operational staff to understand communities and improve targeting through working with partners.

It was reported that 568 accidental dwelling fires were attended in 2013/2014, a reduction of 21 from the previous year therefore Tyne and Wear had met its target.

Of the 568 accidental dwelling fires, it was reported that 241 were caused by cooking appliances, including the oven with the second largest being smoking related with 31 incidents. It had been recognised that cooking related fires were an issue across the service therefore Members were assured that this would be an area of focus for Operational and P&E staff in 2014/2015.

The Chair enquired if there was any knowledge of the tenure of properties that were targeted. Nina Griffiths responded advising that home safety checks would help to pick up this type of information.

Members were advised that there had been a reduction in injuries from accidental dwelling fires for the last three years. In 2013/2014 there had been 56 injuries from accidental dwelling fires, which was a reduction of 14 injuries

from the previous year. Details of the serious injuries from accidental dwelling fires were listed within the report.

Of the five local authorities, it was reported that South Tyneside was the only exception in the reduction of injuries with an increase of 50% when compared to the previous year. These all involved multiple victims, the details of the injuries sustained were included within the report.

John Pratt explained that investigations took place to look at individuals and how they were affected. Work also took place with the young people at the college whose first language was not English to explain safety messages.

In relation to deliberate fires, Members were advised that in 2013/2014 4,800 fires had been attended to, which was an increase of 993 from 2012/2013, therefore the target had not been met.

All fire and rescue services had reported an increase to the previous year, however with the exception of London, Tyne and Wear recorded the highest percentage increase and had the second highest number of deliberate fires.

Moving onto primary fires, Tyne and Wear had recorded a reduction of 47 deliberate primary fires compared to last year. Newcastle was the only district to report an increase in deliberate primary fires.

John Pratt stated that there was a downward trend in deliberate fires and that the Service was working continuously to combat this further. It was reported that many deliberate fires took place on grassland and scrub land in areas of Sunderland and Newcastle and that work was underway with the police in those areas. A table outlining the types of deliberate fires attended to since 2009/2010 to date was included within the report.

The Chair stated that one of the problems in Newcastle was that wheelie bins were often left out and set on fire and added that the issue of wheelie bins being left out could be in view of the cuts that had been made in environmental services.

Councillor Stockdale recalled that at a previous meeting Members had agreed that it would be useful if a piece of work could be undertaken to demonstrate what affect changes in environmental services had had on the Fire and Rescue Service.

The Chief Fire Officer responded advising that a large amount of work had been undertaken with students, partners and other local authorities to assess changes following the cuts.

Nina Griffiths reported that in 2013/2014 the Service attended 4,200 deliberate secondary fires, which happened to be a significant increase of 1,041 from 2012/2013.

Members were advised that when Tyne and Wear compare its performance to the other Metropolitan Fire and Rescue Services it had the most deliberate secondary fires in 2013/2014. Tyne and Wear also had the greatest increase compared to the previous year.

It was confirmed that work was underway within Service to combat deliberate secondary fires.

Members were advised that the Service had attended 10% less malicious false alarm calls in 2013/2014 compared to 2012/2013. However despite this positive performance, the Service continued to report the highest number of these incidents when compared to other authorities.

It was reported that in 2013/2014 the number of false alarm calls attended to due to automatic fire alarms from non-domestic premises was 2,450, which was a reduction of 221 on the previous years figures. With the exception of London this was reported to be the next highest number of automatic false alarm calls.

John Pratt explained that an Unwanted Fire Signals Group and a Fire Safety Officer Group were in place, both of which looked closely at investigation times of automatic false alarm calls. Work was underway with commercial premises where the calls came in from.

In terms of domestic fires, Members were advised that burnt toast had been the main cause over the last five years.

A summary was provided to highlight where performance was improving and how many fewer fires there had been in specific areas. The summary also provided an explanation of the work that was being undertaken to target areas where there had been more fires compared to previous years.

The Chair commented that the report was very interesting and that relationships at authority level were valuable. He stated that the report evidenced that there had been some excellent achievements and that all of the good performance should be celebrated. The chair requested that thanks be expressed to all staff for their hard work.

Councillor Stockdale enquired whether linkages with the police at ward level could be used by the Fire and Rescue Service to assist in improving local fire safety knowledge across the region. The Chair responded advising that local councillors tended to be the linkages with local communities and the way in which the Fire and Rescue Authority can support councillors was always a priority.

Members were advised that the Service liaised at a local level with partners regarding fire intelligence on the ground and it was anticipated that further work would be done around this as part of the organisational structural review. Overall, based on the performance data presented, the Authority was maintaining its overall trajectory of improvement and was set to meet the

majority of the targets set for the current financial year. This included, based on a comparison with the same period in 2012/2013: -

- 6% fewer Primary Fires
- 3.6% fewer Accidental Dwelling Fires
- 20% fewer Injuries from Accidental Dwelling Fires
- 8% fewer Non Domestic Automatic False Alarms Attended

2. RESOLVED that:-

- i) the contents of the report be noted and endorsed; and
- ii) the publication of the Performance Report be approved

(Signed) N. FORBES
Chairman

