

## **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 11  
NOVEMBER at 10.30 a.m.

### **Present:**

Councillor N.Forbes in the Chair

Councillors Burdis, M.Forbes and Stockdale

### **Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence

### **Declarations of Interest**

None.

### **Minutes**

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Committee held on 17 June 2013 (circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **End of Q2 (April – September) Performance Report 2013/2014**

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Fire Officer to present the Quarter 2 (April – September) Performance of the Authority against the targets for 2013/14. 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 Pratt, Area Manager and Nina Griffiths, Area Manager and invited them to present the report.

Nina Griffiths advised the Committee that Based on Quarter 2 performance data, the Authority was maintaining its overall trajectory of improvement and is set to meet the majority of the targets set for the current financial year. This includes, based on a comparison with the same period 2012/13:

- 2% fewer **Primary Fires**
- 2% fewer **Accidental Dwelling Fires**
- 38% fewer **Injuries from Accidental Dwelling Fires**
- 26% fewer **Malicious False Alarms Attended**

The first two quarters of 2013-14 have seen an increase in deliberate fires when compared with the same period last year. This has also affected the All Fires figures. However this should be viewed in the context if the wider trend over a number of years, where the trajectory of deliberates is still downwards; as the tables within the report show, 2012-13 was an exceptionally good year for deliberate levels across all Mets.

The report was based on applying performance management against service wide targets that have been set over a three year period as featured in the Strategic Community Safety Plan. However, for the purposes of this report performance was only reported against the target set for 2013/14

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 the Committee would be able to identify any issues which were contributing to the overall performance of the service and take remedial action if necessary

To reflect the overall performance of TWFRS in comparison with other Metropolitan FRS a comparison had been provided in the report.

This level of comparative performance had also been reflected at district level to highlight the performance of each district when compared against each other.

The Community Outcome Indicators were considered in turn:-

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

- By the end of Quarter 2 2013/2014 the Authority attended 852 primary fires, this was a reduction of 20 (2%) from the previous year. They were forecast to attend 153.06 primary fires per 100,000 population in 2013/14 meaning they were not expected to meet the target but if this performance continued will be within 2.5%

of it. They were the third best performing Met FRS in this indicator for Q2 2013/14.

- Despite seeing a reduction in the overall number of primary fires the Authority had seen an increase of 10 primary fires that were started deliberately. Deliberate primary fires accounted for 42% of all primary fires by the end of Q2 2013/14.
- All districts with the exception of Newcastle recorded a reduction in primary fires compared to Q2 last year; Newcastle recorded an increase of 44 incidents, the majority of which were deliberately started. There were 30 more deliberately started primary fires in Newcastle by the end of Q2 than there were for the same period last year.

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

- Sadly during Quarter 2 there were two fatalities due to all fires (not just accidental). One was in Newcastle and involved an elderly lady aged 85 with mobility problems; smoking materials were involved in this incident. The other was a 49 year old man in Gateshead; this incident is still being investigated.
- Both of these incidents were still awaiting a verdict from the coroner following the relevant inquests.

#### **(LI2) Number of fatalities from all fires per 100,000 population**

The Authority were not currently expected to meet the target for this indicator; they were equal third best performing Met FRS for Q2 2013/14 in relation to fatalities from accidental dwelling fires.

When a fatality occurred an incident profile was produced providing details of the victim, the location, the incident, MOSAIC profile and details of incidents in the area. This information was used in a case conference with partners to identify if any actions could be taken to prevent the occurrence of a similar event. As a result of this review a number of properties were identified as being higher risk and they were revisited by Authority staff for an updated HSC

#### **(LI 8) Accidental dwelling fires per 10,000 dwellings**

- The Authority attended 271 accidental dwelling fires, 6 less in comparison to the end of Q2 last year; this was a reduction of 2%. They were the second best performing Met FRS in this indicator for Q2 2013/14 and only one of three to see a reduction during the same period last year.
- The Authority were forecast to attend 11.99 accidental dwelling fires per 100,000 population in 2013/14. If this performance continues they were not expected to meet the target but be within 2.5% of it.

Three districts continued to show a reduction in accidental dwelling fires when compared to Q2 last year with Sunderland showing the greatest improvement.

**South Tyneside** recorded an increase of 13 incidents (39%) in Q2 2013/14 when compared to the same period last year. 30 of these fires were in the kitchen and this reinforces the need to promote cooking safety during Home Safety Checks (HSC). South Tyneside personnel would continue to highlight the hazards and risks associated with fire via the HSC initiative. This data continued to inform the targeting strategy, and where it was identified that a particular person was at a greater risk from having a dwelling fire every effort would be made to carry out an HSC at that premise. Partnership working also plays a key part in this targeting strategy locally. Plans for South Tyneside personnel to provide smoking cessation information were also part of the HSC initiative.

**Newcastle** district recorded an increase of 9 incidents (11%) in Q2 2013/14. There have been days of action in Q2 when the Service Volunteers have assisted Newcastle District P&E Dept to target areas in Newcastle where there have been higher incidents of accidental dwelling fires. These days have proven to be extremely productive for obtaining HSC referrals. In Q3 and Q4 Newcastle District will be looking to replicate this in the other station areas.

**Gateshead** district recorded a reduction of 11 incidents (18%) in Q2 2013/14. Safety messages are given during HSC's and visits to sheltered accommodation and schools. HSC's are a huge priority in the District and, as well as P&E staff and operational crews, GMBC's provider CareCall is carrying out HSC's. Important data is referred back (e.g. particularly at risk cases) and action taken accordingly by P&E. Gateshead have a pilot scheme underway with GMBC's maintenance contractor Mears to fit Smoke Alarms in void properties that are being prepared for re-let.

**North Tyneside** recorded a reduction of one incident (2%) in Q2 2013/14. The HSC process along with other core business such as; sheltered accommodation talks to residents and schools education talks are carried out to assist with the reduction of this indicator.

**Sunderland** recorded a reduction of 16 incidents (26%) in Q2 2013/14. Sunderland Prevention and Education staff have started refresher Fire Safety Awareness training with Gentoo. All Housing Managers and Gentoo Wellbeing staff are participating in this. This is expected to be an on-going venture to further drive down the number of accidental dwelling fires occurring in the Sunderland district.

- By the end of Q2 2013/14 there were 6 less accidental dwelling fires from smoking materials, 6 less from wiring, cabling and plugs however there were 19 more cooking related accidental dwelling fires, this correlates to the above graph which clearly shows a peak during evening mealtimes. Cooking remains our main cause for concerns and accounts for 53% of all accidental dwelling fires which occurred in Q2 2013/14. Kitchen safety awareness continues to be delivered via the HSC programme.

### **(LI3) Injuries from accidental dwelling fires per 100,000 population**

- By the end of Q2 2013/14 there were 26 injuries from accidental dwelling fires, this was a reduction of 16 injuries (38%) in comparison with the previous year. This was a positive reduction which directly contributes to the achievement of one of the strategic objectives.
- The Authority were currently expected to meet the target of 5.88 injuries from accidental dwelling fires set for this year, being the third best performing Met FRS for this indicator.
- All districts showed a reduction in this indicator with the exception of South Tyneside. Although South Tyneside saw an increase of 9 injuries in comparison with the previous year, 8 of these injuries occurred in just 2 incidents both in student accommodation and involved cooking.
- Of the 26 injuries only 3 were serious; this was a reduction of 67% in comparison to last year. Of the 26 injuries 18 (69%) were cooking related. Details of the serious injuries were as follows:
  - 61 year old female in Gateshead who was taken to hospital after being overcome by fumes/smoke from a fire that started in the kitchen, the cause of which is suspected to be a faulty refrigerator. The victim was rescued from her bedroom.
  - 48 year old female in South Tyneside who suffered burns following a gas explosion in her kitchen. The cause is under investigation.
  - 52 year old female suffered from cuts/lacerations sustained whilst attempting to escape from a fire in her bedroom. The fire was caused by an iron being left turned on in the bedroom and being placed too close to clothing.
- **South Tyneside** district had an increase of 9 compared to the same period last year, 5 of these occurred in one incident where the victims of a cooking related fire all suffered from smoke inhalation and attended hospital. It has been noted that a number of the victims had English as their second language and further fire safety education has been arranged for them and their fellow residents as well as their landlord in order to reduce their risk from fire in the future.
- It was pleasing to note that early detection and warning at all of these incidents by the operation of a working smoke alarm ensured that the injuries were not as serious as might have been had the fire gone undetected.
- **Sunderland** saw a reduction of two injuries in comparison to Q2 of the previous year.

- **Gateshead** district saw a reduction of 10 injuries (71%) from Q2 2012/13 and have Partner referral procedures in place to identify at-risk occupants.
- **North Tyneside** district saw a reduction of 1 (25%) injuries from Q2 2012/13. Continued education with 'fire in the home' guidance is carried out by the district to ensure injuries from accidental dwelling fires continue to reduce.
- **Newcastle** district saw a significant reduction of 12 injuries (80%) from Q2 2012/13. On a monthly basis the district team in Newcastle monitor all incidents against mosaic codes to assist with informing future targeting strategy.

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

- By the end of Q2 2013/14 the Authority attended 2,915 deliberate fires (26.4 per 10,000 population). This was an increase of 968 (49%) from Q2 2012/13 and the Authority were currently not expecting to meet their target of 32.7 per 10,000 population. This needed to be put in the context of an exceptionally good year in 2012/13 which was experienced across all of the Met FRS.
- All Met FRS had experienced an increase in this indicator in 2013/14; Tyne and Wear continues to have the second highest number of deliberate fires for Q2 2013/14 whilst also experiencing the second highest increase.
- During this period the Authority saw an increase of 10 deliberate primary fires compared with the same period last year. Newcastle district saw an increase of 30 deliberate primary fires during this period. Analysis of these incidents has identified no trends in location, cause or property type involved in these incidents. It would appear to be an overall increase in incidents with no specific cause. Newcastle's performance over the past five years has seen a steady reduction in these types of incidents and the Q2 2013/14 figure compared with Q2 2011/12 shows a reduction in this type of incident.
- Although all districts were showing a significant increase in comparison to last year, when compared over the previous five years deliberate fires were showing a downward trend with only two districts showing an increase from Q2 2011/2012.

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

- By the end of Q2 2013/14 the Authority attended 2,555 deliberate secondary fires (23.1 per 10,000 population). This was an increase of 958 (60%) from Q2 2012/13. Although all districts were showing a significant increase in comparison to last year, when compared over the previous five years deliberate fires were showing a downward trend similar to LI33.

The Chairman commented that the London figures appeared to be very low in comparison to the others due to the fact they had a different way of recording performance, which made it difficult to include them as a comparative Met.

**(LI21) Number of malicious false alarm calls attended**

- The Authority attended 100 false alarms by the end of Q2 2013/14 which was a reduction of 36 incidents (26%) from Q2 2012/13.
- Malicious false alarms had continued to reduce over the last five years; the Authority was expected to meet the target of 241 malicious false alarms attended.
- With the exception of South Yorkshire all Met FRS were showing similar performance for this indicator with Tyne and Wear making the third highest improvement.
- Only two properties had more than two malicious false alarms by the end of Q2 2013/14. Cherry Knowles Hospital in Sunderland had three and Four Lane Ends Metro Station in North Tyneside had four, all other properties had two or less.
- The Call Challenge procedure, carried out by Mobilising Control, continued to be applied resulting in 46 calls challenged in Q2 and non-attendance at 25 of these.
- The service wide Schools Education programme continued to emphasise the consequences of hoax calls.

In response to a question from Councillor Stockdale, John Pratt advised that intelligence regarding the areas where malicious calls were being made from had vastly improved and the information available was much richer.

The Chairman enquired whether legal action was pursued against people making malicious calls and was advised that it depended on the age of the perpetrators and whether they were persistent offenders.

**(LI22) Number of false alarm calls due to automatic fire alarms from non-domestic premises per 1,000 non domestic premises**

- The Authority attended 1,281 (39.91 per 1,000 non domestics) up to the end of Q2 2013/14 reflecting a reduction of 77 (6%) on last year's Q2 figures. These incidents were a waste of resources and the fact that this was the fifth year in a row that the numbers have reduced is a positive indication that our strategies were having an effect. The challenge was to maintain these reductions going forward which would be achieved by continuing to work with partners such as hospitals and universities.

- Hospitals remain the main premises type throughout the Service however the ratio is decreasing. Hospitals accounted for 18% in Q2 2013/14 compared to 19% in Q2 2012/13.
- Research and analysis was currently being undertaken to determine the differences between our policies for false alarms and that of other Metropolitan FRS. For example, West Midlands no longer respond to false alarm calls between 08:00 hours and 20:00 hours unless the call is confirmed by a 999 call or if the property has a specified life risk.
- **Newcastle** district has seen a reduction of 30 incidents in this indicator. Discussions have taken place between the District Team and Fire Safety to identify any underlying causes and potential actions to address this indicator. In Q3, Newcastle District Prevention and Education Teams will be carrying out initiatives at universities and student accommodation in an effort to maintain the downward trend in Li22 in these premises.
- **Sunderland** district has seen a decrease of 3 incidents in this indicator. Intervention work is on-going with Sunderland Royal Hospital who account for 13% of the districts figure for incidents of this type.
- **Gateshead** district has seen a reduction of 8 incidents compared to Q2 2012/13. Ongoing work with Metro Centre and QE Hospital will continue in an effort to further drive down these incidents.

Joy Brindle advised that a piece of work was currently being carried out to determine the different policies for false alarms amongst the Metropolitan Authorities

Councillor Burdis enquired as to whether there was a particular age group of malicious callers and was advised by John Pratt that it was difficult to determine unless you could engage the caller for a period of time on the phone.

**(LI23) Total number of false alarm calls due to automatic fire alarms, either by person responding to an alarm actuated by fire detection equipment or fixed fire fighting equipment from domestic premises per 1000 domestic premises**

- The Authority attended a total of 1,320 incidents of this type by the end of Q2 2013/14; this was a reduction of 119 in comparison to Q2 of the previous year. Sheltered accommodation were responsible for 562 (43%) of these.
- Although this reduction was a positive step the Authority experienced the highest number of these calls in comparison to the other Met FRS who report on this indicator.
- **North Tyneside** district saw an increase of 5 incidents of this type in comparison with Q2 of the previous year. Work is on-going with the Prevention and Education team visiting all sheltered accommodation within North Tyneside to discuss safety in kitchen, electrical etc as these appear to be the main cause of the



increase. All managers are aware of the strain this puts on our resources, poor maintenance, testing and system faults have increased our turnouts within this indicator. Letters will be sent to overall managers for those premises with a high number of calls in an effort to reduce the numbers within this indicator.

- **Newcastle** district saw a reduction of 65 incidents in comparison to Q2 of the previous year. A significant contributing factor to the high numbers in Q2 last year were as a result of new alarm systems being installed in sheltered accommodation premises. These premises continue to account for high numbers of false alarm calls due to automatic fire detection from domestic premises. When the data is analysed further a high percentage of Li23 calls continue to be as a result of burnt toast or faulty systems in sheltered accommodation and discussions have taken place between the alarm providers and the housing providers to identify any potential modifications to the system that could help to reduce these. Call Challenge is in place in sheltered accommodation managed by Your Homes Newcastle and in Q2 2013/14 there have been 144 calls challenged by Your Homes Newcastle.
- There have been increases against LI23 in Newcastle Central in Q2 and in particular calls in Riverside Dene, High Rise properties accounted for 33% of the monthly total in September for this station area. These statistics have prompted the housing provider to meet with the district team to identify reasons for these increases that have been linked directly to the removal of concierge services in the blocks concerned. The technical advisors have identified some of the underlying reasons and are working to make changes to the system to address the problem.
- **Sunderland** district saw a reduction of 21 incidents in this indicator from Q2 of the previous year. Fire safety, Prevention and Education and Operational watches continue to work together to reduce these incidents through fire prevention and safety advice to occupants. The district also works closely with Telecare and Gentoo to reduce calls through their Call Challenge Procedure.
- **Gateshead** district saw a reduction of 14 incidents of this type compared to Q2 2012/13. Monthly statistics from the Performance Monitor are analysed and repeat offenders reported to P&E. Visits and talks to groups of residents (a high percentage are SA's) are then undertaken. Gateshead district also have an arrangement with CareCall whereby they challenge fire calls before they are referred.
- **South Tyneside** saw a reduction of 24 incidents of this type in comparison with Q2 of the previous year. The vast majority of incidents occurred in Sheltered Accommodation Schemes (Housing Plus in South Tyneside). The prevention and education team continue to target these premises and carry out an annual visit to residents in order to convey fire safety education messages to residents and advice to scheme managers on how to reduce these activations.

In Summary the Committee noted that, based on Quarter 2 performance data, 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 2012/13:

- 2% fewer **Primary Fires**
- 2% fewer **Accidental Dwelling Fires**
- 38% fewer **Injuries from Accidental Dwelling Fires**
- 26% fewer **Malicious False Alarms Attended**

The first two quarters of 2013-14 had seen an increase in deliberate fires when compared with the same period last year. This had also affected the All Fires figures. However this should be viewed in the context of the wider trend over a number of years, where the trajectory of deliberates was still downwards; as the tables within the report showed, 2012-13 was an exceptionally good year for deliberate levels across all Mets.

Members commented that they liked the format of the report and the ability to compare with other Mets and districts.

In response to a comment from Councillor Forbes regarding the problem of deliberate fires and the need to educate young people, Joy Brindle advised that a large proportion of perpetrators did not get caught. There was a junior fire setting course as well as the Phoenix project; however the numbers of people who went through this course was small. Furthermore, resource in this kind of activity was diminishing and if such programmes were left to fall the chances are they would be lost.

Councillor Stockdale stated that it would be useful to look at comparative statistics between, for example, local authorities who charge for additional refuse removal and whether this contributed to deliberate fires.

The Chairman stated that it was important to ensure the Fire Authority was not seen as a stand alone service.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor M. Forbes regarding whether comparisons in figures were made with other countries, Joy Brindle advised that they collected statistics in very different ways.

### 3. RESOLVED that

- i) the content of the report is noted.
- ii) the Performance Report be published

(Signed) N. Forbes  
Chairman