

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 10 FEBRUARY 2020 at 10.30 am

Present:

Councillor Forbes in the Chair.

Councillor Duggan, Pickard and Samuels.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Dodds and Purvis and also the Chief Fire Officer, AM Phil Clark and the Strategic Finance Manager.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

7. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Committee held on 25 November 2019 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Quarter Three Performance Report 2019/2020

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority), the Strategic Finance Officer and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report to provide the Committee with information relating to Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service's

(TWFRS) performance for Quarter Three 2019/2020 (period 1 April 2019 to 31 December 2019).

The attention of Members was drawn to the following statistics within TWFRS:

- Unfortunately, there had been four fire fatalities (LI02) from all fires. All were as a result of an accidental dwelling fire (LI01);
- Injures from accidental dwelling fires (LI03) had decreased by 44% (16) when compared to Q3 2018/19;
- During Q3 2019/20, accidental dwelling fires (LI08) decreased by 10% (38) compared to Q3 2018/19;
- There had been a 9% (342) decrease in deliberate secondary fires (LI16);
- False alarms in non-domestic premises had decreased by 10% (141) and false alarms in domestic premises had increased by 6% (113);
- 26,001 HSC's had been delivered in Q3 2019/20, (20,438 by TWFRS and 5,563 by partners). This compared to 19,482 Q3 2018/19 (16,508 by TWFRS and 2,974 by partners); and
- The Service had achieved or were within 10% of achieving 14 of 16 targets as detailed in the report.

The Chairman acknowledged the low number of fatalities year on year however referred to the four to the end of Quarter 3 and questioned if there was a common cause of fire and whether smoke alarms had been installed. Area Manager (AM) John Pratt reported that investigations were being carried out and case studies would determine the cause. In terms of common causes, Members were advised it was difficult to analyse trends in deaths from fire due to the low numbers, however the 10 year trend identified fires that started in the living room or kitchen were most common room of origin. Fatalities had also occurred in different rooms and the coroner's outcomes were awaited for the fatalities up to the end of Quarter 3. Members noted that on some occasions smoke alarms were fitted but not all were working.

AM John Pratt advised that the proactive, targeted intervention and prevention work with communities and partners had helped to reduce the number of accidental fires in the home as compared with Quarter 3 2018/2019. The Chairman asked if there was a correlation between furniture predating Fire Regulations and dwelling fires. AM John Pratt replied that fires involving foam filled fire retardant materials smouldered at a much slower rate than those that were not fire retardant and therefore had a positive effect on slowing down the burn rate and subsequent fire damage caused.

The Chairman commented on the horrendous injuries caused by children's costumes and was astounded that there was no accreditation for clothing. ACFO Heath advised members that there were concerns regarding the safety of unbranded goods and those bought from non-genuine outlets.

Councillor Pickard wondered if the checking of appliances had impacted on the number of dwelling fires. AM John Pratt replied that the prevention work with

communities, which focused on smoke alarms and kitchen safety, had contributed to the reduction in the number of accidental dwelling fires.

ACFO Baines advised Members that in 2010 people were 13 times more likely to die in fires and reported this was now down to three. He agreed to submit a detailed breakdown of the context of accidental dwelling fires to the next meeting.

Action: ACFO John Baines

AM John Pratt reported that vehicle fires had increased by 1%. In response to a question from the Chairman, he informed Members that 430 had been deliberate fires.

Members noted the downward trend in fire attendance in Quarter 3 over the last three years. The Chairman observed that statistics on call challenge were not reported, neither were duplicate calls for the same incident. ACFO Heath agreed to collate the information and submit to the next meeting.

Action: ACFO Heath

The Chairman referred to the reduction in incidents attended by TRVs and asked if their availability had been reduced. AM Pratt explained that TRVs were located to areas based upon risk level and peak times for deliberate secondary fires across the Service. This ensured the availability of fire engines to attend life threatening incidents. The Chairman noted that attendance time by risk level had improved, however questioned the improved attendance time for risk level 4. AM Pratt acknowledged that the time had improved as had attendance to all risk levels. He agreed to carry out a detailed analysis on attendance times for each risk level and the Chair commented that he would welcome the information going forward.

Action: AM John Pratt

In relation to district performance, the Chairman commented that Newcastle City Council had introduced a charge for replacement wheelie bins and wondered if other local authorities did the same. It was noted that Sunderland, South Tyneside, North Tyneside and Gateshead had. This should encourage residents to take in their bins and consequently reduce the number of wheelie bin fires.

The Chairman acknowledged that deliberate secondary fires were not a threat to life however he had received feedback from a number of residents on this type of incident. He requested a succinct report be produced to enable Members look at the issues for their authority and deal with them before becoming an upward trend. Councillor Pickard agreed it would be useful to have the information broken down into wards. AM John Pratt reported this information was currently shared with local authorities in the Partnership meetings. ACFO Heath agreed to submit a report to TWFR.

Action: ACFO Heath

The Chairman suggested that if young people were engaging in anti-social behaviour, perhaps the Authority's work with young people, for example the Phoenix Project, should be reviewed to discourage negative behaviour. This could also be taken to the Northumbrian Water Innovation Festival as a challenge. ACFO Baines

informed Members that the ASB profile was shared with partners of Northumbria Police and the North East Regional Data Sharing Group. It was agreed that this be circulated to Members.

Action: ACFO Baines

The Chairman thanked AM Pratt for his report. He added that AM Pratt was retiring later in the year and thanked him for the support he had given to Members. Members wished AM Pratt a happy retirement.

8. RESOLVED that:-

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

HMICFRS Inspection of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2018/2019

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority), the Strategic Finance Officer and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report to inform Members of the 'Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS) 'State of Fire and Rescue: Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2019' report, incorporating an overview from the 2018/19 inspection programme.

ACFO Baines reminded Members that the first cycle of HMICFRS inspections of all 45 FRS in England had taken place in 2018/2019 over three tranches, with the final (tranche 3) inspection reports published in December 2019. TWFRS was inspected in tranche 2 and judged as 'Good' across the three pillars of inspection, namely: Effectiveness, Efficiency and People. HMICFRS published the State of Fire and Rescue Report on 15 January 2020. This was the first report by HMICFRS Inspector, Sir Thomas Winsor, under s.28B of the Fire and Rescue Services Act. The link to the full report had previously been circulated to Members.

Members' attention was drawn to the State of Fire and Rescue report which highlighted that there was much that Services should be proud of, and acknowledged that the FRS had many strengths and was admired by the public. The determination and dedication to protect life and property was described as 'second to none', which was a positive reflection on the professionalism, passion and commitment of all staff. The reduction in the number of fire incidents that had allowed FRSs to diversify into other activities to benefit the wider community were highlighted.

ACFO Baines reported it was interesting to note that some Services had been protected from budget reductions, whilst others had had to make considerable savings, which could be detrimental to the services provided to the public. Members and Officers of the Authority had lobbied regarding the disparity in funding and level of cuts for a number of years and continued this work in seeking a fair funding formula. He added that TWFRS was the hardest hit across England.

Members noted that the report: highlighted the need for reform across the sector, calling for improvement; noted barriers to Services becoming more efficient and effective; referenced unclear demarcation between political oversight and operational leadership and a considerable influence of trade unions.

Bringing Members' attention to the Recommendations of the State of Fire and Rescue Report, ACFO Baines highlighted that by:

- June 2020, the Home Office, in consultation with the fire and rescue sector, should review and with precision determine the roles of a) fire and rescue services and b) those who work within them;
- June 2020, The Home Office, the Local Government Association, the National Fire Chief's Council and trade unions should consider whether the current pay negotiation machinery required fundamental reform. If so, they should include the need for an independent review body and the future of the 'grey book';
- September 2020, the Home Office should consider the case for legislating to give Chief Fire Officers operational independence. In the meantime it should offer clear guidance, possibly through an amendment to the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, on the demarcation between those responsible for governance and operational decision making by the CFO; and
- December 2020, the National Fire Chief's Council, with the Local Government Association, should produce a code of ethics for the Fire and Rescue Services.

ACFO Baines reminded Members that HMICFRS grade Services across three pillars of inspection: effectiveness, efficiency and people, with each Service receiving a judgement for each pillar. Sixteen out of 45 Services received the grade of 'Good' for all three pillars, including TWFRS which was also positioned in the top third of FRSs in England. Three FRSs had received 'inadequate' for a pillar and were in receipt of 'Cause for Concern' notices and subject to re-visit by HMICFRS.

Referring to the report, Members' attention was drawn to the extracts relating to the three pillars. In relation to Pillar 1, Effectiveness, 29 FRS were judged as 'good' and 16 as 'Requires Improvement'. TWFRS appliance availability was 93% which HMI had omitted from the report. Protection (Fire Safety) work needed to improve with over half FRSs graded as 'Requires Improvement' or 'Inadequate' TWFRS was graded 'Good'.

In terms of Pillar 2, Efficiency, 26 FRS were judged as 'good' and 19 as 'Requires Improvement' or 'Inadequate'. The financial disparity was highlighted in the report with acknowledgment that the current funding model was based on an outdated model, which would have a detrimental impact on the services to the communities, about which Members were lobbying. The on-call system was being reviewed to ensure value for money with an observation that significant savings could be achieved through combining FRS. TWFRS would continue to focus on maintaining and improving how resources would be used to manage risk and work with members to lobby for funding reforms to secure an affordable way of managing risk.

ACFO Baines provided an overview of Pillar 3, People, which had been highlighted an area of concern with 18 FRS judged 'Good', 25 'Requires Improvement' and two 'Inadequate'. There were some outstanding examples of a positive culture and whilst not directly mentioned, it was considered TWFRS was among those. Members noted that the report stated the striking lack of diversity which they commented was a national issue and had been debated in detail at the last TWFRS HR meeting.

With reference to public perception of fire and rescue services in England 2019, BMG research had indicated 89% of respondents perceived TWFRS to be an effective service which was above the national average.

Looking forward, the second cycle of HMICFRS inspections was anticipated spring/summer 2020. Inspection activities would commence February 2020 with visits from the Service Liaison Lead and existing HMI. Key elements of the inspection would include Discovery Week and Fieldwork Week.

ACFO Baines concluded that HMICFRS had identified a significant variation on operational effectiveness, efficiency and Services' approach to people management across the Sector. TWFRS had formulated a self-identified Post Inspection Improvement Plan which set out 32 improvement areas with 85 specific improvement actions.

A discussion ensued during which Members noted the additional burden of a temporary team being established in preparation of the HMICFRS Inspection at a cost equivalent to £141,081 per annum, at current rates of pay.

Councillor Purvis commented on the lack of clarity on how to get to outstanding. ACFO Baines replied that he had expected an outstanding judgment for Fire Safety and could not identify any differences between TWFRS's Good judgement and those FRSs judged outstanding.

The Chairman commented that despite the report acknowledging the discussions between FRS, Employers and the Government about the role of fire fighters and pay that had been going on for several years, this had not been taken into consideration by HMICFRS. There was no evidence of understanding of the level of circumstance and risk. Referring to the recommendations of the State of Fire and Rescue Report, the Chairman commented on 'operational independence' and wondered who this would be from. In addition, he reported that the TWFRS prided itself on prevention and was disappointed this would not form part of the inspections and that little consideration would be given to variation of areas. In addition, although there was no long term funding settlement, there was no recommendation for government to put in a funding recommendation regarding the funding formula. The Chairman concluded that funding should be available to support the work related to the inspection process.

ACFO Baines reported it was interesting to note the recommendations and timescales in the absence of views from the Home Office on a one year settlement and it was hoped the Home Office would provide financial stability. ACFO Heath referred to a recent Conference where questions had been raised about disparity and the fairness of the inspection process if FRSs are inspected and compared to others 18 months apart.

Councillor Pickard acknowledged the financial disparity and reiterated that TWFRS was the lowest funded FA in the UK. However, in terms of performance, he was pleased to note that TWFRS was one of the best performing in the UK and therefore had a good baseline that could be improved despite a massive reduction in resources. He was disappointed that no acknowledgement had been given to prevention work, community safety and diversity and equality in the report.

The Chairman concluded that the HMI regime would continue with inspections of England's fire and rescue service and that development would be watched with interest.

9. RESOLVED that:-

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

Incident Response Standards – Quarter 3 Pilot Update

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority), the Strategic Finance Officer and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report to update Members on the pilot of incident responses standards to the end of Quarter 3 (Q£), period 1 April 2019 to 31 December 2019 and seek an extension to the pilot to enable alignment with the review of the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP)

ACFO Heath provided an overview of the report reminding Members of the Authority's strategy and previously approved draft response standards as outlined in section 2.2 of the report. Members' attention was drawn to 2.5 regarding the level of uncertainty regarding the medium to long term financial position of the service due to the one year settled for 2020/21 and the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review, the outcome of which would determine the financial settlement.

The Committee was referred to the draft incident response standards in 3.4, table 1. They acknowledged that further detailed work was required to inform future IRMP. In addition, extension of the pilot would support the approach to the Prevention and Protection services to the community.

Councillor Pickard suggested a breakdown by station would be useful going forward.

10. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the contents of the report be noted;
- (ii) an extension to the pilot response standards project of up to 12 months be agreed; and
- (iii) further reports be received as appropriate

(Signed) N FORBES
Chair