

## Annual Governance Review: Fire Authority Member questionnaire analysis

Question	Answer	Evidence
1) Do you think the Authority clearly communicates its purpose and vision, and its intended outcomes for the community and service users?	Yes - 15  No - 0	<p>Overall Member responses indicated communication was effective and they offered a number of examples in support of this including the publication of annual reports, presentations, the use of the Services' website and social media postings.</p> <p><i>'Quality of communications is excellent. Clear and understandable'</i></p> <p><i>'This is done principally via social media and robust interim and annual reports, including the Strategic Community Safety Plan and Statement of Assurance and Annual Report'</i></p> <p><i>'A range of published documents, SCSP, SOAAR and others clearly set out what we do and who benefits'</i></p>
2) Do you feel the Authority seeks to establish, monitor and maintain the organisations ethical standards and performance?	Yes - 15  No - 0	<p>All Members agreed the Authority monitored and maintained ethical standards which were evident in the behaviours adopted by senior management and staff and governed by corporate policies, with performance reported to Fire Authority and scrutinised by the Governance Committee.</p> <p><i>'Our ethical stance is evident in everything we do and has been recognised by HMI in judging our People pillar as good. The service has gained recognition – e.g. Stonewall'</i></p> <p><i>'TWFRS is quite possibly the most ethical and transparent organisation I have been part of'</i></p> <p><i>'A good record of implementing ethical standards as well as having policies'</i></p>
3) Do you think the Authority conducts business in an open and transparent manner? Behaving with integrity and leading a culture where acting in the public interest is visibly and consistently demonstrated thereby protecting the reputation of the organisation.	Yes - 15  No - 0	<p>All Members agreed that Authority business was conducted in a clear and transparent manner; examples included adherence to public sector contracting rules, external publication of committee reports, public attendance at committee meetings (including virtually, live streamed during covid-19) where a significant proportion of business is conducted during the public part of the meeting (part I) which provides transparency of the decision making processes.</p> <p><i>'Authority meetings are livestreamed (with justified exceptions – e.g. Part II) and...Members and officers are cognisant of public duty'</i></p> <p><i>'The vast majority of our business is conducted in part 1 so the public has the opportunity to read and understand our journey over many years. This includes our constituent authorities and our 29 partner organisations'</i></p> <p><i>'I think the reputation of the organisation is excellent in comparison with other public bodies. This is because of openness, transparency, integrity'</i></p>

<p>4) Do you feel the Authority has adequate provisions to effectively deal with corruption and misuse of power?</p>	<p>Yes - 15 No - 0</p>	<p>On the whole responses indicated there was adequate provision in place to deal with corruption and the misuse of power which Members evidenced by making reference to the past performance of the senior leadership team, the use of internal and external auditing and the work of the Governance Committee.</p> <p><i>‘CFO and leadership team not afraid to deal with difficult issues – e.g. disciplinary’</i></p> <p><i>‘Members appear to have no trouble asking searching questions and holding officers to account’</i></p> <p><i>‘Yes all checks and balances are in place. A good audit system. No one person makes contractual decisions so we are avoiding misuse of power’</i></p> <p><i>‘Internal and independent audit reports are shared with Governance Committee which is independently chaired’</i></p> <p>One respondent highlighted that whilst mechanisms were in place to address corruption and the misuse of power is was important to continually review these arrangements to ensure standards of openness were maintained.</p> <p>One respondent suggested Members may benefit from a fuller briefing from legal services about the provisions for effectively dealing with corruption and misuse of power.</p>
<p>5) Do you think that the Authority has effective arrangements to identify and deal with failures in service delivery?</p>	<p>Yes - 13 No – 1 Unsure - 1</p>	<p>Thirteen of the fifteen Members agreed effective measures were in place to deal with failures in service delivery, with instances of failure having previously been addressed. It was acknowledged oversight arrangements were in place through the use of internal audit, regular reporting to the HR Committee and the Policy and Performance Committee where performance data is shared.</p> <p><i>‘Reporting is consistent and thorough. Full information is either reported to Members ‘at first instance’, or is forthcoming upon request’</i></p> <p><i>‘I have seen instances of where problems with service delivery addressed’</i></p> <p><i>‘Full performance data is provided and variances are visible. Additionally, the authority has been proactive in adapting arrangements that are not working’</i></p> <p>One Member disagreed with the statement and suggested the arrangements for dealing with failures in service delivery needed to be improved:</p> <p><i>‘Needs to be improved, in particular when things are not performing as expected senior officers should report this to the Authority’</i></p>
<p>6) Do you think you are made sufficiently aware of</p>	<p>Yes - 15 No - 0</p>	<p>All Members agreed they were kept informed of issues of interest and were encouraged to participate, receiving information via committee papers and invitations.</p>

issues which may be of interest so that you can choose whether to get involved?		<p><i>'Kept very well informed by clear and understandable communications'</i></p> <p><i>'Invitation to many groups / events on equality'</i></p> <p><i>'Employees and authority members are all encouraged to get involved in matters of interest'</i></p>
7) Do you think you are provided with sufficient briefing when dealing with local fire related issues?	<p>Yes - 13</p> <p>No - 1</p> <p>No answer - 1</p>	<p>Thirteen of the fifteen Members agreed they were sufficiently briefed to deal with Area Managers.</p> <p><i>'The briefings are clear and concise with ability to seek further information'</i></p> <p><i>'All Authority meetings attended to date provide Members with detailed and useful information'</i></p> <p><i>'Whilst fighting fires is the priority, whether it be a fire in your area or fire related issues in general I am well briefed'</i></p> <p><i>'Area Managers keep me well informed'</i></p> <p>Whilst feedback on this issue was mostly positive, there were some comments which indicated that communication could be improved.</p> <p><i>'Usually find out through media'</i></p> <p><i>'This is difficult balance anyway but made worse by covid-19 pressures'</i></p> <p><i>'To a certain degree – as TWFRS has its management who deal with day to day running of service. ASB / Bonfire night in particular are flagged up via the Authority'</i></p>
8) Do you feel that you have an influence in how Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS) is run?	<p>Yes - 15</p> <p>No - 0</p>	<p>Members felt their views were listened to and were able to have their say to influence and make decisions on how the service operated, through their participation at Fire Authority and committee meetings.</p> <p><i>'Members take an active role in steering Service at a strategic level, though to date Members and officers have agreed on most matters and so this has not been tested'</i></p> <p><i>'As an Authority Member I have as much say as I want to. We are given plenty of detail of operational and organisational issues'</i></p> <p><i>'Every opportunity at meetings and encouragement to contact ELT if necessary'</i></p> <p><i>'Absolutely. Members views are listened to and acted on by Principal Officers'</i></p>
9) Are you clear regarding the role of the Executive	<p>Yes - 15</p> <p>No - 0</p>	<p>All Members confirmed they understood the role and function of the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and this had been communicated:</p>

<p>Leadership Team Members and their functions?</p>		<p><i>‘Very clear and there is a distinct difference in roles between the executive leadership and the political leadership but having mutual interests for the service’</i></p> <p><i>‘Recent changes in leadership team well explained by the CFO’</i></p> <p><i>‘Including how the ELT functions have changed over time as our service has adapted to cuts’</i></p> <p>Two respondents made suggestions for improvements, one suggested that more frequent updates should be provided when changes occur and another thought Members may benefit from training.</p> <p><i>‘Yes however need regular updates when changes are made’</i></p> <p><i>‘Yes, but perhaps all Members of the Fire Authority would benefit from a training session on this and others’</i></p>
<p>10) How well do you understand what the Authority is trying to achieve through the Strategic Community Safety Plan and Integrated Risk Management Planning.</p>	<p>Yes - 15</p> <p>No - 0</p>	<p>Members indicated they understood the SCSP and IRMP; as the objectives were clearly explained in the documents and have been discussed at Fire Authority meetings and updates provided as changes occur.</p> <p><i>‘Very well. They are comprehensive documents which set out our aims and objectives very clearly, including how we will do so’</i></p> <p><i>‘Detailed papers and presentations at governance and full meeting – plenty of opportunity to ask questions’</i></p> <p><i>‘Yes value all the work that goes into this and support the joint working with LA’</i></p> <p>One Member indicated that format and complexity of the reports can present a barrier to their understanding:</p> <p><i>‘It is sometimes difficult to understand the complexity of papers issues. I prefer to ask questions and these are always answered’</i></p> <p>Two respondents asked whether there was an opportunity to review or change the strategic documents and to streamline into a single document.</p> <p><i>‘Are they working. Is there need for review or change’</i></p> <p><i>‘There is an opportunity to streamline all these into one future plan for the FRS’</i></p> <p>One respondent suggested it would be beneficial for Members to undertake refresher training about the strategic documents.</p> <p><i>‘Members would benefit from a refresh where applicable, especially those newly appointed’</i></p>

<p>11) Is the information you receive from TWFRS sufficient, useful, timely and easy to understand?</p>	<p>Yes - 13  No - 1  Between Yes &amp; No - 1</p>	<p>Thirteen of the fifteen Members confirmed the information they received was sufficient, useful and timely and the updates received during the pandemic had been useful.</p> <p><i>‘The papers for authority meetings are very thorough which gives me confidence, they reach us in a timely manner. The service regularly communicates outside this cycle with authority Members whenever required’</i></p> <p><i>‘Chief Fire Officer updates received during the Covid-19 pandemic had been particularly useful’</i></p> <p><i>‘Information is provided promptly and is well-structured’</i></p> <p><i>‘Plentiful information clear and concise’</i></p> <p>One respondent commented that the reports were <i>‘difficult to understand but verbally always clear’</i> which reinforces the earlier point about ensuring information is available in an appropriate format for all Members.</p> <p>Two Members highlighted that information had been received to the Governance Committee after it had been presented to the Fire Authority, rather than the reverse, this was the result of changes made to the committee meeting sequence due to the pandemic. Both commented this matter had now been rectified.</p> <p>One respondent referred to the use of acronyms:</p> <p><i>‘Use of acronyms – on occasions not always initially spelt out. Again I understand this is now in hand’</i></p>
<p>12) If you work with external stakeholders, do you feel that you have the support you need from TWFRS to work efficiently with them?</p>	<p>Yes - 11  No - 0  N/A - 2  No answer - 2</p>	<p>Eleven of the fifteen responses suggested Members received the required support to efficiently work with stakeholders and had received or were able to request relevant information for reporting purposes:</p> <p><i>‘I get all the support I need and report back regularly to the Council leadership political and officer level’</i></p> <p>One respondent indicated they were not always aware of incidents occurring in their locality and another respondent suggested the establishment of an area committee to improve communication:</p> <p><i>‘On occasion when incidents happen in a particular area/ward we lack communications on this as a heads up with other elected spokespersons for that area’</i></p> <p><i>‘An examples is an Area Committee where a Station Manager provides an update of service actions during a given time period, in addition to answering questions from councillors and residents’</i></p>

