



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE  
held on Wednesday, 11 September 2024 at Lecture Theatre - Fire Service  
Headquarters, Sadler Road, Winsford, Cheshire CW7 2FQ at 10.00 am**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Phil Harris, Nick Mannion, Margaret Simon, Derek Barnett and Mo Hussain.

**1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS**

**A Recording of Meeting**

Members were reminded that the meeting would be audio-recorded.

**B Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Bird and Razia Daniels.

**C Declaration of Members' Interests**

There were no declarations of Members' interests.

**D Minutes of the Performance and Overview Committee**

**RESOLVED:**

**That the minutes of the Performance and Overview Committee held on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> July 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.**

**2 FINANCE REPORT - QUARTER 1, 2024-25**

The Treasurer introduced the report, which provided Members with an overview of the Service's forecast revenue financial outturn at the end of Quarter 1, 2024-25 and information about progress against the capital programme.

The Treasurer drew Members' attention to the Forecast Revenue Spending with the overall position at the end of Quarter 1 forecasting an underspend of £68k. The underspend had been transferred to capital reserves.

The Treasurer advised Members that the 2024-25 budget included an allowance for a 4% pay award for all staff. The grey book (operational staff) award had been agreed at 4% from July 2024. The green book (non-operational staff) pay award for 2024-25 had not yet been agreed. An offer which equates to between 2.5%

to 5.77% was currently being consulted upon. As soon as agreement had been reached the estimated impact would be calculated and thereafter reported to Members.

The Treasurer referred Members to the section on the revenue reserves held on 1 April 2024. The general reserve reflects the underspend in 2023-24 of £1,192k. The Budget Management Board was in the process of reviewing the resource centre managers reserves, to ensure the funds were still required; if not the money will be moved to the capital reserve, to fund the capital programme.

The Treasurer gave an update on the Fire Station Modernisation Programme, work: had been completed at Macclesfield, was ongoing at Wilmslow, had started at Knutsford, and the works for the modernisation of Winsford had been agreed and priced.

**RESOLVED: That**

**[1] the Finance Report – Quarter 1, 2024-25 be noted.**

### **3 PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 1, 2024-25**

The Temporary Head of Operational Policy and Assurance introduced the report, which provided an update on the Service's Quarter 1, 2024-25 performance for each of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

The Temporary Head advised Members that a number of changes had been introduced for the 2024/25 reporting year including the new 10-minute response standard agreed as part of CRMP 2024-2028 and a new minimum standard of fire cover designed to support this. He provided further context on the KPIs where targets had not been achieved, or where performance was particularly positive:

- The figure for the number of Deaths in Primary Fires was 0 for Quarter 1 against a figure of 3 for Quarter 1 in 2023/4. The number of Injuries in Primary Fires was also reduced to 1 for Quarter 1 against a figure of 2 for Quarter 1 in 2023/4;
- The number of Accidental Dwelling Fires was 82 incidents against a target of 85 for Quarter 1. The primary cause was kitchen fires where an item had been left on or close to the cooker hob. The occupancy profile for the fires was highest in lone person properties. This affirms that the current targeting of Safe and Well visits continues to be appropriate in capturing those most at risk;
- The number of deliberate primary fires recorded at the end of Quarter 1 was 52, against a target of 55. The station areas with the highest number of incidents were Crewe 10, Warrington 6 and Widnes 4;
- The number of Safe and Well visits was 6656 visits against a target of 6875. The new structure for the Prevention department came into effect on 1st July 2024, which would provide improved resource to meet the target going

forward;

- The figure for Fires in Non-Domestic Premises was green for the first time in 5 quarters with 33 reported against a target of 43;
- The figure for Automatic Fire Alarms in Non-Domestic Premises was at 143 against a target of 112. There was a range of reasons for the higher number of actuations, with a faulty alarm being the most common, followed by activation by steam;
- The figure for Time Taken to Mobilise to a primary fires was green with 82 seconds against a target of 90 seconds;
- To support the revised response standard a new metric, Minimum Fire Cover Standard was introduced to ensure that the appropriate number of fire engines were available. The Minimum Fire Cover Standard was split into two response levels, Critical and Optimum, both figures were green; and
- The target for On-Call fire engines had been amended to provide a more proportionate and achievable target, designed to allow the Service to meet the 'Resilience Level' of fire cover described in the Minimum Fire Cover Standard; this results in an overall target of 51%. On-call fire engine availability at the end of Quarter 1 was 51% (crew of four) which was slightly higher than the same quarter in 2023/24 (50%).

A Member questioned the approach to call challenging for Automatic Fire Alarms in Non-Domestic Premises. The Chief Fire Officer outlined that this was to reduce the number of times fire engines were mobilising to false alarms. He stated that this approach was only used for commercial premises where there was no one sleeping on the premises. He noted that this metric did not indicate the actual number of properties, and this could be looked at for future performance reports.

A Member asked if cases were investigated where the response standard had not been achieved. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that every mobilisation to a primary fire that exceeded the 10 minute Response Standard was sent to the Area Manager to investigate and drill down into the reasons. He expected the operational changes being delivered in the CRMP 2024-28 to reduce the number of times the metric was exceeded.

**RESOLVED: That**

**[1] the Performance Report – Quarter 1, 2024-25 be noted.**

#### **4 PROGRAMME REPORT - QUARTER 1, 2024-25**

The Corporate Programme Manager provided Members with an update on the Service's key programmes and projects, aligned to delivering the Community Risk Management Plan 2024-2028. He covered the following:

- The Emergency Response Proposal was progressing well. The collective

agreement for Weekday Crewing was agreed in June and preferencing for the new duty systems was underway.

- The Road Safety Strategy Plan for Cheshire project was in progress and the strategy was expected to be published in June 2025.
- The Fire Station Modernisation Programme was amber due to the funding requirements. Further capital would be required to complete Phase 5 of the Programme. Officers are due to present a further paper to Members at a full Fire Authority.
- The Fire Service Housing project was amber due to the large amount of work to complete to bring the houses up to standard. It was anticipated that this work would cost in the region of £680k. The risk of the project not delivering to budget had been escalated through the Service Leadership Team.

The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that due to the publication of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 Report last week the Service was working through the recommendations and further updates would be brought to the Committee.

A Member questioned when further information would be given to Members on the Fire Service Housing project. The Treasurer advised that further information would be presented at future Fire Authority meetings and Members' Planning Days and it was expected that Members would sign off the Capital Programme in February 2025.

**RESOLVED: That**

**[1] the Programme Report – Quarter 1 2024-25 be noted.**

**5 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24**

The Equality Diversity and Inclusion Officer introduced the report, which provided a summary of key issues covered in the Service's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2023-24. She referred Members to the progress made and plans for the coming year:

- The workforce continues to become ever more diverse, with small but steady increases in representation among most minority groups. More women than ever before work for the Service and the number of female firefighters or fire officers stands at its highest ever level. The Service's success in recruiting operational women was only bettered in percentage terms by 3 fire and rescue services in England.
- The percent of colleagues from minority ethnic communities had increased to 6% from 4.5% in 2022/23. This figure of 6% surpassed the percentage given in the Census for the general population of Cheshire.
- A wholtime firefighter recruitment campaign in early 2023 attracted large numbers of female applicants. This resulted in the next two cohorts of new

recruits having more women than men. The Service welcomed 10 female and 7 male trainee firefighters in September 2023 and April 2024.

- A positive action activity to support under-represented groups through the recruitment process included two taster days at the Training Centre in Winsford attracting 60 people and buddying and mentorship from 30 serving firefighters from diverse backgrounds.
- The 2022/23 Gender Pay Gap Report, published March 2024, showed continued progress in reducing the disparity between average pay for men and women in the Service. The gap had more than halved to 8.57% compared with 18.9% the year before and 24.6% in 2019.

The Equality Diversity and Inclusion Officer advised Members that the current EDI Strategy runs until the end of 2024. Officers are developing the new strategy in consultation with colleagues and communities to advance the Service's equality, diversity and inclusion work.

A Member noted that the Service held a water safety awareness event at a mosque in Warrington. He advised that it was very successful; it was well attended and the safety messages were well received.

**RESOLVED: That**

- [1] the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2023-24 be noted.**

**6 'ON THE STREETS' YOUTH WORK ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24**

The Cadet Manager introduced the report, which provided a summary of the work that the On the Streets team had completed between April 2023 and March 2024.

The Cadet Manager advised Members that the On the Streets provision is 'detached' youth work. It is delivered in places where young people congregate, working with them in an area they were most comfortable. This could be on streets or estates where they live, waste ground, open spaces, shopping areas, cafes etc.

The Cadet Manager advised that the aim of the On the Streets programme is to mitigate anti-social behaviour and deliberate fire setting through engaging with young people in areas of identified need and areas at highest risk from these activities. The On the Streets team, work to develop activities and facilitate positive links between young people and others in their community.

The Cadet Manager informed Members that during the 2023/2024 reporting period, due to staffing issues, the OTS team had been reduced to 1 active team (2 staff members) delivering intervention across all 4 Unitary areas.

The Cadet Manager advised that over the 2023/2024 reporting period contact was recorded with 1,491 young people. The contact was broken down into unitary areas: Halton, 644 times, Warrington, 406 times, Cheshire West and Chester, 377 times,

and Cheshire East 64 times. It was noted that a full team would enable better coverage across all of Cheshire.

A Member asked how they decided on the areas to target. The Youth Engagement Manager commented that they used information from a wide variety of sources, for example the Business Intelligence Team, Police Notification Reports, Station Managers, the Road Safety and Deliberate Fire Reduction Manager and fire crews.

**RESOLVED: That**

**[1] the 'On The Streets' Youth Work Annual Report 2023-24 be noted.**

**7 SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24**

The Persons at Heightened Risk Manager introduced the report detailing the safeguarding referrals and improvements that had been made to the safeguarding process for the reporting period April 2023 to March 2024.

The Manager advised Members that there were 39 CYP's safeguarding referrals submitted relating to 49 children. This was an increase of 129% since the last report (previous year 17 CYP referrals). It was noted that operational crews had referred 74.3% of the referrals and the highest referral areas were Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester.

The Manager highlighted that the reason for a referral differs from case to case but could include concerns around home conditions, poor mental health, drug and alcohol misuse and neglect. It was noted that staff remain pro-active in making referrals following incidents. This demonstrates that recent training, information materials, including safeguarding tool kits, continue to have a positive effect on crews recognising the signs of young people at risk.

The Manager drew Members attention to the figures for Adult Safeguarding. In 2023-24 there were 72 cases where adult safeguarding thresholds were met, this represented an increase from 2022-23, where the Service referred 29 adults at risk. The largest number type of referrals was for neglect related issues, followed by emotional and psychological issues (including attempted suicide). Most of these referrals were generated by Service Delivery staff when attending operational incidents.

The Manager advised Members that in addition to the 72 adult safeguarding referrals there had been 157 Vulnerable Persons Folders created that required further support from the Prevention department. A Vulnerable Persons Folder is created where safeguarding thresholds were not met, but further intervention or case management work by the Service is required. Of the Vulnerable Persons folders established the most common causation was high risk smoking and lower-level hoarding issues.

**RESOLVED: That**

**[1] the Safeguarding Children and Young People (CYP) and Adults Annual Report 2023-24 be noted.**

## **8 PARTNERSHIPS ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24**

The Partnership Co-ordinator introduced the report, which provided an update on the Prevention department's Partnerships portfolio 2023-2024.

The Partnership Co-ordinator advised Members that the partnerships include (but were not limited to), the Safe and Well Programme, and the Early Help and Prevention Partnership led by Cheshire West and Chester Council.

The Partnership Co-ordinator informed Members that the Prevention Department hosts the Prevention Partnership Board which is conducted quarterly to provide more formal support to partner leads in the monitoring and ongoing governance of prevention partnership and collaboration activity.

Key achievements included:

- In the Early Help and Prevention Partnership a total of 387 Safe and Well referrals were requested during the year. 212 referrals were completed, with 175 families refusing a visit or failing to engage with the Service. 192 smoke alarms were fitted, and 35 fireproof letter boxes installed at properties to help reduce the risk of a fire developing within a property;
- In November 2022, NHS partners requested that the Service stop testing for atrial fibrillation and blood pressure due to recent structural and governance changes within health. In April 2024 these tests were re-introduced
- Energy Projects Plus continued to provide dedicated support to help residents with the cost-of-living crisis. The programme supports resident to reduce their energy demand, access financial support, understand and manage fuel bills and identify competitive tariffs. Energy Projects plus supported households across Cheshire with telephone calls, face-to-face advice, and casework support. During the period the project had supported 482 households. This was a 49% increase in referrals compared to the previous year.

The Partnership Co-ordinator advised Members that the "Combined Intelligence for Population Health Action" (CIPHA) programme was working to prioritise the Service's home safety safe and well activity. The CIPHA trail had begun in the Halton area and evaluation information will be provided in future reports.

**RESOLVED: That**

**[1] the Partnerships Annual Report 2023-24 be noted.**

## **9 NORTH WEST FIRE CONTROL ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24**

The Temporary Head of Operational Policy and Assurance introduced the report which provided information about the performance of North West Fire Control

(NWFC) during the year 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

The Temporary Head of Operational Policy and Assurance advised Members that the average percentage of calls challenged, where a fire engine was not mobilised was 47% for the reporting period. This enabled the crews to be used on other jobs and reduced the cost of false alarm calls.

The Temporary Head of Operational Policy and Assurance informed Members that following the introduction of the Right Care, Right Person (RCRP) approach by Police forces nationally, a new call challenge procedure had been introduced into NWFC. RCRP is a national scheme to ensure that members of the public in mental health crisis were provided with the right care, responded to by the right person with the right skills, training and experience to best meet their needs. It was noted that there had not been a significant upturn for the Service in this type of job.

The Temporary Head of Operational Policy and Assurance advised Members that the cost of NWFC paid for by the Service was largely in line with the percentage of calls it receives, however this does fluctuate from year to year.

The Temporary Head of Operational Policy and Assurance drew Members attention to a new piece of technology Fire Survival Guidance (FSG) that was as a direct response of the first Grenfell enquiry. The FSG allows Fire Control rooms to improve the way they shared information with firefighters at incidents involving large numbers of callers trapped within a building. It includes the location and status of multiple callers who may be located on different floors or flats within a building and the advice they provide them with to make their own escape or await rescue by firefighters.

The Chief Fire Officer reassured Members that the FSG will be tested through multiple joint agency exercises and NWFC.

**RESOLVED: That**

**[1] the North West Fire Control Annual Report 2023-24 be noted.**

## **10 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The table included those items that had been identified/agreed to date. It was agreed to add the Grenfell Recommendations action plan to the March Performance and Overview Committee Meeting.

**RESOLVED: That**

**[1] the Grenfell Recommendations action plan be added to the forward plan for the March 2024 Performance and Overview Committee Meeting; and**

**[2] the Forward Work Plan 2024-25 be noted.**