



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
held on Wednesday, 25 November 2020 at Remote Meeting - Via Skype at 10.00 am**

PRESENT: Councillors Phil Harris, Peter Wheeler, Razia Daniels, Gina Lewis, Les Morgan, James Nicholas, Jonathan Parry, Norman Wright and Derek Barnett

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A Record of Meeting

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

B Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies received.

C Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of Members' interest.

D Minutes of the Performance and Overview Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Performance and Overview Committee held on Wednesday 2nd September 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

2 FINANCIAL REVIEW - QUARTER 2, 2019-20

The Head of Finance introduced a report which provided a review of the Service's forecast financial performance at mid-year and an update on progress against the 2020-21 capital projects.

She informed Members that the Quarter 2 Review was reporting a forecast underspend of £225k in relation to the revenue budget. She proposed that the funding be moved to capital reserves to limit future borrowing.

She explained that there were two proposed in year bids for additional funding from the underspend, the first in relation to thermal fleeces for staff and the second in relation to an invest to save scheme for photovoltaic panels on various fire stations (which would assist with the Service's desire to reach a carbon neutral).

A Member asked if there would be any cost associated with Crewe Fire Station and the HS2 project. The Head of Governance and Commissioning said that there were no clear indications of what impact HS2 might have at Crewe Fire Station, but discussions were being held with Cheshire East Council and it was hopeful that

some clarity would be forthcoming shortly. Currently, it was thought that any impact would be below the surface of the fire station site.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the forecast outturn position be noted; and

[2] the movement in reserves as set out in Appendix 2 be approved; and

[3] The following in-year bids be approved:

Fleeces for operational firefighters - £38.5k

Installation of PV panels at Middlewich, Sandbach and Tarporley - £22.5k

Installation of PV panels at Widnes Community Safety Centre - £12.5k

3 PROGRAMME REPORT - QUARTER 2, 2020-21

The Director of Governance and Commissioning provided Members with an update on the Service's programmes and projects. He referred Members to Appendix 1 to the report which contained a health report for Quarter 2, 2020-21.

He informed Members that the IRMP projects had now been added to the list of projects contained in the Health Report. Members had received an update on a number of estates projects at the Planning Day held on 20th November 2020, and the Director reiterated that good progress had been made given the difficult circumstances that had prevailed for much of 2020. The Training Centre had now been completed and handed over and Chester was moving towards completion in January/February 2021. A status had not been added to the Crewe Fire Station project update at the moment. However, a suitable delivery plan would be in place by the end of the year, with milestone dates added to the Cheshire Planning System.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Operational Assurance and Service Improvement, gave an update on the Operational Training Group Review and stated that this worksteam would look at a model of training delivery which was fit for purpose and made best use of the investment made and of the site itself. The Training Centre would not be used in its entirety until the start of the new training year in April 2021, as this would enable trainers to finish the current years training and allow time for them to familiarise themselves with the facility as well as developing courses and training scenarios. At the same time a pilot model of delivery would bring together the Incident Command trainers and the Operational trainers into one team in order to make better use of capacity and enable the centre to open seven days a week and during the evenings in order to benefit wholetime and on-call firefighters.

A Member asked about the implications that the Training Centre use could have on the housing development adjacent and what was being done in terms of protecting the housing nearest to the Training Centre and what liaison had been undertaken with the developer. The Director of Governance and Commissioning confirmed that

the Service was aware of the housing development and would endeavour to liaise with the developer with a view to resolving any potential issues.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Programme Report – Quarter 2 2020-21 be noted.

4 PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 2, 2020-21

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer Operational Assurance and Service Improvement introduced the report which provided Members with an update on the Service's performance against each of the key performance indicators (KPIs). Appendix 1 to the report included the Corporate Scorecard, which reflected the Quarter 2 position against targets set and the year-on-year direction of travel for the Service's KPIs.

Members were referred to Appendix 2 of the report which contained a detailed description of each KPI, including a summary of current performance and any actions taken to improve performance.

It was noted that deaths in primary fires had become red in Quarter 1, but that there had been no further deaths in Quarter 2. Accidental dwelling fires was showing slightly above target, but figures for fires started in the kitchen were lower compared with last year. Prevention work had continued with a focus on kitchen fires in the home and the Service had utilised the 23 virtual station open days to promote safety messages and these open days had had 153,000 views across social media platforms.

It was noted that the Pandemic and lockdown had had an effect on regulatory work with businesses and non-domestic premises, so the target had not been achieved. However, fires in non-domestic premises were well below target with 66 against a target of 87.

There had been 56 working days lost due to injuries, but this was because of two injuries sustained in the previous year which were carried over even though the actual events happened in the previous year. On a positive note Quarter 2 had not seen any days lost due to injury.

On-call availability was showing Amber with 78% against a target of 85 and the Head of Service Delivery reminded Members that in Q1 the on-call availability target had been achieved. This occurred within the first period of national lockdown when many on-call staff were working from home or furloughed from primary employment. As lockdown restrictions were lifted over the second quarter the Service experienced a downturn in availability, but the direction of travel across all on-call stations showed an improving picture in comparison with the previous year. Overall availability in Q2 was 6% higher than in the same period last year. In order to provide some assurance to Members, he reported that Cheshire is very much at the centre of the national discussion about the on-call duty system and this could only support the work of the On-Call Programme in Cheshire.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer Operational Assurance and Service Improvement outlined the hard work undertaken by staff in conjunction with partners and local authorities to manage the risks associated with Covid. This included deliveries of prescriptions, shielding visits, bulk deliveries of PPE and pre-operation swab tests.

A Member asked about the ten minute standard and the references to four failures for distance from the station and whether this was normal or something to be concerned about. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer Operational Assurance and Service Improvement responded that the time would always depend on where fire engines were at the time of call. However, the Service was always concerned about failures to achieve the standard. The Head of Service Delivery confirmed that the Service scrutinises every failure to try to understand the reasons why this occurred and to be certain that everything had been done in order to get to an incident with the standard.

Members wished to record their thanks to all staff who had gone above and beyond to help unitary authorities and other partners during the Pandemic and lockdown periods.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Performance Report – Quarter 2, 2020-21 be noted.

5 HMICFRS ACTION PLAN - HEALTH REPORT

The Business Support Manager, Organisational Performance, introduced the report which enabled Members to review performance against the action plan created in response to the identified “Areas for Improvement” (AFI) from the inspection report published by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

At the end of Q4 in 2020 there were 21 open actions remaining. The vast majority of actions were now complete with only 12 ongoing. Completion of all actions was expected by the end of March 2021. However, there had been good progress in a number of areas. Further work had been undertaken to develop recommendations for the Protection Department and the Project Initiation Document for the Risk Based Inspection Programme Review had now been signed off by Service Management Team.

The review of the Attendance Management policy was complete and had been aligned with the Service’s core value of “Act with Compassion” in mind. Guidance for managers and staff had also been developed, with a series of attendance management HR Roadshows running throughout Autumn in conjunction with the Service’s Mental Health Advisor.

Communications around wellbeing had become more prevalent with regular articles and guidance placed on the intranet and in the monthly Alert magazine. The importance of physical and mental health and wellbeing continued to be promoted through staff groups and within Covid-19 guidance documents.

During the pandemic management visibility had been maintained via a programme of Skype visits and regular principal officer briefings thanking staff for their contributions. All staff have been afforded two days extra leave during 2020 in acknowledgement of their hard work.

During the Pandemic, the Service had facilitated working from home arrangements for many staff where practical. Therefore, all aspects of agile working and use of technology had been tested thoroughly as a result. An interim guidance document had been produced to provide information to staff who were currently working from home on a temporary basis. It outlined the approach adopted by the Service to ensure that staff were able to continue to work from home, safely with the necessary equipment and support.

The Service set up a forum for staff to ask questions, raise queries or provide suggestions related to Covid-19. Topics raised had included suggestions about crewing arrangements, how to reduce the spread of the virus, supporting staff and increasing help for the vulnerable. These suggestions were considered by managers and responses were provided.

Work was also ongoing to develop a new staff suggestion scheme with the help of the Staff Engagement Forum.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the HMICFRS Action Plan – Health Report be noted.

6 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT - QUARTER 2, 2020-21 AND FOLLOW-UP REPORT

Anne Marie Harrop (the Auditor), a representative from Mersey Internal Audit Agency (MIAA) was in attendance to present the Internal Audit Quarter 2 2020-21 Progress Report (attached as Appendix 1 to the report).

She reported that work on the payroll systems had now been completed and the pensions report was in draft awaiting management comments. In addition, financial systems work had been undertaken and a draft report issued. Risk management work was due to take place in December and work on collaboration partnerships which would focus on blue light was at planning stage. In the New Year some work would be undertaken around estates management.

Key findings of the payroll report were mentioned. It contained a substantial level of assurance and only two medium risk recommendations had been made. In addition roles and responsibilities had been looked at and some audit testing on starters, leavers, bank changes and contractual changes had been undertaken and controls in place were satisfactory.

The two medium risk recommendations were to update the overarching payroll policy and to ensure that payroll checklists used accurately reflected up to date processes and procedures that are operational on the ground. However, a good status of internal control in the payroll system had been noted.

In terms of progress on the plan, considering the impact of Covid 19, MIAA remained on track for a full delivery of the plan by the end of March.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Internal Audit Progress Report – Quarter 2, 2020-21 and Follow-Up Report both be noted.

7 ANNUAL HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING REPORT 2019-20

The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager introduced the report which provided an update on the management of health and safety in the Service. He highlighted to Members the key achievements of the Service during 2019-20.

A small increase in the number of minor accidents had been reported, however, there had been a small decrease in the number of incidents that had to be reported to the Health and Safety Executive. There was a decrease in the number of duty days lost as a result of accidents and a decrease in the number of accidents involving service vehicles. In addition a small decrease in the number of reported attacks and abuse directed at staff was noted. Time had been spent focussing on the risks that firefighters face related to cancer following the publication of the University of Central Lancashire's research report and this would now be considered in more detail. There had been a review of the risk assessments and the associated procedures and the additional hazards and risks associated with Covid-19. The final quarter of the year saw the Covid-19 pandemic start to take effect across the country and the Service took immediate action to identify measures that would reduce the risks to staff and their families and still allow statutory obligations to be met.

The Service continued to deliver Managing Safety Courses with 100% success rate. The Service had introduced a subgroup of the Health and Safety Committee to focus on the de-contamination of firefighters and operational kit. Initially, focussing on decontamination after fire incidents, the group also looked at the provision of suitable protective clothing and procedures for decontamination of both the kit and the fire appliances following incidents as a result of Covid.

The Service had employed a Health and Wellbeing Advisor to help improve the management of mental health in the service and that had proved very successful.

Reporting of injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences saw 5 reported during the year, 4 of these were as a result of injuries and known as over 7 day injuries where an individual is off for more than 7 consecutive days following an injury. None of these were as a result of significant injuries, with only 1 dangerous occurrence reported (which related to breathing apparatus).

The Health and Safety Executive considers accident rates based on the number per 100,000 employees and the data from 2016-17 to 2019-20 shows that the Service's reportable accident rate is approximately 450. The average reportable accident rate for fire and rescue services in the North West is 767 and nationally, the rate is 1,230, so the Service is performing considerably better than other services. The national

reportable accident rate for all employers in 2019-20 was 230 which does make the Service look quite poor. However, the Health and Safety Executive does recognise that their reporting figures are artificially low. The labour force survey is general seen as more accurate with a national rate of 430, much closer to the Service's.

It was noted that there was a slight increase in the reporting of minor accidents which went from 43 up to 51.

The Service's accident reports for 2019-20 show that most of the accidents resulted from slips, trips and falls, with manual handling being the next most common cause. This picture mirrors the picture nationally and across all industries in the country.

During 2019-20 there was a slight reduction in reports of violence and aggression towards staff.

Vehicle accidents show an improvement. A small sub group of the Health and Safety Committee regularly looks at what improvements can be introduced and there had been a successful campaign to reduce the number of incidents where Service vehicles have been driven in excess of the speed limit.

The Service aims to test every operational firefighter annually to ensure that they meet the minimum standard of fitness and those who fall below that are taken through a programme with the aim of getting them back on the run as quickly as possible. It was noted that the investment that the Fire Authority had made in fitness equipment and gyms over preceding years was starting to pay off.

A Member asked about planning legislation and consultation regarding new developments where roads were narrow and no, or limited, parking was provided.

The Health and Safety Manager responded that this point was very important as most of the Service's minor accidents tended to occur on small side roads and with the Government apparently keen to ban parking on pavements the problem would only get worse. The Director of Governance and Commissioning suggested that this should be considered further outside the meeting with a view to reporting back.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Annual Health, Safety and Wellbeing Report 2019-20 be noted.

8 ANNUAL ROAD SAFETY REPORT 2019-20

The Group Manager, Prevention introduced the report which appended the Authority's Annual Road Safety Report 2019-20, containing details of interventions delivered by the Service. He highlighted the achievements of the Service at events throughout the year.

Members' attention was drawn to the background section of the cover report reminding them that the service was a strategic partner to support local authorities in the fulfilment of their statutory duty under the Road Traffic Act 1988. The Service had been commissioned on behalf of Cheshire East Council to provide road

education to local schools, both at primary and high school level, with a contract in place over a 6 year period to the value of £432,000. The money received funded two positions within the Prevention Department to support the delivery of this activity.

The targets of a wide variety of the road safety activities were achieved and some activity had been recognised at a national level. Members' attention was drawn to the Tyre Safe Winter Driving event which saw the Service receive the Emergency Services Award with the Tyre Safety educational intervention programme which was developed and delivered by the Apprentice Firefighters Cohort.

He asked Members to look at the information contained in the report regarding the commissioned road safety activity for Cheshire East which involved key stage 2 and key stage 4 delivery to just over 150 primary and secondary schools within the Cheshire East area. The contract stipulates that the Service is required to hit a success rate of 90% of completion across those schools. A lot of the delivery year takes place between January and August and the summer holiday period and this year that fell directly in to the Covid period when the Service had to adapt its way of working and a lot of schools were locked down or had a very small numbers of pupils in school. The direct impact was that the payment of £36,000 which covered that six month period could not be collected and this had a direct impact on salary and staffing levels within the department and the two vacant roles of two road safety officers were not filled. However, discussions have now commenced with regard to utilising online platforms to ensure that the Service meets its obligations under the contract and the job description and job role have been finalised for new posts within the department. The proposed new model would be trialled for 12 months and utilise two operational crew managers.

The Fire Bike and Biker Down schemes have proved incredibly popular this year, however, the Service was slightly under target because of the lockdown measures which impacted in early 2020. Biker Down volunteers and Fire Bike riders subsequently undertook support in the community by assisting organisations such as the blood bike service to deliver blood as well as breast milk and tissue sample deliveries across some of the medical establishments in the North West.

Members were asked to note that the Service's Road Safety Officer, Andy Gray, was now the Vice Chair of the North West NFCC National Road Safety Group and Cheshire were seen as very proactive in terms of their road safety activities and the Fatal 5 initiative was now viewed as best practice across the NW Region. Lancashire had recently taken on the Fatal 5 message which ties in with the message that Cheshire Fire, Cheshire Police and NW Ambulance promote. Latest figures received from the Cheshire Road Safety group shows that the five year overview of collisions where someone is killed or seriously injured had reduced by 38% across Cheshire between 2015 and 2019 and there continued to be a reduction in the early part of 2020. In 2015 there were 440 collisions and in 2019 this visibly reduced to 273. The number went down from 228 at the end of October 2019 to 207 at the end of October 2020 which shows a 9% reduction. This was expected because of the lockdown measures and was perhaps disappointing with an expectation that the figures might have been even lower. This had been put down to a dramatic increase in the number of cyclists or pedestrians that had sadly been

killed or injured in the early part of the 2020 calendar year. Consequently, there is a huge amount of work to be done around education of cyclists and pedestrians.

A Member asked for an update on the law on tyres. The Group Manager, Prevention said that there had been a huge amount of campaign work undertaken, including lobbying for a change in legislation around tyres that were deemed legally acceptable if they met the relevant tread depth requirements, despite the tyres being more than 10 years old. Legislation went through parliament very recently that would put a requirement on owners of HGVs, LGVs and public transport vehicles to change the tyres not just based on the tread depth, but also the life span of the tyre as well. However, this did not apply to cars.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Annual Road Safety Report 2018-19 be noted.

9 INTERIM BONFIRE REPORT

The Group Manager, Prevention provided Members with a verbal interim update on the preventative and operational activities of the Service during the bonfire period. He confirmed that a full report would be presented to the Committee at its next meeting.

He reported that due to the Pandemic the bonfire period this year had been difficult to predict. For the first time the Service actively promoted safety messages aimed at people having bonfires within their own gardens or on their own land so that they could do in the safest way possible.

Members were asked to note that the normal bonfire reporting period was 24th October to 7th November and this year that period covered two and a half weekends. A huge amount of proactive work was undertaken on social media, local radio and TV to promote the concept of bonfire safety across Cheshire.

Headlines across the bonfire reporting period showed 41 deliberate secondary fires which was a 90% reduction from 5 years ago and a 38% reduction from the same period last year. The social media campaign was slightly harder hitting in terms of the message delivered. The feedback received through digital media was that this had a huge reach across Cheshire and was the most popular social media campaign in terms of the number of people engaging directly with it and the number of people that re-shared it. In addition a huge amount of information was shared on how to report nuisance fires and the build up of debris through local authority partners and the figures recently received show that the reach from our social media campaigns was just under 600,000 people with viewing figures of just under 100,000 people.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the verbal interim bonfire report be noted.

10 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The forward work programme was considered by Members and no changes were made.

RESOLVED: That:

[1] The Forward Work Programme be noted.