



**AS A RESULT OF CONCERNS ABOUT THE RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH MEETING IN PERSON CAUSED BY THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC THIS MEETING TOOK PLACE VIA SKYPE.**

**THE LAW AT THE TIME OF THE MEETING DID NOT RECOGNISE REMOTE MEETINGS (LIKE SKYPE) AS FULFILLING THE REQUIREMENT FOR PUBLIC ACCESS. THEREFORE, THE MEETING WAS INFORMAL WITH NO DECISIONS BEING MADE. ANY DECISIONS THAT NEED TO BE MADE IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA WILL BE DEALT WITH AT THE NEXT FORMAL MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE.**

**NOTES OF INFORMAL MEETING OF MEMBERS OF PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE held on Wednesday, 21 July 2021 via Skype at 10.00 am**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Phil Harris (Chair), Peter Wheeler, Razia Daniels, Phil Eastty, Gina Lewis, James Nicholas and Norman Wright and independent (non-elected) member Derek Barnett

**1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS**

**A Record of Meeting**

The informal meeting was held using Skype and was also broadcast.

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

**B Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Parry.

**C Declaration of Members' Interests**

There were no declarations of Members' interests.

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

Members did not raise any issues about the minutes.

**2 PERFORMANCE REPORT, QUARTER 4, 2020-21**

The Group Manager for Organisational Performance introduced the report, which provided an update on the 2020-21 quarter 4 review of performance for each of the Service's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Officers expanded on the KPIs where targets had not been achieved, providing further context, particularly in relation to the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic:-

- Thematic inspections, target remains suspended;
- Physical fire safety audits, restarted in September with limited capacity in Q3 and Q4, target remains suspended;
- Risk based inspection programme, target remains suspended;
- Safe and Well visits, were impacted due to Covid-19, no target was set for operational crews with a target of 9000 visits set for the Prevention team for the year.

The Group Manager for Organisational Performance referred Members to the KPI relating to the number of deaths in primary fires. One death occurred in Quarter 4, as a result of a chip pan fire. The individual was under the age of 65 and living alone. The total for the reporting year was three fatalities in primary fires.

The Area Manager for Service Delivery referred Members to the on-call availability KPI which was at 75% for the year, 10% below target. A number of temporary measures were put in place throughout the year to reduce the risk of the on-call workforce from contracting Covid-19 to safeguard the availability of the on-call fire engines.

The Group Manager for Organisational Performance gave an update on:-

- Working days lost through injury;
- False alarms attended;
- Covid-19 work streams undertaken.

A Member referred to the banners outside vaccination centres being predominantly displayed in Cheshire West. The Group Manager for Prevention responded that the banners were placed at venues CFRS were supporting with the vaccination programme. Requests had come predominantly from Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington. Roving vaccination units were now covering Cheshire East and banners could be utilised at these pop up sites.

A Member requested the information on Road Traffic Collisions be broken down into road type for future reports. Members agreed this would be helpful.

A Member highlighted the number of electric bicycles and e-scooters that were an issue because they do not require a licence or a test to use them. The Group Manager for Prevention responded that road safety education was given to schools in Cheshire East at Key stage 2 and 4. In the other unitary areas this was carried out by in-house road safety officers. Due to Covid-19 an online e-training session was provided to Cheshire East schools. The road safety team were working with Councils and commercial e-scooter rental companies on educating and informing the public.

A Member referred to the number of False Alarms Attended and asked how the Service was addressing this. The Group Manager responded that the Protection team were looking into the incidents and the causation and this would feed into the annual review of the Integrated Risk Management Plan.

Members were happy to move onto the next item.

### **3 PROGRAMME REPORT - QUARTER 4, 2020-21**

The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive 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 the Quarter 4, 2020-21 and picked out key areas for specific focus, including:-

- The major build programmes and modernisation programmes had continued throughout the Pandemic;
- Chester Fire Station was now complete, the official opening due to take place on 19<sup>th</sup> August, with a closedown report due to be issued at the next meeting;
- Consultation had commenced regarding Crewe Fire Station as part of the planning process;
- The Training Centre had received excellent feedback from trainers and trainees;
- Further options were being evaluated on the Drone project due to a change in legislation.
- The procurement of the High Reach Fire Engine had commenced;
- The delay to the Emergency Services Communications Programme was beyond the Service's control – this was a Government led project.

Members requested that thanks were passed onto those that had kept the capital projects on schedule, safely throughout the pandemic.

A Member referred to the capabilities of the Water Carrier and its use for moorland fires. The Chief Fire Officer explained that the water carrier would offer resilience in any major fire, including moorland fires. Dialogue across services within the North West was taking place to establish whether water carriers could be mobilised to major incidents across the region to enable a constant rotation of water carriers.

Members were happy to move onto the next item.

### **4 OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE TRAINING TEAM 2020-21 ANNUAL TRAINING PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Group Manager for Operational Training and Assurance provided Members with an update on the training arrangements and performance throughout the training year 2020-21.

The existing training strategy had been revised at the beginning of the year due to the impact of Covid-19 and an Operational Covid Training Strategy was implemented. This involved the training team visiting all watches to deliver the training commitment.

82.4% of operational staff had completed the Breathing Apparatus training day. Those that had not attended were either on amended duties, isolating due to Covid or annual leave. The BA Training was front loaded in the new training year as this was considered the greatest risk to fire Fighter injury. All of the operational staff had now completed a new BA course at the training centre with a new high-rise evacuation procedure.

Swift water training is carried out at a site in North Wales, which offers Grade 2, moving water. This is a higher standard than the water risks found within the county. The availability of the course was restricted due to weather conditions and Welsh Covid guidelines. 42% of Swift Water Technicians had completed the course and was now up to date.

A Member referred to the impact of not using Manchester Airport for training services. The Group Manager for Operational Training and Assurance explained that this was a joint partnership with Manchester Fire Service and Manchester Airport, and now the Service had the facilities at the training centre to create flash over training and a light aircraft scenario.

A Member questioned if the National Fire Service College was still part of the annual training programme. The Group Manager for Operational Training and Assurance explained that the College was primarily used for command training weekends. A programme of command events had been put in place at the training centre, which replaced the National Fire Service College training programme. Which enabled training against local risks and could involve multi-agency participation from North West Ambulance Service and Police.

Members were happy to move onto the next item.

## **5 SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (CYP) AND ADULTS – ANNUAL REPORT, 2020-21**

The Group Manager for Prevention introduced the report and outlined the number of safeguarding referrals made from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. 13 referrals were made covering 24 children and young people. Two of these referrals were not made in line with policy. An investigation had taken place, which found that in both cases there was a delay in reporting the case to the designated safeguarding leads and this was a potential risk for the children involved. As a result, a number of recommendations and improvements were identified. Level 3 safeguarding training had been given to all operational Group Managers and there was a dedicated safeguarding toolkit for staff members to augment their e learning.

28 cases of adult safeguarding had been referred to the local authorities where the safeguarding thresholds were met. Prevention activities had been changed due to Covid-19, and Safe and Well intervention activity was reduced, with resources utilised for the community response programme, e.g. delivering food parcels and medication, as well as supporting the vaccination programme.

Mental health safeguarding referrals had seen a downturn, which was believed to be due to the reduction in opportunities to enter private homes to identify other

safeguarding indicators. There had been a dramatic increase in self neglect referrals.

A paper had been presented to Service Management Team recommending a change in the approach to the Safe and Well programme - targeting the vulnerable in both the over 65 years and under 65 years demographic. An initiative operating in Cheshire West had a mental health advocate role assisting young families known to social services with ongoing long-term support.

It was noted that 402 instances involved activities that did not meet the safeguarding threshold for a referral. However, ongoing and meaningful support was provided, where required, e.g. to reduce the risk of fire within the home. 123 of the 402 were noted as vulnerable person cases due to a threat of arson at the property; support was put in place for the families involved.

Peer review exercises were taking place regionally and nationally, with Cheshire Constabulary and the local authorities ensuring policies were robust and closely aligned with partners.

A Member asked if Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service liaised with housing trusts on safeguarding issues. The Group Manager for Prevention explained that this happens in two ways, Protection advise on fire safety in communal areas and Prevention look at internal areas within the home. The Safety Central team would provide educational input to care professionals helping them identify and spot potential fire risks with the home, i.e. burns on furniture and overloading sockets.

Members were happy to move onto the next item.

## **6 INTERNAL AUDIT FOLLOW UP REPORT AND ANNUAL REPORT AND INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT AND HEAD OF INTERNAL AUDIT OPINION 2020-21**

Anne-marie Harrop, a representative from Mersey Internal Audit Agency (MIAA), was in attendance at the meeting to present the Internal Audit Follow Up Report and Annual Report and Internal Audit Annual Report and Head of Internal Audit Opinion 2020-21.

The follow up report looked at 20 outstanding recommendations, 15 of which had been implemented, with a further 5 partially implemented.

She explained that the overall opinion for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 provides 'substantial assurance'. This means that there was a good system of internal control designed to meet the system objectives and that controls are generally being applied consistently throughout the organisation.

Members were happy to move onto the next item.

## **7 ANNUAL RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT 2020**

Louise Willis, from the Planning and Performance Department, Joint Corporate Service, introduced the report which provided Members with an update about risk management.

Scrutiny of risk is undertaken at the Risk Management Board held in March and October each year, chaired by the Chief Fire Officer. Each department had its own risk register which was managed on the Cheshire Planning System and the highest risks were escalated to the Strategic Risk Register for transparency and oversight. A quarterly risk review was undertaken with each department.

Over the last year virtual training sessions had been undertaken with Members. An internal audit had been carried out on the risk management process by MIAA achieving 'high assurance' which was the best possible.

Members were happy to move onto the next item.

## **8 MENTAL HEALTH - 6 MONTH UPDATE REPORT 2021**

The Mental Health Adviser introduced the report and highlighted significant areas over the last 6 months:-

- Skype roadshows for all stations and teams reminding them of the mental health guidance and help available;
- 2 guidance documents were produced Covid-19 Safe Workplace Guide and Post Covid-19 Return to Work Guide for managers
- Advice and guidance had also been made available through the intranet, in The Alert magazine and The Green to support people's mental health;
- One to one advice had been given to individuals to support them;
- The Mental Health Strategy had been published;
- The Mental Health Steering Group had been formed.

The Mental Health Steering Group was a forum comprised from a cross section of staff where issues and ideas could be raised. Initiatives included; the provision of mental health first aiders; expansion of trauma support practitioners; training on suicide first aid and prevention; and setting up new networks for Fathers and Carers.

A Member questioned how the service would identify those hiding mental health problems, or suffering anxiety. The Mental Health Adviser responded that people in leadership positions were reminded in the Skype visits and the managers guide that they could be the first to notice any changes with staff members and instigate conversations and encourage talking about mental health and wellbeing generally.

Members were happy to move onto the next item.

## **9 HMICFRS INSPECTION ACTION PLAN**

The Group Manager for Organisational Performance introduced the report which presented Members with an update in relation to the action plan produced in response to the 'Areas for Improvement' highlighted within the inspection report of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

The action plan was largely complete and the paper highlighted the outstanding live actions and their updates.

The most recent HMICFRS inspection carried out early in 2021 and the subsequent inspection report due in the autumn will require a new action plan responding to the issues highlighted in the report.

Members were happy to move onto the last item.

## **10 FORWARD WORK PLAN 2021-22**

The table included those items that have been identified/agreed to-date. Members were asked to agree any additional items at the end of the meeting which need to be added to the programme. No further items were requested.