



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE held on Wednesday, 2nd March 2022 at Lecture Theatre - Training Centre, Sadler Road, Winsford, Cheshire CW7 2FQ at 10.00 am.

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

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 Councillor Jonathan Parry.

C Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations.

D Minutes of the Performance and Overview Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Performance and Overview Committee held on Wednesday 24th November 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

2 FINANCE REPORT - QUARTER 3, 2021-22

The Head of Finance introduced the report, which provided Members with a review of the Service's forecast financial outturn and reported on progress against 2021-22 capital projects. She drew Members attention to the underspend of £130k in Quarter 3, taking the cumulative underspend for 2021-22 to £147k.

She summarised elements of the report and referred Members to the Grey Book pay award of 1.5% and the newly agreed pay award for Green Book staff of 1.75% backdated to July 2021, payable from March 2022; and confirmed that good progress had been achieved with the capital programme.

A Member questioned if the Service had any financial exposure due to the war in Ukraine and the sanctions involving Russia. The Head of Finance confirmed that the Service did not.

A Member queried the cost to obtain scrap cars. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that the cost was considered fair: the scrap cars had to be prepared before delivery e.g. drained of all liquids then transported to site and ultimately disposed of once the Service had finished with them.

RESOLVED: That Members

[1] note the forecast outturn position; and

[2] approved the movement in reserves set out in Appendix 2.

3 PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 3, 2021-22

The Business Support Manager introduced the report, which provided an update on the Service's Quarter 3, 2021-22 performance for each of the Service's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

She drew Members attention to the Corporate Performance Scorecard and gave a more detailed description on: the Number of Deaths in Primary Fires; the Number of Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs) in Non-Domestic Premises; and the Thematic Inspections Completed by Operational Crews.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer talked through the On-call Availability section of the report, which detailed the cumulative availability of 60% against the target figure of 85%. He explained that the availability had been impacted by the loss of Crew and Watch Managers, whose skills took time to replace. An on-call performance meeting was taking place monthly chaired by AM Neil Griffiths, to actively manage the on-call availability with a view to improving performance.

A Member questioned the overall impact of the reduced on-call availability across the County and if the Fire Authority should be concerned. The Chief Fire Officer commented that in reality the on-call stations were used as resilience fire engines at incidents and were not generally the primary fire engine at the scene. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer added that there was a review being carried out looking at the entire on-call system and that this was a nationwide issue, not one restricted to Cheshire.

A Member requested the Covid sickness and isolation figures were split from non-Covid cases to gain a true picture. The Business Support Manager advised that the data could be split for the Quarter 4 report.

A Member requested information on the two fatalities that had occurred e.g. if there was any previous contact with the deceased and if so what was the outcome and if there was any external scrutiny in a Fatal Fire Review. The Chief Fire Officer advised that the Fatal Fire Review was an internal investigation to try to understand the cause of the fire and determine any lessons to be learned for the Service. A Serious Case Review could be initiated if there were any issues found. This was an external investigation. The findings of fire investigations were not reported to the Fire

Authority but it was agreed that a summary Fatal Fire Reviews could be included in future reports.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Performance Report – Quarter 3 2021-22 be noted.

PROGRAMME REPORT - QUARTER 3, 2021-22

The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive provided Members with an update on the Service's programmes and projects (including those contained within the Authority's annual IRMP action plan). He highlighted the following:

- The Crewe Fire Station project will imminently move into the delivery phase, Work on site will begin in the next few months;
- A plan for the drone project was being produced with the latest information. Drone technology had improved and the costs had reduced. It was acknowledged that the Service requires the capability;
- The M365 project was behind schedule due to several technical issues found in the testing. Lessons from the technical pilot would inform the full roll-out;
- A closedown report would be issued for the project that saw the creation of an in-house Communication and Engagement Department. Thanks were expressed to the key people in successfully completing the project;
- The High Reach Fire Engine was now operational and was used to great effect at two incidents within the last week;
- The Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP), was a national project that was experiencing major delays. The red status would not change until there was progress made on a national level; and
- The project to create a Road Safety Strategy Plan for Cheshire was on amber status due to delays engaging partners. The Service would continue to work with partners to progress this project.

A Member commented that the Sprinkler Campaign was paying dividends with an occupant in a flat being saved last week by sprinklers going off when a fire was started by a faulty e-bike charger.

A Member questioned if the Service was continuing to support the vaccination programme and if the associated costs had been recouped. The Chief Fire Officer commented that the vaccination campaign was still being supported, however, the work was tailing off. He advised that the costs were recovered from the NHS. He thanked SM Andy Gray for coordinating the work.

A Member noted the rise in social isolation, especially in the older generation. The Chief Fire Officer commented that it was the role of the advocates to visit community centres and groups to engage with individuals and refer them for further support. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer added that pre-Covid community groups were invited onto the fire stations and that this activity would be restarted.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Programme Report – Quarter 3 2021-22 be noted.

5 INTERNAL AUDIT - QUARTER 3, 2021-22 PROGRESS REPORT

Anne-Marie Harrop (the Auditor), a representative from Mersey Internal Audit Agency (MIAA) was in attendance to present the Internal Audit Quarter 3 Progress Report.

She provided Members with a brief overview of the progress made on:

- Financial Systems was given Substantial Assurance. One medium level risk recommendation was agreed in respect of budget setting;
- Health and Wellbeing was given Substantial Assurance;
- National Fraud Initiative led to a position statement that was issued in Dec 2021 following evaluation of the potential data matches; and
- Reviews into Cyber and Working Time Arrangements were ongoing.

The Audit Plan was on track and no concerns were brought to Members' attention.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Internal Audit - Quarter 3, 2021-22 Progress Report be noted.

6 ANNUAL BONFIRE REPORT 2021

The Deliberate Fire Reduction and Road Safety Manager introduced the report, which summarised the preventative and operational activities of the Service and partners during the bonfire period (24th October 2020 to 7th November 2021).

He advised that the Service attended 55 Small Deliberate Fires during the 2021 bonfire period, in comparison to 41 Small Deliberate Fires during the 2020 bonfire period (which occurred when Covid-19 restrictions were in place).

The Deliberate Fire Reduction and Road Safety Manager outlined how the Service had actively promoted safety messages about bonfire safety across Cheshire. He noted that two cases of missiles thrown at fire crews had occurred and that a direct link with Cheshire Police enabled swift assistance to the fire crews.

A Member questioned if the Service visits non-organised bonfires. The Deliberate Fire Reduction and Road Safety Manager confirmed that crews may visit informal resident's bonfires and the incident commander makes a risk assessment on-site and takes appropriate action if required.

A Member questioned why the figures for Cheshire East were different to the rest of the county. The Deliberate Fire Reduction and Road Safety Manager confirmed that this had been historically the case. It was presumed that this was because Cheshire East was a more rural part of the county.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Annual Bonfire Report 2021 including the recommendations be noted.

7 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION SIX-MONTH UPDATE, MARCH 2022

The Equality and Inclusion Officer introduced the report, which provided an update about the key areas of focus and accomplishments as well as priorities for the next 6 months. He highlighted the following:

- Cheshire ranks fourth out of 45 services for gender equality in operational roles;
- Staff networks had played key roles in promoting positive action within the Service. The Race Equality and Cultural Heritage (REACH) network would play a significant role in organising AFSA's Winter Conference in November. The Limitless women's network had progressed work on buddying, maternity, menopause and appearance. The Firepride LGBT+ network hosted the third 'Proud to Provide' conference which was delivered virtually to great success;
- Equality Impact Assessment training workshops had been delivered to more than 100 staff over the past six months; and
- The Service had been ranked 2nd in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index. Whilst this was a great achievement the feedback from the submission had been reviewed and an action plan developed with the intention of progressing areas of improvement that had been highlighted.

A Member questioned how the percentage of BAME recruits compared with the ethnic percentage for Cheshire. The Equality and Inclusion Officer advised that the Service was above the county average. However, this was not a reason for complacency because staff were recruited from throughout the UK.

A Member questioned if the Service had any staff who were transitioning and if so how they were supported. The Equality and Inclusion Officer advised that the Service do have staff who identified as trans and they were supported by their managers and HR. All employees also undertake a Trans Awareness course.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Six-Month Update, March 2022 Report be noted.

8 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE REPORT

The Environment and Sustainability Lead introduced the report, which provided an update on the progress that was being made by the Service concerning the environment and climate change agenda.

He advised that the Service was well ahead of expectation for the reduction in carbon emissions. He highlighted the following:

- The building modernisation programme had enabled green technologies to ensure buildings were energy efficient;
- The biomass boiler at the Training Centre was carbon neutral, saving carbon emissions with a fuel cost (certified UK wood pellets) of £20,000;
- Electric vehicles were being added into the fleet helping to reduce emissions; and
- Carbon literacy training was being rolled out to staff and Environmental Impact Assessments were to become embedded within policies and proposals.

A Member questioned if there was space for a solar field on any of the Services sites. The Lead advised that a solar field would need to generate 1 megawatt of energy and the Service did not have a large enough site. There was also a restriction on the amount of energy that could be sold back to the grid. It was, therefore, more realistic for the Service to concentrate on energy that could be produced, stored in batteries and used on site.

A Member questioned if carbon sequestration was an option rather than carbon removal. The Lead advised that it was possible to use a carbon offset organisation, but, this was seen as 'Green Washing' and was a reputational danger. There were other ways such as adding biodiversity and tree planting, and this was being looked at by an environment sub-group.

A Member questioned if hydrogen-powered vehicles were considered for the larger fleet appliances. The Lead advised that they may be in the future, however, the infrastructure needs to be in place first.

RESOLVED: THAT

[1] the Environment and Climate Change Report be noted.

9 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The table included those items that had been identified/agreed to date.

Members requested that an Environment and Climate Change update be presented every 6 months.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Forward Work Programme be noted.