



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
held on Wednesday, 20 September 2023 at Lecture Theatre - Training Centre, Sadler
Road, Winsford, Cheshire CW7 2FQ at 10.00 am**

PRESENT: Councillors Phil Harris (Chair), John Bird, Steve Collings, Razia Daniels, Nick Mannion, Rob Polhill (Substitute), Margaret Simon, 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 Councillors Peter Wheeler (Substitute Rob Polhill) and Norman Wright.

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 12th July 2023, be confirmed as a correct record.

2 FINANCE REPORT, QUARTER 1, 2023-24

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, 2023-24 and information about progress against the capital programme.

He drew Members' attention to the Forecast Revenue Spending with the overall position at the end of Quarter 1 forecasting an overspend of £378k. The overspend was largely due to the grey book pay award, 6% had been included in the budget with the actual pay award being 7%. It was also noted that the green book pay award was not yet agreed, however, 5% was included in the budget.

The Treasurer advised Members that the position would continue to be monitored and every effort would be made to reduce the overspend utilising existing budgets.

The Treasurer informed Members that the recent rise in interest rates had increased the estimated income receivable from cash balances and that the additional income would be used to offset the capital programme costs.

The Treasurer referred Members to the section on Treasury Management Activities. The updated Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice for Treasury Management recommends that Members are updated on treasury management activities at least quarterly.

He confirmed that the Authority's investments were with Santander, Aberdeen Liquidity Money Market Fund and NatWest, all of which were used regularly to manage day to day cashflows.

The Treasurer reassured Members that there had been no instances of non-compliance with approved Annual Investment Strategy limits during the year.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Finance Report – Quarter 1, 2023-24 be noted.

3 PERFORMANCE REPORT, QUARTER 1, 2023-24

The Group Manager for Organisational Performance and Planning introduced the report, which provided an update on the Service's Quarter 1, 2023-24 performance for each of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The report included the Corporate Scorecard, which reflected the Quarter 1 position against targets set and the year-on-year direction of travel for the KPIs.

The Group Manager focussed on the KPIs where targets had not been achieved, providing further context:

- The figure for the number of Deaths in Primary Fires was 3 for Quarter 1. Two deaths were accidental, caused by smoking materials. The third incident was awaiting a determination at HM Coroner's Court. Smoking continues to be the leading cause of fire related deaths in Cheshire during the last five years.
- The number of Deliberate Secondary Fires, was 272 incidents against a target of 237 for Quarter 1. The highest number of incidents had been in Runcorn, Widnes and Warrington, accounting for 54% of all incidents;
- The number of Safe and Well visits was 5942 visits against a target of 6250. It was noted that this was an ambitious target and the number that had been completed was well above the national average.
- The figure for Fires in Non-Domestic Premises was 52 against a target of 37. 12 of the incidents were minor fires within prisons;
- The figure for Automatic Fire Alarms in Non-Domestic Premises was at 119 against a target of 106. The largest increases had occurred in care homes

and student halls of residence;

- The percentage of alarm activations not attended was 78%, which shows that the call challenging approach at North West Fire Control is working;
- The Risk Based Inspection Programme figure was 288 against a target of 310 for Quarter 1. The shortfall is within Cheshire East and resource from other offices would be re-distributed in the coming months to enable the target across all Service areas to be met; and
- The On-Call Fire Engine Availability was at 50% in Quarter 1 against a target of 85%.

A Member questioned the approach to call challenging for Automatic Fire Alarms in Non-Domestic Premises. The Chief Fire Officer outlined that this was a decision made a number of years ago, by the Fire Authority, 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.

A Member asked if the decision by the Police to no longer attend mental health calls would affect the Service. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that multi agency meetings were taking place nationally where this was being discussed and there was not a requirement for Fire Services to be involved at this stage.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Performance Report – Quarter 1, 2023-24 be noted.

4 PROGRAMME REPORT, QUARTER 1, 2023-24

The Head of Service Improvement provided Members with an update on the Service's programmes and projects. He covered the following:

- The Station Modernisation Programme is now moving forward and the plans and budget for Congleton had been agreed. The next stage of the modernisation programme would be presented to Members at the Fire Authority Meeting in September.
- The Microsoft 365 Implementation, the funding for Phase 6 is now in place and Phase 7, would commence shortly.
- The International Search And Rescue Team (ISAR) Review had been carried out, however this report had been on hold since April 2023 due to the recent deployments to Turkey and Morocco.
- The Welfare/Contaminants Unit Project was now in the driver training stage.

- Reduction In False Alarms In Domestic Premises had been added as a new project. 40 repeat offenders had been identified so far and they would receive guidance to reduce the number of false alarms.
- The Road Safety Strategy Plan for Cheshire was now progressing. The external company had now been appointed by the Cheshire Road Safety Group and work on the plan would commence shortly.

A Member requested an update on the Road Safety Strategy Plan for Cheshire at a future Members' Planning Day. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that once the Road Safety Strategy Plan is available it would be presented to a future Members' Planning Day.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Programme Report – Quarter 1 2023-24 be noted.

5 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

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 2022-23. She referred Members to the progress made and plans for the coming year

- the Service developed a Wider Horizons development package for non-operational colleagues, in response to feedback from fire staff and HMICFRS recommendations;
- the Service had seen a slight increase in representation of women amongst its staff in the year 2022-23. Furthermore, in the next two cohorts of new recruits women would outnumber men for the first time ever; and
- positive action activity to support underrepresented groups through the recruitment process attracted 60 people to taster days held at the Training Centre.

The Equality Diversity and Inclusion Officer outlined there was an opportunity for the next EDI strategy to be developed in tandem with the new Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) for 2024-28. The aim would be that the EDI objectives directly support the delivery of CRMP projects, particularly those relating to prevention, protection and workplace culture.

A Member questioned if the Service recorded if the new recruits came from disadvantaged communities. The Equality Diversity and Inclusion Officer stated that 3 from the current cohort had attended one of the positive action events for underrepresented groups.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2022-23 be noted.**

6 SAFETY CENTRAL ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

The Safety Central Manager introduced the report, which presented a review of the performance of Safety Central between 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023.

The Safety Central Manager outlined the changes to the staffing team and the engagement of the volunteers throughout the year. 21 volunteers had been retained giving a total of 2,339 hours to the centre. A priority for 2023 was the recruitment of further volunteers.

She explained that due to receiving feedback from the rangers about the reduced attention span of school groups following lockdown, they would focus on year 2 and year 5 students.

A focus group with high school teachers was formed to encourage high school take up at the centre. The Manager was considering running themed visits for high schools, topics could include county lines drug gangs and water safety.

The Safety Central Manager highlighted the increased cost of coach travel impacting school visits especially from Cheshire East. The centre had submitted a joint bid to Gas Safe Charity for £16,500 towards coach travel for 2023 - 2024. This will enable the centre to support schools especially in higher risk areas and schools that had never visited Safety Central before.

A Member asked if the centre had approached the governor's conference as a way to reach more schools. The Safety Central Manager advised Members that it was an excellent opportunity and she would make enquires.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the Safety Central Annual Report 2022-23 be noted.**

7 'ON THE STREETS' YOUTH WORK ANNUAL REPORT 2022 - 23

The Youth Engagement Manager introduced the report, which provided a summary of the work that the On the Streets team had completed between April 2022 and March 2023.

The Youth Engagement 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 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.

She advised Members that 4 Youth Work Staff were employed to carry out the work, 3 working 9 hours per week and 1 working 11 hours. Working in teams of 2 this posed a challenge when staff absence occurred through illness or leave.

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 joint 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 2022-23 be noted.

8 NORTH WEST FIRE CONTROL ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

A Station Manager, who acted as the Single Point of Contract with North West Fire Control introduced the report which provided information about the performance of North West Fire Control (NWFC) during the year 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023.

He summarised the Call Handling Performance and highlighted the Calls Challenged, where a fire engine was not mobilised was 43.25%. This enabled the crews to be used on other jobs and reduced the cost of false alarm calls.

The Station Manager advised that the percentage of calls answered within 10 seconds dropped between Quarters 2 and 4 where a dip in performance below 90% was observed. This was due to a change in the telephone systems which led to the data being recorded differently. This was now rectified.

The Station Manager outlined the new technology that was being utilised by NWFC to improve the mobilising performance and he advised that a new Computer Aided Dispatch system was to be procured.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the North West Fire Control Annual Report 2022-23 be noted.

9 NATIONAL FIRE CHIEF'S COUNCIL FIRE STANDARDS COMPLIANCE

The Group Manager for Organisational Performance and Planning introduced the report, which provided an update on the Service's current compliance and progress in implementing the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) Fire Standards.

He advised Members that there were sixteen fire standards that had been published to date, each with individual desired outcomes. The NFCC had released an implementation tool with each standard and a set of criteria with tasks to action and measure compliance against.

A further report will be presented to members at the March 2024 meeting of Performance and Overview Committee providing an update on progress.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the National Fire Chief's Council Fire Standards Compliance Report be noted.

10 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2023-24

The table included those items that had been identified/agreed to date. It was agreed to add the Fire Standards Implementation Six Month Review to the March Performance and Overview Committee Meeting.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Fire Standards Implementation Six Month Review to be added to the forward plan for the March 2024 Performance and Overview Committee Meeting; and

[2] the Forward Work Plan 2023-24 be noted.