



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
held on Wednesday, 22nd November 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, Margaret Simon, 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

All Members were in attendance.

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 20th September 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.**

2 FINANCE REPORT - QUARTER 2, 2023-24

The Treasurer introduced the report, which provided Members with an overview of the Service's forecast revenue financial outturn and reported on progress against 2023-24 capital projects. He reminded Members that the Fire Authority's Revenue Budget was £52m, and the Capital Budget was £10m for the year.

The Treasurer drew Members' attention to the anticipated overspend of £458k in Quarter 2. He outlined a number of reasons for this, including:

- Grey Book (operational staff) pay had increased by 7% (an estimated £290k budget pressure);
- Operational Policy and Assurance had additional expenditure of £49k on North

West Fire Control, this had been offset by a saving of £31k on the Gartan staffing system;

- the cost of minibus hire for the Prince's Trust team had contributed £47k to the overspend, not £458k as shown in the agenda; and
- Support Services, including the disaggregation of some Blue Light Collaboration services had contributed an overspend of £116k.

The Green Book pay award of approximately 6% had recently been agreed (an estimated £65k) this cost was not included in the forecast.

The Treasurer confirmed that the position would continue to be monitored and every effort would be made to meet the overspend from existing budgets.

The Treasurer advised Members that there had been a delay in spending on the capital projects, leading to an increase in interest received. This would be transferred to capital reserves to fund the capital programme.

The Treasurer outlined the capital programme schemes. Crewe Fire Station was on target and Congleton was due to be completed early in the new year. Work at Wilmslow and Macclesfield was ongoing, and the rest of the modernisation programme was being reviewed. There had been an increase in the cost relating to the new fire engines, this would be reflected in the capital programme budget for 2024-25.

A Member questioned whether there was a business case for the Service to acquire a minibus for the Prince's Trust work. The Treasurer advised that this was an option the Service was exploring and further work was required prior to considering the purchase of a minibus.

A Member asked the Treasurer to explain how the Capital Reserve was generated. The Treasurer advised that £1.5m was transferred from the Fire Authority budget per year. When the levels of earmarked reserves were reviewed, any amounts from earmarked reserves that were no longer required were transferred to the Capital Reserve, which would be used to support the funding of the Authority's capital programme.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Finance Report – Quarter 2, 2023-24 be noted.

3 PROGRAMME REPORT - QUARTER 2, 2023-24

The Service Improvement Business Manager provided Members with an update on the Service's programmes and projects (including those contained within the Authority's annual IRMP Action Plan). She highlighted the following: -

- project 1613, International Search and Rescue, moved from amber status to green. The project had been paused due to inactivity, after recent deployments the project had now resumed, and new milestones had been added;
- project 1614, Welfare/Contaminants Unit. The decision was made to introduce a smaller 12-person unit. This unit would still deliver the IRMP objective of improved welfare arrangements;
- project 1615, Intermediate Command Support Vehicle, the project was a feasibility study and was in the process of being closed. A new project would be created for the implementation of the vehicle, and this would form part of the next Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) (2024-2028); and
- the status of the projects within the IRMP 2020-24 were described as either completed or on track. There were two that could not be completed within the timescale, and these were in the new CRMP.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Programme Report – Quarter 2, 2023-24 be noted.

4 PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 2, 2023-24

The Service Improvement Business Manager introduced the report, which provided an update on the Service's Quarter 2, 2023-24 performance for each of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). 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 KPIs.

The following matters were highlighted:

- the Number of Deaths in Primary Fires was red due to the 3 deaths in Quarter 1. No deaths had occurred in Primary Fires during Quarter 2;
- the Number of Fires in Non-Domestic Premises was 80 against a target of 74. The increase was due to calls from HMP Styal and barn fires in the summer period;
- the number of Automatic False Alarms in Non-Domestic Premises had also increased to 284 against a target of 245. There was an ongoing issue with student accommodation premises in Chester. Protection officers from the unitary office were working to reduce the false alarms; and
- the Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) had a very challenging target of 620 inspections. This was the first quarter since it commenced in April 2022 where the Service had achieved and exceeded the target number of audits.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Performance Report – Quarter 2, 2023-24 be noted.

5 HMICFRS 2023 INSPECTION ACTION PLAN

The Service Improvement Business Manager introduced the report, which updated Members on the action plan to resolve Areas For Improvement (AFIs) identified in the Service's 2023 HMICFRS inspection report.

She reminded Members that the 2023 report contained the lowest number of recommendations the Service had been given by HMICFRS in any of their inspection reports. The 5 Areas for Improvement had a list of actions to rectify the issues and provided evidence of progress that had been made to complete them. The Service aims to resolve all the 5 AFIs in advance of a future inspection which was likely to take place in 2025.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the report about the HMICFRS 2023 Inspection Action Plan be noted.

6 UPDATE ON HMICFRS VALUES AND CULTURE REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Head of People and Development introduced the report, which provided Members with an update on the work undertaken to address the recommendations of the HMICFRS Spotlight Report into Values and Culture in Fire and Rescue Services.

The spotlight report contained 35 recommendations, 20 of these were specifically to be actioned by each individual Fire and Rescue Service. An action plan had been produced, and good progress had been made in dealing with the majority of recommendations within the required timescale. Only two areas require further work, these being the use of EDI data, and having plans in place to ensure the Service could meet the two key Fire Standards.

The Head of People and Development advised Members that 15 out of 17 (88%) of the recommendations where the deadline had passed, had been completed. Of the 3 remaining recommendations which had deadlines which fall in 2024, the work in relation to DBS had already commenced, with the other two relating to misconduct and grievances requiring further information to be published by the NFCC before the Service could take any meaningful action.

A Member questioned if the report was signed off by an independent body. The Chief Fire Officer advised that he anticipated that HMICFRS would check on the progress made during its next inspection.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the Update on HMICFRS Values and Culture Report Recommendations be noted.**

7 HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

The Health and Safety Manager introduced the report, which provided Members with an update on the Health and Safety performance 2022-2023.

The Health and Safety Manager highlighted the key areas of the report:

- there had been an increase in the number of minor injuries 51 in the year 2022-23 against 38 injuries in 2021-22. Manual handling and slip, trip and fall incidents had been the cause of the most accidents;
- there had been a decrease in the number of days lost because of injuries this year which totalled 40, a reduction on last year's total of 74.5;
- a significant improvement had been seen in operational employee fitness with the Service fitness pass rate increasing from 75% to 95%; and
- there had been four accidents reported under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations, the same number as the previous year. One of the incidents reported was in relation to a member of the public who had now fully recovered.

The Health and Safety Manager advised Members that the improvement had been achieved due to a combination of the investment of time and money by the Service Leadership Team, and a continuing improvement in the health and safety culture of both managers and employees.

A Member questioned if the reportable accident rate was benchmarked against other fire services. The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that this information was available in the past and Cheshire was in the lower range for accidents. The data had not been collated last year and this was something which the Service would look at. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that no areas of concern relating to health and safety were identified in the latest HMICFRS inspection.

RESOLVED: That

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

8 MENTAL HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

The Mental Health Advisor introduced the report, which provided an update about the work undertaken over the last 12 months to deliver the objectives and priorities contained within the Service's Mental Health Strategy.

He highlighted key points from the report which included the following:

- the Mental Health Advisor partnered with the Service Fitness Advisor to start offering joint visits, to emphasise the parity of esteem between physical and mental health. Whilst the Fitness Advisor undertook the fitness testing, staff were also invited to undertake a Mental Health MOT. To date, 25% of staff had accessed the MOT;
- a “Step Away” programme had been offered to staff before and after retirement. The programme offers workshops on the financial implications of and opportunities afforded by retirement, offering practical advice and health and wellbeing support. The programme was reviewed following the first round of delivery;
- the Wellbeing Group offers informal and flexible peer support to colleagues. Activities include paddleboarding, mindful walks and meditation; and
- there was a new initiative working with an organisation called K9 where 12 volunteers with their dogs could be assessed and trained to become wellbeing dogs for the Service. The wellbeing dogs could help get people talking and create expressions of genuine feeling just by being friendly and non-judgemental.

The Mental Health Advisor outlined to Members that the aims within the Mental Health Strategy 2021-25 had become business as usual in the Service, and that work was ongoing to develop the next 4-year strategy.

A Member commented that there was still a stigma within society about reporting mental health issues and that it was a concern that 75% of operational staff had not taken up the Mental Health MOT. The Mental Health Advisor advised Members that other sectors had looked to mandate mental health assessments; however, the cooperation rate was very low, and the participants did not engage in a meaningful way. The training given to staff included watchful waiting and being aware of colleague’s behaviour. He concluded this was something the Service was very keen to promote and that ways to gain more uptake were constantly being looked at.

RESOLVED That

[1] the Mental Health Annual Report 2023 be noted.

9 PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

The Partnership Co-ordinator introduced the report, which provided an update on the Prevention department’s Partnerships portfolio 2022-2023.

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.

Key achievements included:

- in the Early Help and Prevention Partnership a total of 301 Safe and Well referrals were requested during the year. 157 referrals were completed, with 144 families refusing a visit or failing to engage with the Service. 146 smoke alarms were fitted, and 32 fireproof letter boxes installed at 32 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. Since April 2023, discussions had recommenced with health partners to reintegrate these health offers. This work was of a high priority and was due to be re-introduced once equipment guidance and refresher training was in place;
- Energy Projects Plus continued to provide funding and awareness to households. The “Warm and Well” programme had supported 324 households in 2022-23, compared to just 15 households during 2021-22.

The Partnership Co-ordinator advised Members that there was a new project “Combined Intelligence for Population Health Action” (CIPHA). It involves intelligence-based data being shared by the NHS. The data identifies the properties most at risk within Cheshire by using health data, which would support the Service’s Safe and Well activity.

A Member commented that he was pleased to see the diverse work carried out with partners. The Chair advised that if the Members identified an area of work or collaboration not covered in their area their Unitary Performance Group could assist by contacting their Officer buddy.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Partnerships Annual Report 2022-23 be noted.

10 INTERIM BONFIRE REPORT 2023

The Deliberate Fire Reduction Manager provided Members with an interim update on the preventative and operational activities of the Service during the bonfire period. This ran from 08:00 24th October 2023 to 08:00 on 7th November 2023 (aligned with North West Fire Control). He confirmed that a full report would be presented at the next meeting.

The Deliberate Fire Reduction Manager outlined to Members the preparation work that occurred in the weeks before the start of the bonfire period. This included: developing a media campaign to give key safety messages via social media and radio; working with high schools in Winsford and Runcorn to deliver safety presentations; the ‘On the Streets’ team working with the Police to target youngsters in well-known trouble hot spots; and working with the Local Authority and housing trusts to identify and remove waste and fly-tipped items.

The Deliberate Fire Reduction Manager advised that 1 attack had been reported with youths in Winsford throwing objects at the appliance and fire crew. The Police escorted the fire engine and intervened to enable the firefighters to extinguish the fire. Having the Police escort was an active deterrent, and this approach would be used next year.

The Deliberate Fire Reduction Manager highlighted that:

- across the bonfire reporting period, 30 deliberate secondary fires were recorded, which was a 47% reduction compared to 2022 and a 65% reduction compared to 5 years ago;
- 6 deliberate secondary fires were recorded on Bonfire Night which was a decrease of 6 from the previous year;
- 10 Station Areas experienced deliberate secondary fires, with most activity (10 fires) occurring in Winsford which was a decrease of 16 from the previous year;
- there were 6 deliberate primary fires across 6 different station areas. These occurred in Chester, Ellesmere Port, Frodsham, Nantwich, Runcorn and Warrington; and
- it was also noted that the weather may have helped reduce the number of incidents across Cheshire.

The Deliberate Fire Reduction Manager was proposing a number of recommendations for next year, these included: -

- a full review of the UPG funding bids to try to determine how effective the work was and develop further options for the coming year to ensure value for money;
- delivering a full programme of school visits to capture more schools and create better awareness; and
- developing a partnership approach with the Local Authorities and housing trusts to work together to remove combustible waste.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the Interim Bonfire Report 2023 be noted.**

11 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Director of Governance commented that no changes or additions to the Forward Work Programme had been identified.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the Forward Work Programme be noted.**