



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
held on Wednesday, 10 July 2024 at Lecture Theatre - Fire Service Headquarters,
Sadler Road, Winsford, Cheshire CW7 2FQ at 10.00 am**

PRESENT: Councillors Phil Harris (Chair), John Bird, Razia Daniels, Mo Hussain, Nick Mannion, Margaret Simon, Derek Barnett and Rob Polhill

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 Phil Rimmer and Councillor Peter Wheeler (Substitute Councillor Rob Polhill).

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 6th March 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.

2 PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 4, 2023-24

The Service Improvement Business Manager introduced the report, which provided an update on the performance for each of the Service's Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for Quarter 4, 2023-24.

The Business Manager referred Members to the KPI relating to the number of deaths in primary fires. Two fire fatalities occurred in Quarter 4 taking the total for the year to eight. It was noted that two of these deaths were pending further determination by HM Coroner, which might lead to them being reclassified as non-fire related deaths.

The Business Manager drew Members' attention to the Number of Safe and Well visits completed. The cumulative total for the year was 25,519 against a target of 25,000. She emphasised that there were 23.5 visits per 1000 population, significantly higher than the national average of 9.4 visits per year.

The Business Manager referred Members to the Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) metric.

The total for Quarter 4 was 610, exceeding the target of 461. She informed Members that despite a 79% successful call challenge rate, there was a notable increase in AFAs primarily from retirement homes, care homes, and student halls of residence. Efforts were underway within the Protection team to reduce the number of false alarms associated with these premises.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Performance Report – Quarter 4, 2023-24 be noted.

3 PROGRAMME REPORT - QUARTER 4, 2023-24

The Corporate Programme Manager provided Members with an update on the Service's programmes and projects, including those contained within the Authority's annual Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

The Corporate Programme Manager referred Members to the Station Modernisation Programme; the status was amber due to delays at Congleton and Wilmslow Fire Stations. The Congleton delay was weather-related, however, the modernisation works were now complete and the snagging process was underway. The delay at Wilmslow was caused by the discovery of asbestos in the existing roof, and the project team was working closely with the contractor to resolve the issue.

He informed Members about the new Response Project, which was developed from the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) approved by the Authority on 14th February 2024. Initial work was completed in Quarter 4, and a detailed update would be provided in Quarter 1.

The Corporate Programme Manager also provided an update on the High Rise Sprinkler Campaign, which was now in closedown phase. An evaluation had been completed to highlight the successes and lessons learned.

A Member asked about the feasibility of having a Road Safety Strategy Plan for Cheshire in place by December 2024, given the reliance on external partners. The Road Safety Manager confirmed that this timeline was realistic. The external company was prioritising the partners' goals, analysing the past 10 years of data, and using the five principles of safe systems to develop the plan.

A Member asked what the five principles were. The Road Safety Manager explained that Cheshire uses "The Fatal Five": careless driving, drink/drug driving, not wearing a seatbelt, mobile phone use, and speeding. Some services use the Fatal Four, excluding careless driving. The Road Safety Manager participates in the Road Safety Practitioners Group, a national body reviewing the Fatal 4/5.

A Member questioned if there was still enthusiasm in developing the cardiac response capability. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the cardiac response work was linked to national negotiations. However, he advised Members there was a desire to take this project forward locally and it was within the CRMP 2024-2028.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Programme Report – Quarter 4, 2023-24 be noted.

4 UNITARY PERFORMANCE GROUPS ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

The Service Delivery Manager for Warrington and Halton introduced the report, which provided an update on the initiatives supported and funded by the Unitary Performance Groups (UPGs) during 2023-24.

He outlined that the UPG meetings provided an opportunity for Members to engage with the Service to develop initiatives that assisted with improving performance and outcomes for the communities within each unitary area.

The UPGs had a budget of £10,000 per year allocated to enable them to fund a range of activities to help drive down nuisance fire setting and enhance community engagement. A total of £16,471.64 was spent from UPG budgets against an available budget of £40,000, giving an underspend of £23,528.36 for the 2023/24 financial year. An additional £15,748.14 was drawn from the central pot, for initiatives that benefited the whole of Cheshire.

The Service Delivery Manager advised Members that from 2024/25, station open days would be funded from the central UPG pot and would therefore not affect local UPG budgets.

A Member asked if there was a way new Members could understand what was in scope for UPG funding. The Chief Fire Officer commented that each Member of the Fire Authority had an officer as a buddy, this would be their first point of contact to talk through any initiatives.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Unitary Performance Groups Annual Report 2023-24 be noted.

5 TRAINING PERFORMANCE ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

The Group Manager, Operational Training and Assurance provided Members with an update on the training arrangements and performance throughout the training year 2023-24.

He drew Members' attention to fact that the majority of training courses in Quarter 4 were green RAG status. However, the RTC Refresher Training was at amber status, with 479 staff attending against a target of 500. To address this, four additional courses were being held to capture the staff who missed the initial training. The Height Training had a red status, with 40 staff attending out of a target of 49.

The primary reason for non-attendance was due to staff being on long-term absence or on amended duties. Training would be scheduled when these individuals return to full duties.

The Group Manager also noted that the Emergency Fire Appliance Drivers Training had improved to green status. He explained that the training year had been challenging. However, four new driving instructors requiring development were recruited, and one instructor was seconded partway through the year to increase department resilience.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Annual Training Performance Report 2023-24 be noted.

6 PROSECUTIONS ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

The Group Manager for Protection presented a report updating Members on prosecutions under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 for the financial year 2023-24. During the reporting period there had been two successful prosecutions.

He summarised the successful prosecution cases and advised there were currently eleven cases in various stages of the prosecution process. These include four cases going to trial in the Crown Court and seven cases under investigation.

The Group Manager highlighted the cost implications of prosecuting cases, advising Members that the Service maintains a prosecution reserve of approximately £300k. The Beechmere Retirement Village prosecution was expected to be the most expensive prosecution to date, due to the complexity of the case and the need for significant legal support. The Service may be awarded costs to cover its solicitor's fees and staff time, however, this was not guaranteed and could take a significant time to recover.

A Member questioned what actions were taken before prosecutions were initiated. The Chief Fire Officer explained that the Service had a statutory duty to enforce fire safety laws, and that prosecution was a last resort. The Service had teams that work with businesses to help them rectify deficiencies before enforcement action is taken, or prosecution considered.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the contents of the Prosecutions Annual Report 2023-24 be noted.

7 HMICFRS 2023 INSPECTION ACTION PLAN

The Service Improvement Business Manager introduced the report which provided an update on the actions and areas for improvement (AFIs) identified in the Service's Action Plan following the 2023 HMICFRS inspection report.

The Business Manager outlined the five areas for improvement that were open and detailed the progress made on each one. She advised Members that an audit against the HMICFRS criteria was underway.

A Member commented that it was good to see the progress made and the closure of actions, but questioned why there was no further progress on the AFI relating to adequate resources being available for future industrial action. The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that this was a national issue. Legislation now requires 73% of the workforce to remain on duty during industrial action, which was considered adequate. Therefore, another solution was not currently needed. However, if the new government repeals this legislation, an alternative solution would need to be found.

RESOLVED: That

[1] HMICFRS 2023 Inspection Action Plan be noted.

8 ROAD SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

The Road Safety Officer introduced the report which provided an update on the targeted road safety activities 2023-24. Activities were delivered in support of the multi-agency road safety plans of the local authorities and Cheshire Police and were designed to reduce road traffic collisions, deaths and injuries.

The Road Safety Officer outlined that the data showed a total of 387 road traffic collisions requiring the Service's attendance during 2023-24, a 1.0% decrease from the 2022-23 totals. Of these collisions, 28% required the Service to perform an extrication of a casualty at the scene.

Over the previous three years (2020-23), the data indicated that fatal incidents had reduced by 20%, but serious injuries had increased by 23%.

The Road Safety Officer highlighted the achievements of the operational crews delivering targeted road safety activities throughout the year in their communities. These included TyreSafe Winter Driving campaign, Brake Road Safety Week and Operation Close Pass. He advised Members that they were welcome to attend these events.

The Road Safety Officer informed Members that not all campaigns had been completed and an action plan was in place to complete them. Progress on the action plan was reported back to the Station Managers working group.

A Member asked if the road safety work could be extended to driving school groups to pass onto their learners. The Road Safety Officer explained that the Local Authority was responsible for road safety, and the Service would support them where appropriate. He advised that road safety intervention "Think Drive Survive" was delivered across Cheshire in partnership with Cheshire Police and Highways England. This program was aimed at young people aged 17 to 25, both pre and post test, or those who were passengers in cars with young drivers. It was delivered 26 times during the year across Service premises, externally at schools, colleges, and business premises. The Service's Prince's Trust teams also received this training.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Annual Road Safety Report 2023-24 be noted.

9 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2024-25

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

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Forward Work Plan 2024-25 be noted.