



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
held on Wednesday, 2 September 2020 at 10.00am. Remote Meeting - Via Skype**

PRESENT: Councillors Phil Harris (Chair), Peter Wheeler, Razia Daniels, Gina Lewis, Les Morgan, James Nicholas and Norman Wright

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A Record 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 and Independent Non-Elected Member Derek Barnett.

C Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of Members' interest.

D Minutes of the Performance and Overview Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Performance and Overview Committee held on 22nd July 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

2 FINANCE REPORT - QUARTER 1, 2020-21

The Treasurer introduced a report which provided Members with a review of the Service's forecast financial performance and information about progress with the 2020-21 capital projects.

He drew Members attention to the forecast revenue spending with the overall position at the first quarter forecasting an underspend of £220k. He proposed that the funding be moved to capital reserves to limit future borrowing.

The Treasurer referred Members to details of the Service's funding position for the first quarter of the current financial year. He drew Members attention to the additional costs and reduction of income during the pandemic. However, the Government announced emergency local government funding for Covid-19 additional costs with the Service receiving £166,768 in 2019/20 and £793,795 in 2020/21.

He noted that the impact of Covid-19 would not affect funding in the current financial year, but would almost certainly affect the level of funding from Government and the Cheshire billing authorities in future years. This may reduce both the council tax and business rate bases, as well as leading to potential deficits on the Collection Funds which the Authority would be required to contribute to in line with their corresponding share.

The Treasurer reported that the staff pay award of 2.75% had recently been confirmed and this additional costs would need to be covered.

Members were satisfied with the content of the report and approved the movement in reserves.

RESOLVED: THAT

[1] the forecast outturn position – Quarter 1 2020-21 be noted; and

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

3 PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 1, 2020-21

The Head of Protection and Organisational Performance introduced the report which provided an update on the Service's Quarter 1 2020-21 performance for each of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Appendix 1 to 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.

Officers expanded on some of the KPIs, providing further context, particularly where targets had not been achieved. In addition Members were asked to note three new indicators.

The Head of Protection and Organisational Performance asked Members to note that performance in Quarter 1 had been mixed as Covid-19 had had a significant impact on many areas of the Service.

He referred Members to the KPI relating to the number of deaths in primary fires. Two deaths had occurred in Quarter 1, both fatalities occurred in one incident with the cause involving smoking materials and with both victims aged over 65.

The KPI status for the number of Injuries in Primary Fires was currently red, with 14 injuries recorded against a target of 11. The Head of Protection and Organisational Performance confirmed that all incidents had been investigated and lessons learned.

The KPI status for the number of Safe and Well visits delivered to properties of Heightened Risk was currently red. These visits had largely stopped due to the pandemic, but up to the end of Quarter 1 1,443 heightened risk visits had been completed by Prevention and Operational staff, including additional visits to vulnerable people.

The KPI status for Thematic Inspections completed by Operational Staff and Fire Safety Audits in Non-Domestic Premises were currently red as these visits had stopped due to the pandemic and not yet restarted.

The Head of Protection and Organisational Performance provided an update on performance against the On-Call availability KPI. There were variations of availability between the differing on-call systems with the status of Nucleus and Primary on-call being Green and Secondary on-call Amber. The Covid-19 pandemic had had an impact on the availability of On Call appliances and staff, with a steady increase throughout the quarter as primary employers either closed, furloughed their staff, or implemented a work from home policy. In addition, a number of staff in other departments who have worked from home during lockdown have volunteered to be available for local on call stations and this also had a positive impact on availability.

The Head of Protection and Organisational Performance drew Members' attention to the new KPIs. Road Traffic Collisions Attended would help the Service to monitor and report on the number of road traffic collisions that the Service attends as there had been an increase in the number of fatalities on the road up to December 2019, (with a subsequent decrease during the last two quarters due to travel restrictions place on households due to Covid-19).

The new KPI on Total Number of False Alarms attended has been included as approximately 40% of all operational incidents across Cheshire are false alarms and from this year the Service will monitor all false alarms, both malicious and those of good intent, to review how the Service can improve performance. Over the last 12 months 3454 incidents had been classified as a false alarms, 56.4% (1,947) are automatic false alarms and 41.6% (1,437) classified as false alarm good intent from dwellings.

A Member asked for clarification on what the Service categorises as a false alarm. The Head of Protection and Organisational Performance responded that there are a number of categories which fall under false alarms and these were detailed in the tables on Page 60.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Performance Report – Quarter 1 2020-21 be noted.

4 PROGRAMME REPORT - QUARTER 1, 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 first quarter of 2020-21 and picked out key performance areas for specific focus.

He explained that the Whole Service Review was moving to the closedown phase and as the IRMP 2020-24 was approved by the Fire Authority on 1 July 2020, Heads of Department had now considered an outline plan for the delivery of the objectives. Project Initiation Documents had been developed and progress on delivery of projects would be captured in future Health Reports.

The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive explained that the Covid-19 pandemic had had an impact on the building programme with Sadler Road Training Centre status currently on Amber. This was due to the overall delays within the programme and forecast budget overspend of 10%, which included the costs incurred from delays in the planning application and the window and fire alarm replacement works in the existing buildings.

He explained that the Replacement of Crewe Fire Station does not currently have a status as the project needs new milestones to be agreed before it can be tracked on the Cheshire Planning System.

He provided an update on the Protection Review and asked Members to note that the timescales for the review had slipped as a consequence of the delay in outcomes of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, which the review was dependent on.

He drew Members' attention to the Operational Training Group Review which was currently on Amber status. This was due to the slippage of the revised duty system pilot due to the pandemic. However, discussions on identifying a suitable date to commence a trial had now re-commenced.

RESOLVED: THAT

[1] the Performance Report – Quarter 1 2020-21 be noted.

5 INTERNAL AUDIT - QUARTER 1, 2020-21 PROGRESS REPORT

Ann-Marie Harrop (the Auditor), a representative from Mersey Internal Audit Agency (MIAA) was in attendance to present the Internal Audit Quarter 1 2020-21 Progress Report (attached as Appendix 1 to the report).

She explained that 50% of the MIAA workforce had been redeployed until June, but work had now commenced on the Pension Review and Payroll Audit. In addition recommendations from previous years were being followed up and ongoing work on the National Fraud Initiative had begun.

RESOLVED: THAT

[1] the Internal Audit Progress Report – Quarter 1 2020-21

6 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

The Equality and Inclusion Officer introduced the report which provided a summary of key issues identified in the Service's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2019-20.

He explained that a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy would be developed for the period 2021-24 and would be submitted for approval to Members in Spring 2021.

He referred Members to the Key Accomplishments from the last six months, in particular:

- Stonewall Workplace Equality Index – retained the rank of third in the Stonewall Top 100 Employers list for a second year running.
- Addressing disproportionality in the workforce
- Staff Network Groups
- Visibility and Awareness Days
- Policy Development
- EDI Education and Training Review
- Equality Impact Assessments (EIA)
- Developing Community Partnerships
- Recruitment Communications and Attraction Strategy

He also provided an update on the priorities for the next 6 months which would include:-

- Covid-19 Recovery Planning following the recent thematic staff survey to identify any particular trends and/or concerns that would inform recovery plans;
- maintaining the momentum behind staff networks as well as establishing a disability staff network and ways in which to raise awareness and provide a higher level of support to staff with dyslexia;
- raising the profile of the BAME network and events being planned for October to recognise Black History Month;
- the #BLM campaign had put a strong emphasis on the need for the Service to be able to demonstrate what was happening from a BAME perspective and how it meets the needs of the community in respect of response, protection and prevention;
- Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) remained under review and were developed to highlight actual and potential risks to the different equality interest groups in Cheshire;
- Positive Action work had been commissioned to research and understand the viability of applying positive action to promotion processes in addition to recruitment.

- Preparation for Stonewall 2021 Submission. Work would continue to ensure that the Service remains committed to the fair and equal treatment of LGBTQ+ staff and communities.

A Member requested a regular update on all events in advance in the form of a forward calendar. The Equality and Inclusion Officer explained that there was an Events Calendar and he would ensure that this was circulated regularly.

A Member asked for an update on the restart of the business and staff working from home. The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive explained that staff had found other ways of working since the start of the Pandemic and homes had now become offices. The Service was exploring options for the future, taking into account environmental and financial implications. Employees had found a number of benefits of working from home, including financial savings and well-being. Concerns had been raised about isolation and the Service was looking at a hybrid option where staff would be able to come into the office for some of the week. In addition, each department had carried out a risk assessment and the Service was looking at ways to provide staff with equipment that they may need to improve their home working situation, such as chairs, keyboards etc.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2019-20 be noted.

7 SAFETY CENTRAL ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

The Safety Central Manager introduced the report which presented a review of the performance of Safety Central between 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2020.

He explained that the centre welcomed a total of 8,773 visitors which represents an increase of 26% on the previous year, of which 3,915 were children and young people and 1,598 were adults from a total of 186 schools and community groups.

He drew Members' attention to feedback figures from visitors who took part in the centre's learning evaluation. This showed an average improvement of 68% in basic safety and lifeskills knowledge and 100% rated their visit as good or very good and 100% would visit again. In addition 94% of children and young people and 98% of adult visitors rated their visit as 4 or 5 out of 5.

The Safety Central Manager also updated Members on achievements during 2020/21, which included the installation of a new shop scenario donated by the Co-op, adopting a more targeted approach to attracting schools and groups from areas of need and the launch of a new website with live booking calendar and volunteer self-rostering capability.

He explained that the year ahead was a little uncertain as Covid-19 continued to have an impact on the way the centre operated and a phased approach to reopening would be required, although it was hoped that a full programme could be offered from January 2021, but the situation would be reviewed regularly.

A Member asked for information which could be passed on to schools who weren't aware of the centre to encourage visits. The Safety Central Manager explained that there was some electronic information which he would share and the website would be re-launched shortly.

RESOLVED: THAT

[1] the Safety Central Annual Report 2019-20 be noted.

8 NORTH WEST FIRE CONTROL - ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

Station Manager Huw Coates introduced the report which provided information about the performance of North West Fire Control (NWFC) during the year 2019-20 (1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020).

He summarised the current system performance which included information on the availability, faults and speed of the mobilising system, information about call handling and mobilising performance, the cost of the service, staff performance and business continuity.

He explained that NWFC had appointed an officer with specific responsibilities for data and reporting and during 2019-20 some changes had been agreed on how performance was reported in order to provide a complete picture of overall workload. These included:

- The total number of both emergency and admin calls received and calls that generated a call-challenge, such as Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs), Animal Rescues, Bonfires and Gaining Entry incidents in order to show the effectiveness of processes in reducing unwanted fire calls.
- Mobilising times for appliances broken down into incident type.
- Staffing levels, employee absenteeism and percentage of optimum staffed shifts as an indicator of the effectiveness of existing staffing arrangements.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the North West Fire Control Annual Report 2019-20 be noted.

9 PREVENTION PARTNERSHIPS - ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

The Partnerships Coordinator presented an overview of the performance of the Prevention Department's Partnerships portfolio during the period 1st April 2019 and 31st March 2020.

She explained that the Prevention Department had a longstanding history of leading on or being a key partner agency in high performing partnerships, including the Safe and Well programme, the Fit4Safety initiative and the Early Help and Prevention Partnership led by Cheshire West and Chester Council. In addition the Service made a commitment to support the local authorities through the Covid-19 pandemic by helping to provide essential items, welfare support and other provision to the most at risk households across Cheshire.

RESOLVED: THAT

[1] the Prevention Partnerships Annual Report 2019-20 be noted.

10 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The forward work programme was considered by Members and no changes were made.

RESOLVED: That:

[1] The Forward Work Programme be noted.