

Fire & Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee

8 January 2021 – At a virtual meeting of the Fire & Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee held at 10.30 am with restricted public access.

Present: Cllr Waight (Chairman)

Cllr Barnard, Cllr Edwards, Cllr M Jones, Cllr Pendleton and Cllr Smytherman

Apologies were received from Cllr Barling

Also in attendance: Cllr Crow

17. Declarations of Interest

17.1 In accordance with the code of conduct the following interests were declared: -

- Cllr Smytherman in respect of item 5 (Fire and Rescue Service Strategic Performance Report Q2 2020/21) as president of Sight Support Worthing and as the manager of a block of flats in Worthing

18. Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee

18.1 Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2020 are approved as a correct record and are signed by the Chairman.

19. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

19.1 Resolved – that the Committee notes the Forward Plan of Key Decisions.

20. Fire and Rescue Service Strategic Performance Report Q2 2020/21

20.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer (copy appended to the signed minutes) which was introduced by Sabrina Cohen-Hatton, Chief Fire Officer and Mark Andrews, Deputy Chief Fire Officer who told the Committee: -

- The Service had been operating in unprecedented circumstances and although some areas still needed improvement the direction of travel was good
- Core Measure 1 (Total number of Fire Deaths) – the Service had set-up a Panel to review every fatal fire to inform future strategy
- Core Measure 6 (Number of Safe and Well Visits Delivered) – significant progress had been made against this target which should be green by the end of the year
- Core Measure 18 (Critical Fires – 2nd Appliance (Fire Engine) attendance), Core Measure 19 (Critical Special Service - 1st Appliance (Fire Engine) attendance), Core Measure 21 (Adequate Crewing on all retained Fire Engines) - crewing optimisation

allows the Service to make sure it has the right resources in the right places. The county crewing pilot allows the Service to make the best use of its on call or retained duty staff to ensure they are in the right places - this continues to improve cover and whilst it is disappointing to see that these measures are red the Service is focussing on them to ensure they improve over the coming quarters. The Service has employed additional retained liaison officers.

- Core Measure 10 (Proportion of Unsatisfactory Fire Safety Inspections) – the Service had prioritised quality over quantity
- Core Measure 12 (Building Regulation Consultations) – target achieved
- Core Measure 17 (Critical Fires – 1st Appliance (Fire Engine) Attendance) – there had been slight improvement

20.2 Summary of responses to committee members' questions and comments: -

- Officers will review all fatal fires through a Panel of fire officers
- Physical Safe and Well visits had been hampered by the pandemic, but some had been done by phone – the target for these visits would not be met this year due to a lack of referrals rather than a backlog
- Although the target for Core Measure 18 had not been met, compliance was 4% up on the same quarter last year and there were no areas of very high risk in the county
- Key to improving performance against Core Measure 18 was availability of appliances and retained fire fighters
- Retained Liaison Officers were helping with the recruitment of retained fire fighters and were able to act as incident commanders as they were based in stations staffed with retained fire fighters
- Appliance driving instructors were being recruited to increase the number of drivers
- Between last January and November, appliance availability increased by 21,000 hours enabling 1,498 occasions where retained appliances were first on the scene at 878 incidents
- There was a concern raised over Core Measure 19, but the Committee was assured that there were no very high-risk areas in the county and that the latest performance figures were 4% up and the same time last year
- The number of people furloughed and working from home during lockdown 1 had a positive effect on Core Measure 21 as had other measures such as increased availability of appliances
- Under the new Building Safety Act, management companies will be required to take additional responsibility to ensure the safety of the residents of the flats they manage

20.3 Resolved – that the Committee: -

- i. notes the actions taken by the Fire and Rescue Service and welcomes the progress made, but notes that there are still significant challenges to be met

- ii. notes that the Safe and Well visit deficit is due to lack of referrals rather than a backlog of visits
- iii. notes the work that is continuing on improving second appliance attendance
- iv. notes the improved availability of retained firefighters, but recognises that further improvement is needed
- v. congratulates the Fire and Rescue Service on the improvement of the first appliance attendance record

21. West Sussex Reset Plan and Key Performance Indicators

- 21.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive (copy appended to the signed minutes) which was introduced by Sabrina Cohen-Hatton, Chief Fire Officer who told the Committee that the Service's responsibilities included working with communities and partners to prevent emergencies as well as dealing with fires.
- 21.2 Summary of responses to committee members' questions and comments: -
- The four key performance indicators (KPIs) in the reset plan relating to the Fire & Rescue Service covered all main areas of its work – response, prevention and protection
 - These KPIs used raw data so were more easily measured and demonstrated how the Services was performing more clearly as opposed to others such as Core Measure 10 (Proportion of Unsatisfactory Fire Safety Inspections) which were more complex
- 21.3 Resolved – that the Committee supports the proposed reset plan and key performance indicators for the Fire & Rescue Service

22. Priority Programme Update

- 22.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer (copy appended to the signed minutes) which was introduced by Sabrina Cohen-Hatton, Chief Fire Officer who told the Committee that the Service had focussed first on protection and prevention as these areas had the biggest impact on public safety. The emphasis was now moving to staff culture via the three-year People Action Plan.
- 22.2 Summary of responses to committee members' questions and comments: -
- Local risk management plans were about how to implement the Integrated Risk Management Plan at a local level involving local councillors
 - The Fire & Rescue Service Resilience and Emergencies Team was part of the Council's Resilience and Emergencies Team
- 22.3 Resolved – that the Committee notes the progress made and looks forward to further developments in the next municipal year

23. Fire and Rescue Service Independent Advisory Panel Closure

23.1 The Committee learned that the Independent Advisory Panel was pleased with the significant amount of progress made by West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service against recommendations made by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services and therefore it decided on 11 November 2020 that it no longer needed to monitor the Service.

23.2 Resolved – that the Committee notes the closure of the Independent Advisory Panel.

24. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services Covid Inspection letter

24.1 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services Covid Inspection letter had not yet arrived, but the Committee learned that the Service: -

- Had been involved in meetings with Public Health, the NHS and other key partners to put in place plans for dealing with the pandemic from February 2020 - these proved to be very effective
- Had been able to carry out its core duties of protecting people and responding to emergencies, it had also found new ways to carry out preventative work
- Is able to support the wider public effort whilst fulfilling its own role
- Is involved in weekly Resilience Forum meetings and reviews its own performance continually
- Has supported its staff
- Has a good degradation plan and is confident it can cope if the pandemic worsens

24.2 Resolved – that as Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services Covid Inspection letter had not yet arrived, this item would be discussed at the next meeting.

25. Work Programme

25.1 The Committee discussed its work programme and agreed the following: -

- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services Covid Inspection letter would be placed on the agenda for the 26 March 2021 meeting
- Further details on retained fire fighters as reported in the Performance Assurance Framework would be discussed by the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Chief Fire Officer and fed back to the Committee
- Membership of the Joint Control Centre Task & Finish Group – a request was made for a Labour representative to be appointed to the Task & Finish Group, but this was rejected as the proposed

membership already complied with the constitution by having one non-majority group member – membership was therefore agreed as Cllr Barnard, Cllr Barling, Cllr Edwards and Cllr Smytherman – it was also agreed that the Task & Finish Group would also look at the Electronic Services Group

26. Date of Next Meeting

26.1 The next meeting of the Committee will take place on 26 March 2021.

The meeting ended at 1.19 pm

Chairman