

Fire & Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee

30 September 2022 – At a meeting of the Fire & Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee held at 10.30 am at County Hall, Chichester, PO19 1RQ.

Present: Cllr Boram (Chairman)

Cllr Bence, Cllr Chowdhury, Cllr Patel and Cllr Albury

Apologies were received from Cllr Pendleton, Cllr Evans and Cllr Milne

Also in attendance: Cllr Crow

13. Declarations of Interest

13.1 No declarations were made.

14. Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee

14.1 Resolved – that the Committee agrees the minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2022.

15. Responses to Recommendations

15.1 Resolved – that the Committee notes the responses to recommendations made at its 7 July 2022 meeting.

16. Fire and Rescue Service Strategic Performance Report Quarter 1 2022/23

16.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer (copy appended to the signed minutes) and presentation by the Head of Service – Protection and learned that: -

- Fire Safety Advisors cannot take enforcement action whereas Fire Safety Inspectors can
- Private sector companies are recruiting Fire Safety Regulators from fire services which affects their ability to retain staff
- There is a development plan to train 66% of the Protection Team to become qualified Fire Safety Regulators – this should take 12 to 18 months to achieve
- The Service is also training people to bring into the Protection Team in next couple of years when vacancies exist
- The Service is looking to see if any officers from other fire services living in West Sussex who can be offered zero hours contracts would be able to work for West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service on their days off
- Fire crews are being trained in fire safety so that more safety audits can be carried out – this should also give them more job satisfaction and help staff retention

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

- Initial feedback from the leadership course had been good
- Targets are set high to ensure the Service sets high standards as it is risk critical – a target showing as amber gives a prewarning to any dips in performance
- There could be a conflict of interests if the Service charged for fire inspections as it is also the enforcement organisation however, the Service is in partnership with a care home provider offering bespoke fire safety advice for cost recovery
- Widening caseload work, new ways of working and working with different partners helps keeps staff engaged/retained
- Following two fatalities in the county, the Service has written to the coroner, who in turn has written to social services and the NHS, about the fire risks of people using emollient creams
- Deliberate fires are covered by local risk management plans with joint action groups consisting of the Service, police, schools and local councils
- The Service's approach to arson reduction has worked well and reduced these incidents over many years – the recent trend is noted and is being considered at local level through local risk management plans
- The Service has two new Wildfire tactical advisers to reinforce the resilience for preparing for and tackling wild fires

16.3 Resolved – that the Committee supports an update to Core Measure 10 to reflect the development challenges.

17. End of June 2022 (Quarter 1) Quarterly Performance and Resources Report

17.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer (copy appended to the signed minutes).

17.2 Resolved – that the Committee notes the report.

18. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Tranche One and Two Inspection Report

18.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer (copy appended to the signed minutes).

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

- The Inspectorate publishes a table of judgement criteria (e.g. for prevention) - the Service provides quarterly information on its performance against these criteria
- Although the Service had not improved enough to be rated good for prevention, it had discharged the cause for concern in this area
- Investment in staff and systems are creating an environment where people can succeed

18.3 Resolved – that the Committee: -

- i. Supports the closure of the Improvement Plan in relation to the tranche one inspection
- ii. Undertakes scrutiny into the areas of concern arising from the inspection report annually through the Statement of Assurance supplemented by a Community Risk Management Plan programme report at six monthly intervals

19. Work Programme

19.1 The Committee notes its work programme.

20. Date of Next Meeting

20.1 The next meeting of the Committee will take place on 25 November 2022 at 10.30am.

The meeting ended at 12.15 pm

Chairman