

Fire & Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee

9 March 2023 – 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 Evans, Cllr Milne and Cllr Patel

Apologies were received from Cllr Pendleton

Also in attendance: Cllr Crow, Sabrina Cohen-Hatton (Chief Fire Officer) and Peter Rickard (Assistant Chief Fire Officer)

29. Declarations of Interest

29.1 No declarations were made.

30. Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee

30.1 Resolved – that the Committee agrees the minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2022 and that they be signed by the Chairman.

31. Responses to Recommendations

31.1 Resolved – that the Committee notes the responses to recommendations made at its 25 November 2022 meeting.

32. Fire and Rescue Service Strategic Performance Report Quarter 3

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

32.2 Summary of responses to members' questions and comments: -

- Turnout times are measured when the station receives the call and appliances leave the station (GPS technology can be used to check when a vehicle has left a station)
- Since publication of the report, there has been one late RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations) report
- Near misses are included in RIDDOR reports
- Fire safety inspections have been carried out by a reduced number of inspectors against a background of legislation changes following the Grenfell incident. Given the number of inspections where fire safety arrangements were found to be unsatisfactory falling against the national average, a review is being undertaken of the Risk Based Inspection Programme as well as an internal audit of the process. As a result, the measure is expected to be reported as amber in the next quarter

- The Risk Based Inspection Programme is being reviewed and updated. As part of this the Service will review the Other Building Fires, national definition of risk work
- The Service also carries out around 1,400 low risk inspections each year
- The figures in core Measure 14 requires clarification – **Action:** Chief Fire Officer to clarify
- False alarms are identified from fire crew reports and challenging callouts that seem suspicious – the Community Risk Management Plan commits the service to penalise companies whose premises have false alarms
- The target for the number of false alarms is likely to reduce next year
- The service has decided to phase in the new call challenge and non-attendance policy to ensure undue risk does not arise
- It was felt that the wording of Core Measure 17 was unclear - **Action:** Chief Fire Officer to clarify
- Core Measure 17 was red because sometimes the control centre has difficulty in identifying the location of the incident from the information given by the caller e.g. it can be hard to get an exact location for a road traffic accident in a rural location causing a delay in the fire station being alerted
- It was suggested that a core measure be introduced for alerts that miss the target or analysis provide for outlier responses - **Action:** Chief Fire Officer to consider
- The Service sometimes uses wholetime fire fighters if there are insufficient retained fire fighters to maximise the number of appliances available at a station
- A sustainable solution was sought to address the shortage of retained firefighters. It was noted that this matter is on the Committee’s work programme

32.3 Resolved – that the Committee requests: -

- i. Information to be provided on retained firefighters as part of the fire service member session in February 2024

33. End of December 2022 (Quarter 3) Quarterly Performance and Resources Report

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

33.2 Summary of responses to members’ questions and comments: -

- The backdated fire service pay increase will have to be funded through the Council’s budget, possibly from the contingency, and may have an impact on delivery of the Community Risk Management Programme

33.3 Resolved – that the Committee: -

- i. Asks to be provided with an explanation of how key performance indicators are reviewed and dealt with, particularly when a particular matter is an indicator is an outlier

34. Diversity in Recruitment

- 34.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer (copy appended to the signed minutes).
- 34.2 Summary of responses to members' questions and comments: -
 - The Committee would like to see data on the retention of staff from diverse groups – **Action:** Chief Fire Officer to include this information in the update to the Committee on the progress against the Community Risk Management Plan
 - The Committee would like to see appropriate material on inclusivity produced by the Service – **Action:** Chief Fire Officer to share appropriate material with the Committee
 - Whilst the Service captured ethnicity information of those that applied for jobs, that information was not tracked through the recruitment process at present for those that were shortlisted, employed and retained
 - There is a stereotypical view of firefighters which focuses solely on physical attributes, whereas a range of skills is required by the service
 - There is no national target for recruitment of a diverse workforce
 - The Service has targeted a range of groups in Crawley in recruitment drives and aims to recruit the best possible workforce
 - Community events such as 'Have a go' days have a big impact on promoting the Service and encouraging recruitment – **Action:** Chief Fire Officer to let the Committee know if any more 'Have a go' days are planned
 - The Service was working on menopause awareness – a successful workshop had taken place and the next two would now be extended. A policy to help women going through the menopause was also being developed
 - A national College for Fire was planned – details were awaited from the Home Office
- 34.3 Resolved – that the Committee notes the progress on the work to date and agrees the future areas of focus will be the Community Risk Management Plan.

35. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

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

36. Work Programme

- 36.1 The Committee considered its work programme (copy appended to the signed minutes) and requested: -

- i. A visit to the Joint Fire Control Centre to be arranged
- ii. An update on diversity in recruitment to be provided as part of the Statement of Assurance
- iii. A possible information session on new key performance indicators before consideration at a committee meeting to be arranged

37. Date of Next Meeting

37.1 The next meeting of the Committee will take place on 12 June 2023 at 10.30am.

The meeting ended at 12.27 pm

Chairman