

Fire & Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee

12 June 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 Pendleton, Cllr Bence, Cllr Chowdhury and Cllr Duncton

Absent: Cllr Joy and Cllr Patel

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

1. Election of Chairman

- 1.1 Cllr Boram was proposed as Chairman by Cllr Duncton and seconded by Cllr Chowdhury. There were no other nominations.
- 1.2 Resolved – that Cllr Boram is elected Chairman of the Committee for the year.

2. Election of Vice Chairman

- 2.1 Cllr Pendleton was proposed as Vice Chairman by Cllr Boram and seconded by Cllr Bence. There were no other nominations.
- 2.2 Resolved – that Cllr Pendleton is elected Vice Chairman of the Committee for the year.

3. Declarations of Interest

- 3.1 No declarations were made.

4. Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee

- 4.1 Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2023 are approved as a correct record and are signed by the Chairman.

5. Responses to Recommendations

- 5.1 Resolved – that the Committee notes the responses to recommendations.

6. Fire and Rescue Service Strategic Performance Report Quarter 4

- 6.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer (copy appended to the signed minutes).
- 6.2 Summary of responses to Members' questions and comments: -

- The hotel fire in Midhurst is classified as a primary fire, not a dwelling fire and is reported separately to the Home Office – the cause of the fire is not yet known but is not thought to be deliberate or suspicious
- The Service is achieving 2.9 audits per 100 premises which is higher than the national average and performing well compared to its neighbours. It also carries out other checks that are not included in these figures and prioritises quality over quantity and is confident that the target is correct
- It is unrealistic that all fire safety inspections could be satisfactory and in fact unsatisfactory inspections show that the Service is targeting premises where it can be most effective to make vulnerable people and premises safer
- The Service has circulated a guidance report for refurbished buildings to district and borough council housing departments concerning fire safety which was well received
- The Service uses a risk-based inspection programme following national guidance - feedback from inspected businesses is taken on board
- The Service has 35,000 buildings on its risk-based inspection database which are sampled for audits and will respond to referrals for inspections - businesses usually cooperate with inspections
- If significant fire safety defects are identified in premises, enforcement powers can be used – low level/low risk defects receive advice but are not monitored
- Where people work from home, this is still classed as a domestic environment
- All but one of 715 customers assessed as having a high level of fire risk were contacted within 7 days and offered a visit – the other person was contacted after eight days and the visit has now been completed
- Reasons for the target for the time between the Joint Fire Control Room receiving an emergency call and a fire station being alerted (CM17) not being met include a high turnover of staff (19 out of 50 are currently in development) and the time taken to get information from callers who initially contact other emergency services and the call has to be transferred to fire
- Average mobilisation times are not shown (these can be very quick) neither are the types of incidents
- An action plan is in place to recruit and retain more control centre staff, this work also includes a cultural element, but some staff may be drawn to similar jobs in London Fire Brigade, other blue light services or other roles within West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service
- The Service could use a GPS system to locate calls, but this would take too long so other ways are used such as What 3 Words
- All control centre staff, regardless of where they live, are skilled at locating incidents
- There has been a 6% increase in the availability of retained staff
- The Committee congratulated the Service on its protection work

6.3 Resolved – that the CM17 measure will be reviewed and the new position reported to the next meeting of the Committee at which stage the Committee will decide if it wishes to consider it further

7. End of March 2023 (Quarter 4) Quarterly Performance and Resources Report

- 7.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer (copy appended to the signed minutes).
- 7.2 Summary of responses to Members' questions and comments: -
- The staff vacancies underspend is part of the overall budget
 - The pay award will be part of next year's budget
 - Human Resources risk is looked at for the Council as a whole by the Performance & Finance Scrutiny Committee
- 7.3 Resolved – that Committee notes the report.

8. West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service Annual Statement of Assurance 2022-23

- 8.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer (copy appended to the signed minutes).
- 8.2 Summary of responses to Members' questions and comments: -
- The National Fire Chiefs' Council has introduced six new Fire Standards that apply to all fire services – the West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service has aligned its core measures with these standards that will also be used as criteria for the independent inspection
- 8.3 Resolved – that the Committee: -
- i. Endorses the draft Statement of Assurance and congratulates the Cabinet Member and Chief Fire Officer on the excellent work of the previous year
 - ii. Wishes to see which key performance indicators are measured nationally at the next meeting as part of the Performance and Assurance Framework

9. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

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

10. Work Programme

- 10.1 Resolved – that the Committee notes its draft work programme.

11. Date of Next Meeting

- 11.1 The next meeting of the Committee will take place on 14 September 2023 at 2.15pm.

The meeting ended at 12.24 pm

Chairman