

## **Fire & Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee**

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

Present: Cllr Waight (Chairman)

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

Apologies were received from Cllr Pendleton

Also in attendance: Cllr Crow

### **27. Declarations of Interest**

27.1 Cllr Smytherman declared a personal interest as working with the Home Office on the changes to the regulations for the Fire Service Order 2005 on behalf of leasehold flat owners.

### **28. Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee**

28.1 Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2021 are approved as a correct record and are signed by the Chairman.

### **29. Fire and Rescue Service Strategic Performance Report Quarter 3 2020/21**

29.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer (copy appended to the signed minutes). A summary of responses to committee members' questions and comments is below: -

- Two rural fatalities highlighted the importance of smoke detectors which will be the focus of a publicity campaign over Easter
- Stations in the general area of an incident would be pre-alerted until the exact location was known to give a prompt response
- A station by station review will show where local recruitment is needed by summer
- The ongoing County Crewing pilot scheme may help retained appliance availability
- It is standard practice to move appliances around the county according to risk to ensure the best fire cover is available

29.2 The Chairman proposed the following recommendations which were seconded by Cllr Smytherman and agreed by the Committee: -

Resolved – That the Committee: -

- i. Supports the formation of a panel which reviews fire deaths in order to improve prevention of injury or death from fire incidents
- ii. Supports further work to refine data collection in an improved performance of 999 call answering but notes

- significant performance improvements since the last quarter
- iii. Supports the investigation of incidents where the mobilisation standard was not achieved
  - iv. Notes the improvement in Fire Station alert times but notes that more work is required including a pre-alert system
  - v. Notes the incremental improvements in second appliance attendance time to critical fires and critical special Service first attendance appliance attendance and supports a station by station review process to drive further improvement
  - vi. Supports post lockdown initiatives to improve adequate retained crewing on front line fire appliances
  - vii. Congratulates the service on the 100 percent safeguarding referral achievement
  - viii. Congratulates the fire service on the critical fires first appliance attendance exceeding the target for the fourth consecutive quarter

### **30. Priority Programme Update**

30.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer (copy appended to the signed minutes). A summary of responses to committee members' questions and comments is below: -

- The 100 staff spoken to about promoting the right values and culture were in a variety of roles within the service – although 29% did not find discussions meaningful, this was lower than before. More work would be done on the process to improve the 29% rate
- Surveys had been carried out during the pandemic to assess staff wellbeing with changes being made where necessary
- The Service reviewed Corporate Risk 60 and requested it remained on the risk register until the next inspection
- The Service is currently developing the next risk profile for the next IRMP which would later be shared with the Cabinet Member

30.2 The Chairman proposed the following recommendations which were seconded by Cllr Smytherman and agreed by the Committee: -

Resolved – That the Committee: -

- i. Notes the progress regarding protecting the public through fire regulation
- ii. Notes progress in the People Action Plan and the closure of the Independent Advisory Panel
- iii. Notes of performances improve whilst taking on additional duties during the covid pandemic

### **31. Report of the Task and Finish Group - Joint Fire Control Centre**

31.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chairman of the Task and Finish Group (copy appended to the signed minutes). A

summary of responses to committee members' questions and comments is below: -

- New working methods meant fewer staff were needed than before and discussions were happening with Surrey Fire & Rescue Service over required staffing levels when East Sussex Fire Authority calls were also handled by the control centre
- The service was monitoring progress of the Emergency Services Network whilst continuing to use an upgraded version of the Airwave communication system
- The centre has a 'buddy' centre on Merseyside which also uses Airwave (a 'buddy' system is standard and effective) and is sufficiently informed to pass relevant information onto the Surrey centre
- 999 calls were queued when there were multiple calls per incident

31.2 The Chairman proposed that the recommendations of the Task & Finish Group be agreed by the Committee. This was seconded by Cllr Barnard. Cllr M Jones abstained from the vote.

31.3 Resolved – That the Committee agrees the Task & Finish Group's recommendations.

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

32.1 The Committee considered the COVID Inspection Letter from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (copy appended to the signed minutes) and learned that the service didn't review how it defined premises as high risk during the pandemic as it considered that existing risk ratings remained appropriate.

32.2 The Chairman proposed the following recommendation which was seconded by the Vice Chairman and agreed by the Committee - the Committee congratulates all those in the Fire Service who took on additional roles to assist the community during the pandemic whilst maintaining its statutory functions.

### **33. Work Programme Planning and Possible Items for Future Scrutiny**

33.1 The Committee considered its work programme (copy appended to the signed minutes) and agreed to look at the proposed transfer of the Fire & Rescue Service to the Police & Crime Commissioner when appropriate.

33.2 Resolved – that the Committee notes its work programme.

### **34. Date of Next Meeting**

34.1 The next meeting of the Committee will take place on 18 June 2021.

The meeting ended at 12.13 pm

Chairman