

Fire & Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee

23 November 2021 – At a meeting of the Fire & Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee held at 10.30 am at County Hall, Chichester, PO19 1RQ and via Microsoft Teams.

Present: Cllr Boram (Chairman)

Cllr Pendleton, Cllr Charles, Cllr Milne, Cllr Richardson, Cllr Turley and Cllr Albury

Apologies were received from Cllr Dunn

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

18. Declarations of Interest

18.1 There were no declarations.

19. Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee

19.1 Resolved – that the Committee agrees the minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2021.

20. Responses to Recommendations

20.1 Resolved – that the Committee notes the responses to the recommendations.

21. West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service Statement of Assurance

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

21.2 Summary of responses to members questions and comments: -

- Although sophisticated evaluation work took place, it was difficult to establish a correlation between prevention work and the number of fires
- The Service received information from partners, including the NHS, to identify homes most likely to be at risk from fire and carried out Safe and Well visits to them advising on safety measures
- The Service had worked with some parishes where there had been fires in thatched properties
- Fatal fire reviews took place to identify areas of learning
- More details of proposals in the Community Risk Management Plan would be discussed at the Member session on 8 December and by the Committee at its 13 January meeting
- Seven 12-ton appliances were purchased and deployed around the county where they would be of most use

- Not all fire fighters had taken the fitness test as some were on light duties and covid restrictions had limited the number of tests possible
- The following suggestions were made for changes to the Statement of Assurance: -
 - Comparative data in the financial section
 - Commentary with the reporting statistics
 - Explanation of numbers on the Risk Ratings map
 - More narrative around recovery from major incidents such as the pandemic

21.3 Resolved – that the Committee requests: -

- i. That future reporting ensures that the equalities and diversity section on cover reports is more detailed.
- ii. That the Fire & Rescue Service provides further explanation on figures in the Statement of Assurance where possible, and provides comparative details on finance where available
- iii. The Service extends information on thatched properties more widely in areas that may benefit from this

22. End of September 2021 (Quarter 2) Quarterly Performance and Resources Report

22.1 The Committee scrutinised the end of September 2021 (Quarter 2) Quarterly Performance and Resources Report (copy appended to the signed minutes).

22.2 Summary of responses to members questions and comments: -

- Retained fire fighter staffing levels had improved thanks to crew optimisation and county crewing, but more needed to be done, hence this was a priority for the next four years
- Changes to technology and team structures when moving to the Joint Fire Control Centre had taken longer than anticipated leading to increased costs/overspend
- Response times by retained fire crews improved during the pandemic – to keep improving, it was proposed to use some whole-time fire crews in areas covered by retained crews in line with risk need and budget

22.3 Resolved – that the Committee asks Democratic Services to work with the Service on the terms of reference for task and finish group on retained firefighters to include potential staffing issues.

23. Work Programme Planning and Possible Items for Future Scrutiny

23.1 The Committee considered its work programme and made the following changes: -

- Corporate Risk Register/Operational Risks to come off the work programme as a separate item as it was covered by the Fire and Rescue Service Strategic Performance Report

- Democratic Services and the Fire & Rescue Service to liaise to find a date for the Retained Fire Fighters Task & Finish Group to take place
- To include updates on Horsham Fire and Training Centre on future Priority Programmes reports

24. Date of Next Meeting

24.1 The next meeting of the Committee will take place on 13 January 2022.

The meeting ended at 12.46 pm

Chairman