

Fire & Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee

7 July 2022 – At a meeting of the Fire & Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee held at 2.15 pm at County Hall, Chichester, PO19 1RQ.

Present: Cllr Boram (Chairman), Cllr Pendleton (until 4.15pm), Cllr Bence, Cllr Chowdhury (until 3.30pm), Cllr Evans, Cllr Milne, 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 Pendleton and seconded by Cllr Bence. 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 as 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 Committee agrees the minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2022.

5. Responses to recommendations

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

6. Fire and Rescue Service Strategic Performance Report Quarter 4 2021/22

- 6.1 The Committee scrutinised a report by the Chief Fire Officer (copy appended to the signed minutes).
- 6.2 Summary of responses to committee members' comments and questions:
 - At the end of Quarter 4 2021-22, 19 of the 30 measures had a GREEN status, 5 were AMBER and 6 were RED. The Committee welcomed areas of significant improvement and success. Quarter 4 saw an overall improvement in performance, with the

following emergency response measures showing particular success:

- Critical Fires -1st Appliance Attendance
 - Critical Fires -2nd Appliance Attendance
 - Critical Special Services -1st Appliance Attendance
- Annual figures for all instances of fires and fire casualties remained low. Accidental Dwelling Fires formed a key focus of the Service's prevention activity and the continued low numbers reflected the sustained work of teams to ensure that the most vulnerable people are kept safe from fire.
 - Sustained improvement and investment in technology had assisted the Service to achieve success in appliance attendance at critical fires.
 - Prevention work was noted as central to the Service's performance with the overall incidence of fires being reduced over the year.
 - The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the service worked closely with Adult Services as well as in collaboration with partners to identify vulnerable people (including those with dementia) and ensure fire prevention work is targeted.
 - It was asked if targets should be revised upwards to strengthen the Service position. It was noted there would be a review of standards at the appropriate time with consideration given to the balance between available resources and performance aims.
 - It was noted that the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) which identifies and assesses all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect the community also looks at the resources in place and the activity needed to be undertaken to meet these risks and develop plans to improve safety. The CRMP addressed unwanted Fire Alarm Calls with the aim of reducing wasted fire service activity.
 - Committee members were reassured that every incident that the Service attends is subject to an operational review to determine whether a fire could have been prevented. Fires that cause injury are investigated by the Borough Commander and fatalities are reviewed forensically by the Chief Fire Officer/Deputy Fire Officer. The service analyses data/trends and uses this information in fire prevention work.
 - Safe and Well visits were discussed as areas for improvement as the target had not been achieved. The Service was determined that improvements would be made by exploring different ways of working, e.g. training fire fighters to spot potential fire risks in commercial property and offering support to district and borough councils to screen for potential fire safety risks. It was noted that the Grenfell Fire incident had produced learning and these safety messages would be promoted to Members.
 - Retained Fire Fighter availability was discussed as an area requiring improvement. It was noted that this was a national issue. The Chairman pointed out that a successful Task and Finish Group had been held, focusing on this issue and providing recommendations on future retention and recruitment. The Committee was confident that this performance would be improved upon.

- Comment was made that the Fire and Rescue website needed accessibility improvements. The Chief Fire Officer was asked to review the website.

6.3 Resolved – that

- i. The Committee supports the fire safety audit tool template for West Sussex County Council;
- ii. The Service continues to remind members of all councils of the resources available for supporting vulnerable people in the community;
- iii. The Service to assess the West Sussex County Council website for how easy fire safety information is able to be accessed by the public;
- iv. The Service to update the Committee on outcomes following the Performance Improvement Plan at an appropriate time; and
- v. To add “Ensuring outcomes are delivered” to Section 1.4 of the Performance and Assurance Framework cover report.

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

7.1 The Committee scrutinised this Quarterly Performance and Resources Report for Quarter 4 2021/22 (copy appended to the signed minutes) which is designed to provide assurance concerning the delivery of the statutory functions of the Fire Authority.

7.2 Summary of responses to committee members’ comments and questions:

- The financial overspend had been largely covered by staffing vacancies in the Communities Directorate.
- Progress was noted as good on the Horsham Fire Training Centre and Fire Station.
- Delays on the purchase of Fleet/Fire Equipment due to internal resourcing issues was noted. Funding had been reprofiled into the 2022/23 financial year.
- Corporate Risk 60, failing to deliver on the, ‘Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)’ improvement plan, was referenced by the Chairman. The Chief Fire Officer responded that an update would be given to the committee upon publication of the inspectorate’s report.

7.3 Resolved – that the Committee notes the report.

8. Priority Programme Update

8.1 The Committee scrutinised the Priority Programme update (copy appended to the signed minutes).

8.2 Summary of responses to committee members’ comments and questions:

- The IRMP (Integrated Risk Management Plan) had transitioned to the CRMP (Community Risk Management Plan);
- Challenges around the people plan and cultural change would take time as would challenges around working directives given the complex nature of the Service's shift systems - new computer software would help achieve compliance.

8.3 Resolved - that the Committee notes the progress reported in relation to the priority programmes.

9. West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service Annual Statement of Assurance

9.1 The Committee scrutinised the West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service Annual Statement of Assurance 2021/22 (copy appended to the signed minutes).

9.2 Summary of responses to committee members' comments and questions:

- The Chief Fire Officer offered to include data on wholetime fire fighters being relied upon for retained support under a dual contract system in future Statements of Assurance in order to show trends
- The Dynamic Cover Tool (DCT) maps areas of fire risk based on demographics, such as age and areas of deprivation
- The service focusses on the availability of retained fire fighters, considering this in conjunction with the good performance that had been achieved on arriving quickly at incidents.
- The Committee congratulated the Service on its achievements on developing the Horsham Training Centre and Fire Station, development of the CRMP and managing the HMICFRS inspectorate visit in November, during a difficult operational period and busy year.

9.3 Resolved – that: -

- i. Trend analysis be included in the next Statement of Assurance report on the level of whole time firefighters who are taking on a dual contract as retained firefighters; and
- ii. Any future visit to the Joint Fire Control Centre to cover risk mapping.

10. Retained Duty System Task and Finish Group Report

10.1 The Committee considered the Retained Duty System Task and Finish Group Report (copy appended to the signed minutes).

10.2 Resolved - that the Committee supports the Task and Finish Group's observations and recommendations.

11. Work Programme Planning and Possible Items for Future Scrutiny

11.1 The Committee considered its work programme and the Forward Plan of Key Decisions.

11.2 It was noted that the West Sussex Statement of Assurance 2021/22, as listed in the Forward Plan and as discussed at this meeting, would be considered at the Cabinet meeting on 20 July 2022.

11.3 Resolved that: –

- i. The item on Covid-19 be removed; and
- ii. The Inspection Report be added to the Work Programme (timing to be confirmed).

12. Date of Next Meeting

12.1 The next meeting of the Committee will take place on 30 September 2022.

The meeting ended at 4.29pm.

Chairman