

Fire & Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee

25 November 2022 – 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, Cllr Evans, Cllr Milne and Cllr Patel

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

21. Declarations of Interest

21.1 No declarations were made.

22. Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee

22.1 Resolved – that the Committee agrees the minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2022.

23. Fire and Rescue Service Strategic Performance Report Quarter 2

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

23.2 Summary of responses to Members' questions and comments: -

- Accidental dwelling fire casualties are mainly minor, such as smoke inhalation
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) numbers are very low, on average 10 per year
- Near misses are included in service measures and helps the Fire & Rescue Service (FRS) know what prevention activity to undertake to reduce RIDDORS
- Prosecutions are a last resort and are mainly fire safety prosecutions
- The coroner decides whether or not a death is attributed to fire - all such deaths are recorded in and reported to the Committee
- The trend of less accidental dwelling fires is down to a range of factors including education, better building regulations, furniture safety and smoke detectors
- However, this trend highlights the need for a fire training facility as hands on experience could diminish
- The FRS is consulted on water and vehicle access during the planning stage of developments and can carry out fire risk assessments after a building is complete
- Site specific risk information is about commercial/industrial buildings and is available to dispatchers
- The strain on the ambulance service has no significant impact on the FRS's attendance at incidents

- Fire fighters have some first aid training and can treat people on scene till ambulances arrive
- 999 calls had been unusually high at times due to wildfires and flooding with multiple calls to the same incidents which can affect response times
- At all times, resources are maximised with daily analysis of the impact of high call volume
- The Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) assesses risk to make sure the FRS has the right resilience and resources to respond adequately to wildfires or flooding
- The FRS has a high-volume pump to deal with flooding and works with the Environment Agency on both wildfires and flooding and looks at trend information for flooding events **Action:** Deputy Chief Fire Officer to speak to Highways about sharing information to better target places subject to repeat flooding
- Unwanted fire signals are caused by users and old systems - repeat offenders are referred to protection specialists who will advise users on ways to avoid these
- There is no evidence that non-attendance to unwanted fire signals in other areas have had negative outcomes - the FRS will always attend if a fire is notified by another method i.e. a 999 call
- The non-attendance policy was delayed so that the FRS could speak to more premises about it
- In Surrey the policy has led to a fall in call responses from around 20 a week to 1.5 a week
- The target for first appliance attendance at critical fires has been met in recent years and with increased fire cover helped by additional investment, the FRS is confident this will continue
- The CRMP refers to climate change and focuses resources on rural areas for wildfires - the FRS will always be resourced based on risk
- Operation Willow Beck spreads calls to a wider number of control rooms during times of extreme demand and is instigated by the Joint Fire Control Centre (JFCC) when necessary – the FRS is confident that the JFCC is sufficiently resourced and since September calls levels have been back to normal
- When the JFCC receives multiple calls to same incident they are stacked and answered as soon as possible with more staff allocated to help
- Although the core measure concerning safeguarding was red, this related to just one report not submitted on time
- A range of factors such as the likelihood of fires occurring, protection activity and enforcement activity are assessed to determine the fire risk of an area
- To meet the challenge of recruiting more retained duty staff the FRS is looking at offering more flexible contracts so that it has the level of staff required for the hours available allowing it to be more effective and efficient
- CRMP work is helping target resources more efficiently with day crew cover and the Crewing Optimisation Group. Non-retained staff are able to become retained fire fighters in addition to their other roles
- An alternative duty system could be explored, but would be more expensive at a time when resources are stretched

- Questions were asked about retained firefighters querying the effectiveness of the recent measures reviewed by the TFG

23.3 Resolved – that: -

- i. There is continued liaison with Highways colleagues to identify areas of repeat flooding incidents
- ii. An item relating to recruitment and retention of retained firefighters be added to the Committee’s work programme for November 2023 to include a review of the effectiveness of measures affecting retained firefighters, specifically relating to the recommendations made by the Retained Duty System Task & Finish Group

24. End of September 2022 (Quarter 2) Quarterly Performance and Resources Report

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

24.2 Resolved – that the Committee: -

- i. Supports the change in the key performance indicator relating to “fire safety order regulated buildings”
- ii. Asks to visit the new Horsham fire station and training facility when appropriate

25. Community Risk Management Plan Programme Update

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

25.2 Summary of responses to Members’ questions and comments: -

- The FRS finds it easy to recruit volunteers, especially for safe and well visits
- Guidelines set out what stations should do to increase staff dignity and reduce the risk from contaminants
- The FRS has money from the Council to upgrade stations, but this will take time
- The FRS has specialist trainers for the Horsham training centre who might possibly train fire fighters from other fire services
- The FRS has a contingency plan in place in case of industrial action - finding any extra money if there is an increased pay offer will be challenging
- The FRS is confident real fires will be identified under the new policy of not automatically attending unwanted fire signals

25.3 Resolved – that the Committee monitors the key performance indicator relating to “Automatic Fire Alarms Reduction” to ensure the new policy is successful.

26. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

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

27. Work Programme

27.1 The Committee considered its draft work programme.

27.2 Resolved – that the Committee agrees that: -

- i. The item on recruitment diversity to come to the 3 March 2023 meeting
- ii. The update on the change in culture within the Fire & Rescue Service and the Service's Covid recovery is taken off the work programme
- iii. The items on the Leadership & Cultural Change Programme and the Fire Safety Bill will become part of the six-monthly Community Risk Management Plan update

28. Date of Next Meeting

28.1 The next meeting of the Committee will take place on 3 March 2023 at 10.30am.

The meeting ended at 12.43 pm

Chairman