

Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee

17 July 2023

Conducted as a public meeting at Headquarters and digitally via Microsoft Teams

Present: Councillor Lloyd (Chair), Councillor Atwal, and Councillor Miks

Virtual: Councillor Dehar and Councillor Waters.

Officers: Richard Stanton, Sam Burton, Tom Embury, Kirsty Tuffin, Kelly Whitmore, Kelly Harding and Kamla Devi-Ahir

01/23 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor Barrie.

02/23 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

03/23 **Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 24 April 2023**

Resolved:

1. That the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 24 April 2023 were approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

04/23 **Matters Arising**

There were no matters raised.

05/23 **Scrutiny Review of Training and Development Progress Report**

Sam Burton, Head of Development and Inclusion, presented the Scrutiny Review of Training and Development Progress Report that outlined progress made on the Scrutiny Review of Training Development commissioned in April 2023.

The Committee were advised that In January 2023, Scrutiny Committee chose Training and Development as the topic for their next formal review. Following this decision, officers developed the terms of reference and methodology for the review in line with the agreed areas of focus approved by the

Committee at their last meeting. It was planned that a report would be brought to the Committee in September 2023, with a further update report, one-year on in 2024.

The Committee were also advised that following the recent publication of the HMICFRS spotlight report on culture and values in the service, the review had been adapted to reflect this. The review would also reflect the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Leadership Behavioural Framework.

The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Leadership Behavioural Framework had also helped shape a pilot for talent pool approach to recruitment and selection processes. The first pilot had begun in March 2023, for group managers and feedback would help shape further development. A further pilot in September would be conducted with Station Commanders. A programme would be developed to prepare individuals for the talent pool process.

The Committee were advised that the Competency Risk Assessment Committee were reviewing the content of e-learning materials available to staff. The trainee firefighter development programme that provided new starters with skills and knowledge to develop into confident firefighters, had been extended from 8 weeks to 12 weeks, following feedback/review conducted by Real World HR.

Following queries, it was agreed that a breakdown of talent pool characteristics (BAME, Gender etc.) be provided to members. Richard Stanton advised members that these figures were being looked into to assess where barriers could be. The use of social media and social events in the community was emphasised.

It was emphasised that this would need to be scrutiny member-led and evidence based with members to lead on face-to-face focus groups with stakeholders throughout August and September. Dates would be confirmed with Members in due course. The Chair of the Committee praised the planned review and confirmed involvement in the focus groups.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the progress in relation to the Scrutiny Review of Training and Development be noted.
2. That it be it was agreed that a breakdown of talent pool characteristics (BAME, Gender etc.) be provided to members.

06/23

Fire Control Performance Report Update – Quarter 1 2023-24

Kelly Whitmore, Group Commander – Fire Control, presented the Fire Control Performance Report – Quarter 1 2023-24, that outlined the operational performance of Fire Control over a three-month period.

The Committee were advised that as per the report, during Qtr. 1 the median call handling time by Fire Control had been 96 seconds. The increase in time handling had been a result of the number of different factors including: the introduction of Risk Based Crewing (increased times by 7 seconds) and the introduction of Vision 4 (increase times by 14 seconds). Work was underway with Fire Control System Management, Digital and Data and SSS to review ways to improve the efficiency of the system.

The Committee were advised that the use of dynamic mobilising had reduced the number of resources/ attendances 275 during the reporting period. No requests were made for additional resources so this showed the decision-making process had been effective and resulted in at least 275 resources remaining available for category 1 incidents. During the reporting period, 180 resources had been stood down and Fire Control would be looking into the data to get a better understanding. A dynamic mobilising case study during the PRIDE parade, as outlined therein the report, was highlighted to the Committee.

999 eye that assisted Fire Control with intelligence led mobilisation and resource management, had increased to an all-time high of 67.2% for responses to requests. Over 4,100 calls relating to automated fire alarm calls had been recovered, which equated to over 20% of all emergency calls received during the reporting period, which had a significant

impact. Following concerns raised, Richard Stanton, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, reassured Members that teams worked hard to work with businesses and did monitor repeat offenders to provide assistance and further means where necessary. Members were also re-assured that unless a trained member of staff advises a call had been a false alarm, the service would always respond to hospital alarms to provide assistance.

Following queries around resources, Kelly Whitmore advised the Committee that plans had been in place to increase capacity of fire control during busy period. Initiatives used in previous years was highlighted.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Fire Control performance update for Quarter 1 2023-24, be noted.

07/23

Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion Equality (DICE) Update

Sam Burton, Head of Development and Inclusion, presented the Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion Equality (DICE) Update report that outlined the progress made by the service in advancing DICE.

The Committee were advised that the service had achieved the top position of most Inclusive Employer for 2022. This was following achieving a top ten position for several years previously. Work had already been underway to gather evidence for the 2023 submission. An Inclusion Steering Group had been established in April 2023 to develop an action plan for the wider service. The action plan would be formed from evidence, data and feedback from across the service. The membership of the steering group included stakeholders from all parts of the service. As outlined therein the report, an update on the ongoing work conducted by the following stakeholder groups was provided to members:

1. Affinity
2. Inspire
3. ASFA
4. Fire Out
5. Neurodiversity

One of the key events held by FireOut, included the first Tri-Service Pride Breakfast. The event included representation from the West Midlands Police and West Midlands Ambulance Service. The overall attendance had been 250 individuals, which made it the largest Pride Breakfast outside of London. It had been anticipated that West Midlands Police and West Midlands Ambulance Service would take the lead in running the tri service Pride breakfasts for the next two years with the potential to continue to hold it at headquarters. A debrief was planned to capture the learning from the event.

The Committee were advised that as part of the services commitment to support serving personnel /veterans, stations flew the 'Armed Services Show Your Support' flag to celebrate the Armed Forces Day. It was also highlighted that the service had obtained a gold award for their support to the armed forces.

The Vanguard Project pilot had now been launched to help reestablish community engagement that got lost during the covid pandemic. The pilot involved the following stations:

- Wolverhampton
- Ladywood
- Ward end
- Highgate
- Foleshill

It was agreed that an update on the Vanguard Project be provided in the next report.

Brave Space Talks had been established for any member of staff to attend and covered off challenging topics such as women's experiences in the service, alcohol and drugs. Talks were underway with the groups to establish the next set of topics that would be covered. An update would be provided in the next report.

Following queries around dyslexia, different languages and application forms, Sam Burton reassured members that there had been an online assessment process in place and if advised, support would be given to these individuals. All

outgoing correspondence was available in different languages.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the ongoing progress made by the service in relation to DICE be noted.
2. That it be agreed that an update on the Vanguard Project be provided in the next report.

08/23

Dispute Resolution Report

Kamla Devi-Ahir, xxx, presented the Dispute Resolution Report that outlined the number, type and outcomes of discipline and grievance hearings and other dispute resolution including Employment Tribunal activity that have occurred during the period 01 January 2023 to 30 June 2023.

The Committee were advised that during the period, 14 grievances had been received, 2 of which were collective grievances. Following analysis of the equality data, no impact had been made upon a specific group. 21 disciplinary cases were received during the same reporting period, 16 of which were gross-misconduct, 5 misconduct. Following analysis of the equality data, no impact had been made upon a specific group.

During the same reporting period, 5 new employment tribunals had been received, with 5 previous tribunals continuing into the above period. It was emphasised that 3 cases had been submitted from one individual.

The Committee were advised that debriefs were held following all grievance cases including both paper feedback and face-to-face. The service had successfully employed a new Business Partner for Policy and Engagement who would be starting in July 2023. An anonymous hotline had gone live for any complaints with 36 received since its go live date. The service would be changing providers for the service so employees would be made aware via posters and other means to ensure they are aware.

Following concerns around the number of disciplines and their time frames received, members were re-assured that the anonymous reporting line had added to the number of cases and the focus upon the HMICFRS Spotlight report. Police involvement was also highlighted as one of the key reasons for a longer process. The need to reduce the number of cases but not prevent report was acknowledged. 3-day training around culture/behaviours would also be provided to new recruitments.

Following queries,

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the contents of the Dispute Resolution Report for 01 January 2023 to 30 June 2023 be noted.

09/23

Draft Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2023-2024

Tom Embury, Deputy Clerk to the Authority, presented the Draft Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2023-2024.

The Committee were advised that following approval at the Fire Authority Annual General Meeting on 26 June 2023, all dates had been confirmed for the municipal year, as per the work programme. Regular reports such as the DICE and Dispute Resolution had been included alongside other reports deemed relevant for the Committee such as the HMICFRS Spotlight report. Members were reassured that any additional items they wished to add would be incorporated into the programme as the year progresses.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Draft Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2023-2024, be approved.

10/23

Any other business

There was no other business discussed.

The meeting finished at 11:47 hours.

Kirsty Tuffin

Portfolio

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