

Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee

15th December, 2014 at 12.30 pm
at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham

Present: Councillor Tranter (Chair);
Councillor Spence (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Collingswood, Hogarth, Phillips JP,
Skinner and Young.

Apology: Councillor Delaney.

28/14 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 13th October, 2014 be approved as a correct record.

29/14 **An Analysis of Progress of Corporate Performance against 'The Plan' – Quarter Two 2014/2015**

Further to Minute No. 21/14, the Committee received an analysis of performance against targets set out in 'The Plan' for the second quarter of 2014/15.

The second quarterly Corporate Performance Review meeting of 2014/2015 had taken place on 26th November 2014. This quarterly meeting, which was attended by the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, Principal Officers and Strategic Managers, provided a joined up method of managing performance and for providing assurance around the ongoing performance and delivery of priorities, strategic objectives and outcomes set out in The Plan. As agreed at the last meeting, Councillor Skinner had also attended and he reported that it had been very illuminating.

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The Service's Performance Indicator (PI) performance against its Prevention, Protection and Response level 2 action plans was provided using an info-graphic approach, which provided transparency and enabled performance to be clearly understood.

The info-graphic was accompanied by headline statements in support of the performance for each indicator. In order to provide a balanced organisational view of performance, the Service had in place other PIs, predominantly around Human Resources and Safety, Health and the Environment against which it was standard practice to monitor performance. All of this information provided members with an all-round organisational performance picture for quarter two of 2014/15. The rescheduling of Scrutiny meetings had allowed for very current information to be available for the Committee.

Members were informed that it had been noted that the numbers of female and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) firefighters had fallen as more had left the Service than had recently been recruited. It was also noted that the number of persons disclosing a disability had not increased despite staff numbers increasing. Work to try and address these issues, and recruitment and retention, was being undertaken by the Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality (DICE) Team. In response to the Chair it was reported that this information, relating to applicants of the new recruitment process, should be available in February 2015. The workforce profile seemed to indicate that there often seemed to be perceived barriers to promotion by women and BME employees. These misconceptions needed to be addressed, not only for new entrants but for existing employees too. Officers would focus on the information gathered from exit interviews to try and determine why staff were leaving the Service.

Members noted that many of the Human Resources Performance Indicators had deteriorated. This was partially due in some areas to small numbers of employees being involved which had an adverse effect on the ratio for these groups. Sickness figures had risen, but the Director Service Delivery reported they were still some of the lowest in the country.

With regard to the high figures reported in PI12 (number of false alarm calls due to fire alarm equipment in dwellings) it was suggested that, where applicable, tenancy agreements might be examined to try and reduce such calls.

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30/14 **Work Programme Selection**

Members received a short presentation on the work of the Scrutiny Committee which included its roles and the development of its work programme. It also indicated the considerations the Committee should give when deciding its work programme as:-

- Making an impact on services
- Address complex problems
- Promoting good practice
- Challenging underperformance
- A catalyst for change
- Dealing with partnership issues
- Being clear about intended outcomes
- Monitoring and following through

Good scrutiny topics were clearly defined; of interest to members of the Scrutiny Committee; a key issue of public interest or concern; likely to lead to improvements for local people and could help the Fire Service and/or its partners to achieve corporate or area priorities.

A work plan development flow chart was also circulated.

Members also received a briefing note which suggested that an area for timely scrutiny review might be partnership working with particular emphasis on data sharing protocols. This would help address findings from recent Serious Case Reviews and higher level investigations that data sharing remained a consistent blockage for effective partnership working and was often a contributory factor to poor service. It would also assist the Service in better achieving its Performance Indicators of targeting the most vulnerable to receive Home Safety Checks.

Members were supportive of the proposals and cited examples of cases in which better and earlier data sharing might have prevented fatalities.

Resolved that officers progress and scope the proposal for a scrutiny review of partnership working with particular emphasis on data sharing protocols.

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31/14 **Work Programme 2014/15**

The Committee noted its work programme for 2014/2015. The scoping and arrangements for the review proposed in Minute No. 30/14 above would be incorporated into the work programme.

32/14 **Season's Greetings**

The Chair wished all members and officers a very Merry Christmas.

(Meeting ended at 1.30 pm)

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