

Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee

22nd July, 2013, at 9.30 am
at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham

Present: Councillor Chambers (Chair);
Councillor Spence (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Eustace, Hogarth, Tranter and Wright.

Observer: Councillor Shackleton.

17/13 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 10th June, 2013, be confirmed as a correct record.

18/13 **An Analysis of Progress of Corporate Performance Against 'The Plan' – Quarter Four 2012/2013**

The Committee noted an analysis of organisational performance against 'The Plan' for the fourth quarter of 2012/2013. Targets were being met against a range of operational and performance indicators.

However, despite a 3% decrease compared to last year, performance had deteriorated and was below target on the number of accidental fires in non-domestic premises (PI 5). The fires had occurred in a wide variety of non-domestic premises, mostly shops and residential buildings (not dwellings). The Service planned to refocus the type of inspections on smaller premises and would look at areas of deprivation where there was a higher risk of a fire.

In relation to the number of Home Safety points achieved by the Brigade (PI 13), the Chair felt that the points system was not easy to follow. It was proposed to have a six month review on the points system theory to review its effectiveness.

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Members noted that the number of deaths from accidental fires in dwellings had fallen from 18 in 2011/12 to 7 in 2012/13. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer was confident that the right groups were being targeted for home checks and there had been an increase in the number of people purchasing smoke detectors.

Members felt that it would be useful to have an analysis on the reasoning for the cause of fire which led to a death, for e.g. arson, electrical, etc and whether these properties had a working smoke alarm. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer reported that a serious incident review was carried out for every fire to inform the Service's actions and to be used by safeguarding boards, as appropriate. However, due to data protection reasons, this information could not be shared with members.

The Committee noted that there had been a 7% increase in the gas used on stations (PI 22a). However, it was acknowledged that this was due to the cold winter.

It was noted that performance was below target for the percentage of women fire-fighters (PI 20); the percentage of uniformed staff from ethnic minority communities (PI 21); the percentage of non-uniformed and Fire Control employees from ethnic minority communities (PI 22); and the number of all staff from ethnic minority communities (PI 23). The Director of Human Resources was requested to report to the next meeting on the reasons for the deterioration on these performance indicators.

Of the ten strategic objectives set out in 'The Plan', seven were meeting the performance target, two of the plans had improved but had not met the performance/Plan expectations and one had not met the performance/plan targets. The Chair undertook to meet with Investors in People, as part of the Internal Review of the Service due in October 2013.

The Committee placed on record their appreciation to staff for performance on the average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness for uniformed staff and all staff (PI 26 and 28) which was exceeding the performance/plan forecasts and was felt to be amongst the best in the country for Fire and Rescue Authorities.

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Performance had improved for the percentage of uniformed employees and non-uniformed and Fire Control employees with a disability. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer undertook to produce a briefing note for the Vice Chair of the Committee on the nature of the disabilities.

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, conveyed his appreciation for the work of all officers in ensuring that targets were continually being met.

Resolved that the Director of Human Resources submit a report to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on the reasons for the deterioration of performance for the percentage of women fire-fighters (PI 20), the percentage of uniformed staff from ethnic minority communities (PI 21), the percentage of non-uniformed and Fire Control employees from ethnic minority communities (PI 22) and the number of all staff from ethnic minority communities (PI 23).

19/13

Scrutiny Work Programme 2013/2014

The Committee noted its work programme for 2013/2014. The Clerk reported that the provisional dates for future meetings of the Scrutiny Review Groups had also been included within the work programme to establish clear reporting deadlines.

In relation to future areas for the Committee to conduct a review on, it was proposed to look at the following:-

- the recruitment process – ensuring that the process was correct and identifying any areas for improvement for the next recruitment exercise;

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- member development programme – to ensure that the process was effective;
- brigade response vehicles and changes in the control room – it was, however, agreed that these vehicles would need to be operational for a longer period before their effectiveness could be measured.

(Meeting ended at 10.10 am)

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