

Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee

20 February 2017 at 12.30pm
at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham

Present: Councillor Tranter (Chair);
Councillors Brackenridge, Dad, Hogarth,
Skinner, and Young

Apologies:

Councillors Barrie and Spence

Observer:

Nil

1/17 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

2/17 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2016, be approved as a correct record.

3/17 **Safeside Review – Response to Members’ Questions**

Gary Taylor, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, provided an overview of the report ‘Safeside Review – Response to Members’ Questions’:

As requested by Members at the committee meeting in November 2016, a press briefing, Safeside logos for social media purposes, and the information on the number of schools attended had been provided. The Safeside prospectus had been reviewed and updated and would be circulated to Members in due course.

In answer to Members questions, the following points were raised:

- Further information in relation to schools attending Safeside would be circulated to Members, specifically the number of schools attending compared to the total number schools within a given area.
- It was acknowledged that cost was an issue for schools wishing to attend Safeside and the Service was looking for a sustainable solution. The 12 month partnership with Transport for West Midlands was an interim solution.
- Officers are considering more sustainable methods of supporting funding for transport including partnership arrangements with Transport for West Midlands.

4/17 **Scrutiny Review of Positive Action and Firefighter Recruitment**

Sarah Warnes, Strategic Enabler People Support Services, provided an overview of the review of positive action and firefighter recruitment:

The Service was committed to ensuring that its workforce was representative of the population it served. Positive action was a tool to help make a difference to the workforce profile. The Service had begun to implement positive action, in the recent recruitment process, but wished to undertake even more pro-active work within this area in a bid to continue to push the boundaries, removing stereotypes and barriers, ensuring that the Service was open to individuals from under-represented groups.

An overview was provided of the review scoping document which had been submitted to the Committee for consideration and approval.

It was proposed that the review would include a third party to provide external scrutiny and perspective, for example West Midlands Police and / or a specialist within this field.

In answer to Members' questions, the following points were raised:

- The use of a third party would potentially incur costs.
- It was confirmed that the Scrutiny Committee budget could be used to meet such costs.
- Any costs would be communicated to Members.
- The Police had been considered as an external partner due to the progress they had made in the recruitment of females and people from Black, Minority, Ethnic backgrounds (BME). It was agreed that consideration would also be given to health services and the ambulance service.
- It was acknowledged that requirements such as fitness standards and appearance e.g. facial hair, did pose barriers for some potential recruits. Additionally, the Service's attraction rate did not reflect the makeup of the population. It was important that the Service understood why this was the case at the first point of attraction (before other potential barriers have an effect).

Resolved that the Scrutiny Committee review of positive action and firefighter recruitment was approved.

Resolved that a working group would be established to take forward the review of positive action and firefighter recruitment.

It was agreed that Cllr Spence would undertake the role of Lead Member, and Joanne Simmonds, People Support Manager, would undertake the role of Lead Officer.

5/17 **Analysis of Progress of Quarterly Performance against The Plan Quarter Three 2016/17**

Gary Taylor, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, and Sarah Warnes, Strategic Enabler People Support Services,

provided an overview of the progress of the quarterly performance against The Plan:

PI 1 'The risk based attendance standard', performance continued to be very positive with a two second increase observed during the quarter for category one incident types.

PI 2 'The number of accidental dwelling fires', good performance continued with figures remaining below the tolerance levels for the quarter, and the year to date.

PI 3 'Injuries from accidental dwelling fires (taken to hospital for treatment)', was within the tolerance levels.

PI 4 'The number of deaths from accidental dwelling fires', four fatalities had occurred during quarter three (nine year to date). So far this year, a third of all fires resulting in a fatality were due to heating equipment and a third due to smoking related materials.

PI 5 'The percentage of Safe and Well visits referred by our partners', at 41.8% continued to be above the 40% target. It was noted that this was the first year where the performance indicator had been above the target.

PI 6 'The number of Safe and Well points achieved by the Brigade', continued to be above the tolerance levels at 159,866 points, compared to a target of 135,000.

PI 7 'The number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions', the delay in data continued. It was noted that evidence suggested that the number of road traffic collisions would continue to increase. The Service would continue to work with partners within this area.

PI 8 'The number of arson fires in dwellings', PI 9 'The number of arson fires in non-domestic premises', PI 10 'The number of arson vehicle fires', and PI 12 'The number of arson fires in buildings'; all four performance indicators had experienced under performance against the tolerance levels and were rated as red.

It was noted that forecasting indicated that PI 8 would remain within target at the end of the year.

The figures for PI 9 would be one over target if it were not for the incidents within HMP Birmingham. The Service was confident that the number of incidents would reduce following the disturbances at the prison. It was noted that the majority of incidents within the prison required no action by WMFS and were dealt with by prison officers.

It was noted that arson vehicle fires was a problem for the fire and rescue service nationally. The Service was aiming to stabilise the number of incidents next year.

Pro-active work had been carried out within the Sandwell area to reduce the number of arson fires in buildings, targeting potentially troublesome premises, resulting in positive outcomes. The approach would be rolled out to other local authority areas.

PI 11 'The number of arson rubbish fires', had observed over performance against the tolerance levels and therefore rated as blue. It was noted that the number of arson rubbish fires had continued to decline and it was not necessarily due to the weather (we had not experienced a wet summer).

PI 13 'The number of accidental fires in non-domestic premises' and PI 14 'The number of false alarm calls due to fire alarm equipment', performance remained positive for both performance indicators, with the continued decrease in the number of incidents being maintained.

PI 15 'The percentage of employees that have disclosed their disabled status', a very small increase had been observed to 89.5%. The target of 100% disclosure, which remained ambitious, would be maintained for next year.

PI 16 'The number of female uniformed staff' and PI 17 'The percentage of all staff from ethnic minority communities', both performance indicators remained on target.

It was noted that PI 16 would not change but had been maintained. Retention and progression were key. An improvement had been observed in the number of females promoted from Watch Commander to Station Commander.

With regard to PI 17, a breakdown of the figures was provided to Members as requested. It was noted that the figures were still not representative of the communities the Service represented and that there was more progress to be made. In terms of progression, 27% of staff from black, minority, ethnic backgrounds were in managerial positions.

PI 18 ‘The average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness – uniformed staff’ and PI 19 ‘The average number of days/shifts lost due to sickness – non-uniformed and Fire Control staff’, continued to be over target and rated as red. The Service continued to closely monitor this issue, particularly due to sickness levels impacting on a lean staffing model.

PI 20 ‘The average number of days/shifts lost due to sickness – all staff’, reflected PI 18 and PI 19 and as a result, was rated as red.

PI 21 ‘The total number of injuries’, continued to show very good performance and was rated as green.

PI 22 ‘The total number of RIDDOR injuries’, demonstrated over performance against the tolerance, with a blue rating.

PI 23 ‘To reduce the Authority’s carbon emissions’, reported on annually.

PI 24 ‘To reduce gas use of Fire Authority premises’ and PI 25 ‘To reduce electricity use of Fire Authority premises’; both performance indicators demonstrated over performance against the tolerance levels and were rated blue.

6/17 **Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2016/17**

The Committee noted the progress of the work programme for 2016/17.

(Meeting ended at 14:25 pm)

Contact Officer: Stephen Timmington Strategic Hub West Midlands Fire Service 0121 380 6680
