Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee

---

15 February 2016 at 12.30pm
at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham

Present: Councillor Tranter (Chair);
Councillors Barrie, Hogarth, B Singh, Skinner, and
Young

Apology: Councillors Spence and Ward

Observer: Not applicable

1/16   **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2015, be approved as a correct record.

2/16   **Update on Partnership Review**

The Committee received an update on the 'Review of Partnerships' and the Members noted the initial direction of travel in implementing the recommendations made following the review.

Gary Taylor, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented an overview of the report to Members:

Members of staff had moved as a result of the review of the Strategic Enabling Team, resulting in a new Strategic Enabler for Prevention who would also cover the area of partnerships.

The Review of Partnerships had highlighted that although the Service had a good external view of partnerships, it had lost some focus in terms of an internal view. Therefore, the Service would ensure clear direction and support internally.

The post of Health and Wellbeing Advisor was in the process of being established formally and integrated further into the structure.

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

- The Service's financial plan includes £2 million to be raised via commissioning which is and will be one of the Service's key activities. Areas of work that are being commissioned by Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG), such as hospital discharges, may be new products for the Service, but they compliment the WMFS service delivery model, aid the targeting of vulnerable people, and provides a source of income generation. The CCG's currently commission some of these activites to the private sector. However, an organisation such as WMFS can provide the service saving significant amounts of money per call, saving the NHS as a whole a significant amount, plus recycling public money and therefore it remaining within the public sector.

- In response to a question regarding how the Telecare Falls Service worked, it was explained that:

  o The wider Telecare Service was the responsibility of the local authority that devolves this to the service provider.

  o WMFS are called to non-emergency falls. WMFS do not respond under blue lights.

  o The average WMFS attendance is 14 minutes 51 seconds (the Service is contracted to attend within forty five minutes within receipt of a call).

  o Upon arrival, staff will assist the patient, lifting them up and checking they are ok. An ambulance is to be called in any situation where something is observed outside of this remit, such as an injury.

  o Approximately ninety five percent of calls result in no requirement for the attendance of the Ambulance Service (as of 6 March 2016, 15 out of 180 calls had resulted in the attendance of the Ambulance Service).

  o There had been 101 Telecare visits in the first three months of the pilot (it had been a slow start to the pilot

but numbers had increased as the confidence to make referrals had increased). .

o The premises monitored under the Telecare Service have alarms installed which are directed to Fire Control in the event of actuation. '999' calls would still go through to the Ambulance Service.

- WMFS are currently supporting Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust with providing a hospital discharge service. The service would entail WMFS staff conducting a one hour visit to a person who has been discharged from hospital, checking that the individual has settled and suitable arrangements are in place including the availability of water, heating, toilet facilities, etc. A secondary visit would be arranged to be conducted in the presence of a family member or social worker, where necessary.

The Committee were introduced to Michele Pym, WMFS Strategic Hub, who briefed Members on the forthcoming review of data sharing:

The review of data sharing was one of the proposals identified as an outcome of the Scrutiny Committee review of partnership working. The review concluded that 'Whilst data sharing arrangements appear to be in place across commands, a systematic review of the quality of the arrangements and underpinning systems and processes should be undertaken'.

Data sharing had long been a critical success factor in identifying and engaging the most vulnerable people within our communities. It was a corporate responsibility to share data and refer vulnerable people (adults and children) with WMFS partners across the public sector.

In many cases, Serious Case Reviews and higher level investigations had all identified that the sharing of data remained a consistent barrier to effective partnership working and could be a contributory factor to a decreased service.

The review was intended to provide a clear picture of the level and effectiveness of data sharing between WMFS and partner agencies, in addition to identifying any lessons that could be learnt from other agencies and sectors.

A working group comprised of members of the Scrutiny Committee would be established to lead on the review. An update would be provided to members at the Scrutiny Committee meeting in August 2016. It was expected that the review would be completed and the findings / outcomes reported to members during the first quarter of 2017 (January to March).

Resolved: -

1) That a working group is to be established comprising Councillors Hogarth, Spence and Tranter to take forward a review of data sharing.

2) That as part of the working group, communication would be via email to include all Committee members. Executive decisions would to be delegated to Councillor Tranter.

3) The Scrutiny Committee would receive an update on the data sharing review at the August committee meeting.

4) The report of the review of data sharing would be completed and reported back to the Scrutiny Committee during the first quarter of 2017 (January to March).

3/16   **Analysis of Progress of Quarterly Performance Against The Plan Quarter 3 2015/16**

Gary Taylor, Assistant Chief Fire Officer and Sarah Warnes, Strategic Enabler for People Support Services, presented an overview of the report to Members:

PI 1 'the risk based attendance standard' remained blue although response times for category 1 incidents had increased by 5 seconds. The slight increase had been forecast by the Service's data analysts as a result of the winter months affecting response times.

Performance within prevention (PIs 2 to 12) remained largely positive:

- PI 3 'injuries from accidental fires in dwellings' had moved into a red rating following a spike of 10 injuries during October (the number of incidents was 2 above the upper tolerance level). However, no specific trends or reasons had been identified.

- PI 5 'the percentage of Home Safety Checks referred by our partners' remained red due to the target of 40% not being met. The Black Country North command area was close to reaching the target due to established good partnership networks. All other command areas had achieved percentage rates of 20% to 25%.

- PI 6 'the number of Home Safety Check points' was rated as over performing against the tolerance level (blue). During quarter three Safe and Well visits had been introduced and the risk point scoring system had been revised to better reflect the level and range of fire risk, and to improve alignment with the priority target groups identified in the Command Level 3 Plans. The points had been back dated and as a result the target for the year 2015/16 had been reached. The figures would be reset for quarter 4 to act as a baseline as part of a benchmarking exercise in preparation for 2016/17 when the target would be revised to reflect the changes to the scoring mechanism.

- There had been positive performance within the set of PIs related to arson, with the exception of PI 10 'the number of arson vehicle fires' and PI 12 'the number of arson fires in derelict buildings' which demonstrated under performance against the tolerance levels (red).

Performance within Protection (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') remained very positive with good work ongoing with local universities.

Performance of the People Support Services performance indicators was as follows:

- PI 15 'the percentage of employees that have disclosed their employment status' continued to demonstrate under performance against the tolerance level, although it was acknowledged that the target was ambitious and the direction of travel remained positive. Good progress continued to be made with a 12% increase in the number of declarations (to 88%) with evidence that members of staff understood the need for this information to be collated and trusted the Service. The impact of the dyslexia campaign had been a positive one and a second video entitled 'Behind the Mask'

focussing on disability was to be launched, featuring a number of people from WMFS discussing their conditions and experiences.

- Performance of PI 16 'the number of female staff' and PI 17 'the percentage of all staff from ethnic minority communities' remained within the tolerance levels (green). Retention and progression remain a key focus of the Service as a result of the recruitment freeze. The balance of the volunteers and community members had been examined to identify if their makeup was representative of the West Midlands communities and to identify ways in which the Service could engage with these groups.

- PI 18 'the average number of working days / shifts lost due to sickness': demonstrated over performance against the tolerance levels (red). Key areas of work included:

  - The formation of a task and finish group that was focussing on managing effectively. Changes had been proposed to be made to the sickness policy to ensure the correct balance was reached between the individual and the manager.

  - Tackling long term sickness via an emphasis around command areas about getting members of staff back to work, working closely with Occupational Health to identify operational limitations, for example identifying if any and what amendments could be made to allow a member of staff to return to work.

  - Reviewing how sickness absences were recorded to ensure the Service was receiving the correct information and data (previously 25% of people had recorded the reason for sickness absence as none; this had been reduced to 8% by the end of quarter 3).

- PI 19 'the average number of working days / shifts lost due to sickness (non-uniformed and Fire Control staff)' continued to perform well, demonstrating over performance against the tolerance levels (blue).

It was noted that the figures for January 2016 had improved significantly indicating a 90% reduction in sickness compared to January 2015 and that this would be monitored going forward.

PI 21 'the total number of injuries' demonstrated over performance against the tolerance levels (blue) with a 23% reduction in the number of injuries observed during quarter 3. The main causes of injuries continued to be slips, trips and falls, and manual handling. Age profiling of members of staff suffering injuries had been conducted but no trends had been identified. Manual handling training would be delivered as part of the distributed training model (training was currently be delivered to the trainers).

PI 22 'the total number of RIDDOR injuries' demonstrated under performance against the tolerance levels (red) although the gap between actual performance and the year end target had narrowed, with the number of incidents recorded just one above the upper tolerance level.

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

- In relation to the under performance of the percentage of Home Safety Checks referred by our partners:

  - It was believed that there were deep rooted issues regarding this and it was more than just a need for improved partnership working and more analysis. There was a need to identify critical success factors.

  - All registered social landlords received the same partnership approach from WMFS, no matter to their difference in size. Although the model adopted was important to ensure successful partnership working, it was appreciated that good working relationships were just as important.

  - The imminent data sharing review would assist with improvement within this area, enabling a more scientific approach.

  - It was agreed that Members were potential stakeholders in this process and any support provided was appreciated.

- In relation to PI 10 'the number of arson vehicle fires' and PI 12 'the number of arson fires in derelict buildings' performance had declined over the last 3 quarters of 2015/16 with a number of external factors having been identified:

  o The Service was working with Local Authorities to understand that the continued rate of these types of incidents was an outcome of the ripple effect from a number of factors. For example, the time it often took for vacant local authority buildings to be secured / boarded up to prevent access by members of the public was quite short but this was often not the case if a third party such as a private owner was involved. There was no longer a proactive approach to securing premises from unwanted access and the pump priming funding was no longer available.

  o The Service had commissioned a piece of work to be undertaken with Local Authorities to identify what was happening and what had changed. There had been a view to monitor these type of incidents but the Service had took the decision to take a proactive approach and to work with partner agencies to tackle these issues.

  o Arson was not an issue solely for the Fire Service and there was a need for a multi agency approach to take responsibility for reducing the number of such incidents, including organisations such as the Police.

  o With regard to securing premises on private land, there is no single authority or agency that is solely accountable. The responsibility is across a number of agencies and organisations. The Arson Task Forces used to have responsibility but they had been disbanded for some time, and although it fell within the remit of Environmental Officers, this was a significantly reduced resource due to the continuing decline in public funding and the resultant cuts to services.

- Educating the public on the causes and risks of kitchen fires, and the actions to take in the event of such an incident occurring formed part of national fire safety policy and was delivered by WMFS.

- Incident data evidenced that males aged 25 to 40 experienced a large number of fires but the vast majority were not significant in severity. Incidentally, the elderly did not necessarily experience multiple fires but the 1 fire they could experience would be significant. There was a need to identify and understand the factors that were involved in the group of males aged 25 to 40, for example, unemployment was often an underlying issue and support in finding employment could prove beneficial for this group.

- With regard to the levels of sickness absence, there was no evidence at the current time that the recruitment freeze was having an adverse affect and causing an increase, as members of staff left the Service. No correlation between the age of the work force and sickness had been identified so far. It was agreed that the workforce planning profile would be presented at the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee in March 2016.

4/16   **Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2015/16**

The Committee noted the progress of the work programme for 2015/16.

Members of the committee agreed that:

- Updates on the data sharing review would be presented at the regular scheduled Committee meetings and the facility for specific meetings to be scheduled for this purpose would not be utilised

- Meetings of the Scrutiny Committee for year 2016/17 would be scheduled to occur on separate dates to other meetings of the Fire Authority

(Meeting ended at 14:01 pm)

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