

Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee

12 June 2017 at 12:30 p.m.
at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham

Present: Councillor Spence (Vice-Chair),
Councillors Barrie, Clinton (substitute for Cllr Dad),
Singh (substitute for Cllr Hogarth), Skinner, and Young

Apologies:

Councillors Brackenridge, Dad, Hogarth, and Tranter

Observer:

Nil

13/17 **Declarations of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

14/17 **Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 27 March 2017**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2017, be approved as a correct record.

15/17 **Analysis of Progress of Quarterly Performance against 'The Plan' – Quarter 4 2016-17**

Gary Taylor - Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Director Service Delivery) gave an update on the end of year performance:

Response

PI 1 The Risk Based Attendance Standard

- The end of year performance gave an average time of 4 minutes and 44 seconds.
- Presented within the report the median attendance time to high-risk ('Cat 1') incidents in quarter four was 4 minutes 51 seconds, an increase of 11 seconds compared to the previous quarter.

- Quarter 4 was a challenging time due to the time of year and dark mornings.
- The overall assessment of performance showed there was an over performance against the tolerance levels, but the Service is still trying to improve.

It was noted that the year-end figure of 4 minutes 44 seconds would be included within the report and appendix. The respective sections have been updated and included as an addendum to these minutes.

Prevention

PI 2 The Number of Accidental Dwelling Fires

PI 3 Injuries from Accidental Fires in Dwellings

- Nationally PI 2 and PI 3 had plateaued
- Nationally there had been an increase in PI 3 but within the Service there had been a decrease – this had been a really good news story.

PI 4 The Number of Deaths from Accidental Dwelling Fires

- There were 13 fatalities at accidental dwelling fires in 2016/17, including four in quarter four
- This was a relatively low figure but the Service was looking to bring it down to single figures and then zero.
- One incident was completely preventable which involved a vulnerable person who had fallen asleep near a heater within a caravan.
- Suicides are not reported but there is a need to change the way the Service views this, as suicidal incidents are linked to mental health and are preventable.

PI 5 The Percentage of 'Safe and Well' Visits Referred by Our Partners

PI 6 The Number of 'Safe and Well' Points Achieved by The Brigade

- In PI 5 44.4% of Safe and Well visits during quarter four were a result of partner referrals, (42.2% overall for the year).
- The number of Safe and Well points achieved during quarter four were 15.4% above target, and the overall total for the year was 19.7% over the target for 2016/17.
- The average number of points per visit was 8.25 for the quarter and 8.08 for the year.
- Most vulnerable cases had been identified through the Service's partners.

- One visit to a vulnerable person has had more impact than carrying out five normal 'Safe and Well' visits.
- Evidence suggested that elderly people felt more confident following a 'Safe and Well' visit, as the average 'Safe and Well' visit lasts up to two hours and provides information around fire, safety within the home and wellbeing.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer gave credit to the Scrutiny Committee group, for supporting the organisation review its partnerships arrangements.

PI 7 The Number of People Killed or Seriously Injured (KSI) in Road Traffic Collisions

- The number of 'KSI' had significantly increased.
- West Midlands Police have replicated a road safety team similar to that of the Service and would be linking in with the Service to enable a joined up approach.
- The Mayor now had a responsibility for roads and infrastructure.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer was keen to work with the West Midlands Combined Authority.

PI 11 Arson Rubbish Fires

An increase had been predicted due to 'wheelie bins', but fortunately this had proven to not be the case.

A member asked if burning rubbish was illegal.

In response to the question it was advised burning rubbish was illegal and the Service encourages people to attend organised bonfire events.

For clarification burning garden waste is not illegal but bonfires are illegal under the Environment Act, due to the smoke caused from the burning products.

Although the Service does not class these incidents as arson, such incidents did have an impact on the environment. The Service cannot enforce but will work with families to try and deter them from burning rubbish.

PI 13 The number of accidental fires in non-domestic premises

PI 14 The number of false alarm calls due to fire alarm equipment

- The Business Support Vehicles (BSV's) had been revolutionary in reducing PI 14, and at the same time enabling appliances to be

available for service delivery. This was an idea which came from staff within the Service's Fire Safety department.

- Other Fire and Rescue Services were now looking at purchasing similar types of vehicles.
- BSV's will attend all false alarms and Fire Safety Officers will try and influence a change in behaviours.
- Overall the end of year performance had been positive and the Service would continue to address the arson indicators.

A member highlighted the on-going issue with rented properties and the length of time it takes for the Housing Department to renovate the property and move in new occupiers, once properties have been vacated.

In response to the issues it was advised information packs are being tailored for each Fire Authority member with contact information and will include details specific to areas.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer asked if there were any more questions.

The members thanked the Assistant Chief Fire Officer for the end of year update on performance.

The Assistant Chief Fire Office left the meeting.

Sarah Warnes - The Strategic Enabler for People Support Services gave an update on the performance indicators for people support services.

PI 15 The Percentage Of Employees that Have Disclosed Their Disabled Status

- A target of 100% had been set for the disclosure of disability, the Service had achieved a disclosure rate of 92%.
- There had been a good direction of travel with a significant increase of disclosure.
- It was noted in some cases; declaration had not been made due to system error.
- The Service had been targeting members of staff who had not declared through their line managers and would continue to raise awareness of managing disability.

A member asked how the Service would know when 100% declaration had been achieved.

In response to the question it was advised that a report was produced every month to monitor disclosure.

A member asked how members of staff disclosed their disability status.

In response to the question it was advised there are a number of ways; either upon employment, within a selection process, or via targeting through line managers.

A member asked if physical disabilities included mental health.

In response to the question it was advised there is a wide range of disabilities which are monitored.

A member asked if the Service could help with mental health.

In response to the question it was advised that the Service would help, through line managers who are able to support individuals and put in place reasonable adjustments. The Service also had many support mechanisms through Occupational Health and had carried out a lot of work to raise awareness with regards to mental health and wellbeing.

Following the recent Dyslexia campaign there was a significant number of people who had disclosed.

A member asked if the Service had support in place for operational Fire Fighters and dealing with incidents.

In response to the question it was advised the Service provides a good level of support for staff dealing with incidents, such as defusing sessions, post incident debriefs along with cognitive behavioural therapy and counselling.

PI 16 The Number of Female Uniformed Staff

- It was reported there were 75 female uniformed staff within the Service (a reduction of three in the last 12 months).
- Positive action had been used during recruitment campaigns to encourage women to apply for the role of Fire Fighter.

A member asked why three women had left the service.

In response to the question it was advised two women had returned to Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service and one woman had left the Service for a career break.

PI 17 The Percentage of all Staff from Ethnic Minority Communities

- The performance was recorded within the tolerance levels.
- It was noted the percentage of staff from ethnic minority communities had been reasonably static due to a recruitment freeze.

PI 18 The Average Number of Working Days/Shifts Lost Due to Sickness – Uniformed Employees

- An average of 6.5 days was lost to sickness in 2016/17 which was a 6% increase compared to the previous 12 months.
- An under performance was recorded against the tolerance levels.
- The causes of sickness would continue to be monitored on a case by case basis to manage effectively.
- Tolerance levels for the number of sick days would be reduced from eight days to six days.
- The number of staff on restricted duties would be reviewed to identify if duties can be modified to enable staffing.

PI 19 The Average Number of Working Days/Shifts Lost Due to Sickness – Non-Uniformed and Fire Control Staff

- An average of 7.7 days was lost to sickness in 2016/17. This was a 13% increase compared to the previous 12 months.
- Non-Uniformed sickness was 7.2 days and Fire Control sickness was 11.6 days.
- An under performance was recorded against the tolerance levels.

PI 20 The Average Number of Working Days/Shifts Lost Due to Sickness – All Staff

- An under performance was recorded against the tolerance levels

There were no further questions from the members.

PI 21 The Total Number of Injuries

- The total number of injuries for quarter four were below target and the overall number of 131 for the year was the same as last year and the joint lowest level on record for the Service.

PI 22 The Total Number of RIDDOR Injuries

- An over performance was recorded against the tolerance levels.

The Strategic Enabler for People Support Services informed the Service had received a Workplace Wellbeing Charter Award.

The Chair asked for the good news item to be included within the end of year summary report.

PI 23 to Reduce the Fire Authority's Carbon Emissions

- An over performance was recorded against the tolerance levels

PI 24 to Reduce Gas Use of Fire Authority Premises

- An over performance was recorded against the tolerance levels

PI 25 to Reduce Electricity Use of Fire Authority Premises

- An over performance was recorded against the tolerance levels

Evidence suggested that there had been a good focus within the Service over the last ten years to reduce its carbon footprint and to reduce the use of gas, electric and heating on fire stations.

The Service will continue to reduce its carbon footprint.

There were no further questions from the members.

16/17 **Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality (DICE) Update**

Sarah Warnes, Strategic Enabler People Support Services, provided an update on the recent 'DICE' activities.

- It was noted there were over 3,000 Community Members from a wide range of ethnic groups.
- The Service had received feedback from Community Members to help understand the potential barriers with applicants from underrepresented groups.
- The Service had set up a partnership with Job Centre Plus (JCP) to work with underrepresented groups across West Midlands to promote the Fire Service as a viable career and to support individuals through to application stage.
- The Service had recently attended 'Birmingham Pride' to promote the Services recruitment opportunities.
- The Service's 'DICE' team had been looking at areas for improvement following the 'Stonewall' assessment, focusing on declaration on sexual orientation in support of Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT).

A member asked if the Service needed to know someone's sexual orientation.

In response to the question it was advised that it was not essential for the Service to know but it was important people felt safe enough to declare should they choose to do so.

- There will be 'DICE' Stations within the Service to promote 'DICE' within their local communities.
- The Service was looking to produce a Transgender policy.
- Staff within the Service would be attending the 'Women in the Fire Service Networking' event which was taking place 16th – 18th June 2017 which supports personal development.

- The 'DICE' team delivering the development and understanding of unconscious bias within the service.

There were no further questions from the members and the Chair thanked the People Support Manager for the report.

The members thanked Cllr Skinner for his commitment on the committee.

Cllr Skinner left the meeting.

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

Joanne Simmonds, People Support Manager, provided a presentation on positive action and Firefighter recruitment:

- The vision of the Service was to be truly representative of the communities it served.
- There was a need to start to understand the feedback from support groups.
- Historically, BME groups and women were likely to be unsuccessful compared with white males, so the Service will ensure the attraction pool is increased.
- The Service would run an on-going recruitment process to enable sustained positive action.
- Social media was a cost effective and powerful tool and would be used to its full potential.
- The Service had been working with local colleges to promote recruitment.
- Recruitment 'Taster Days' would be held within communities.
- The Service would be continuing to work in partnership with 'JCP' to attend career events.
- The tracking of candidates from 'start to finish' would commence to understand why if candidates have been unsuccessful.
- The Service would be asking West Midlands Police about their selection process for shared learning.

The Committee noted the information in the report and the presentation.

The Committee requested a further update to be provided in due course.

There were no further questions from the members and the Chair thanked the People Support Manager for the presentation.

18/17 **Annual Report of the Scrutiny Committee 2016-17**

Resolved that the Committee approved the Annual Report. The Annual Report would be submitted to the Fire Authority on the 26th June 2017 for noting.

19/17 **Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2016-17**

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

Meeting ended at 13.50 p.m.

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