

Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee

05 September 2016 at 12.30pm
at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham

Present: Councillor Spence (Vice Chair);
Councillors Barrie, Hogarth, Skinner and Young

Apology:

Councillor Brackenridge, Dad, and Tranter

Observer:

16/16 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

17/16 **Minutes**

Resolved:-

That the minutes of the meeting held on 21st March 2016, be approved as a correct record, subject to the following amendments in respect of minute 13/16:

- A Member requested that further information be reported to the Committee surrounding incidents involving rescue from water, including details of response times and the number of incidents

In light of the amendment to the minutes, ACFO Taylor agreed that the information requested on incidents involving rescue from water would be reported at the next meeting of the Committee (10 October 2016).

18/16

Dispute Resolution Report – 1 January to 30 June 2016

Wendy Browning-Sampson, People Support Manager, provided an overview of the Dispute Resolution Report:

An error within the report was brought to the Committee's attention. Namely, the table within Appendix 1, Section B: Investigation Activity. The number of investigations into Gross Misconduct was quoted as 21, when it was actually 22 investigations for the period reported.

It was noted that 22 Gross Misconduct investigations was an increase from the previous six months, however 11 investigations were involved in just one case, which was unusual.

A debrief process had been agreed and implemented with a debrief taking place after every disciplinary process. As a result, the Service continued to learn and improve its processes.

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

- The definition of gross misconduct is the same for green book and grey book staff.
- Members of staff who had resigned whilst an investigation was ongoing may not have done so purely due to the investigation itself (for example, a staff member's contract may be due to end within the timeframe of the investigation and may decide to terminate their contract early).
- It was acknowledged that there had been an increase in the last six months but increases were observed occasionally. It was important that such trends in the number of investigations did not become a constant and therefore the normal rate of investigations.
- It was noted that although there had been an increase in the number of investigations in the last six months, the overall number remained lower than it had been previously and that performance as a whole had improved.

- The number of investigations would continue to be monitored to ensure that the right direction of travel was achieved.

19/16

An Analysis of Progress of Quarterly Performance against 'The Plan' – Quarter One 2016/17

ACFO Taylor provided an overview of the Analysis of Progress of Quarterly Performance against 'The Plan' – Quarter One 2016/17:

PI 1 'The risk based attendance standard', at 4 minutes and 40 seconds for category one incidents was an all-time low.

Attendance times for category two, three and four incident types were all outperforming the respective targets.

PI 2 'The number of accidental dwelling fires': performance was very good with the number of incidents below the lower tolerance level.

PI 3 'Injuries from accidental fires in dwellings', taken to hospital' was one above the target (although within the tolerance levels) although a significant reduction had been observed.

PI 4 'The number of deaths from accidental fires in dwellings', does not have a target but at just two fatalities was positive and would hopefully be maintained going forward.

PI 5 'The percentage of Home Safety Checks referred by our partners': a significant improvement in performance had been observed as a result of the outcomes of the Scrutiny Committee review of partnerships taking effect.

ACFO Taylor expressed his appreciation to the Members of the Committee for the work undertaken in the review of partnerships.

PI 7 'The number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions': the numbers were decreasing after an upward trend observed last year.

With regard to PI 7, a Member asked how many incidents occurred on roads within the West Midlands and if it was possible to breakdown the figures into the number of people killed, and the number of people seriously injured.

It was agreed that the Service struggled with obtaining the data and that the Service did not necessarily measure the proactive prevention work that was undertaken, unlike response where such

data was measured. The Service was open to change and different methods of measuring performance within this area.

It was acknowledged that, whereas the Service 'owned' data on fires, road traffic collision data was very different due to multiple partnerships and geographical implications.

With the exception of PI 11 'The number of arson rubbish fires' which was demonstrating over performance against the tolerance levels, the performance indicators relating to arson (PI 8, 9, 10 and 12) were under performing against the tolerance levels. A thematic review had been commissioned and the findings of the report was due to be submitted to the Quarterly Performance Review meeting for quarter 2 2016/17. The findings of the report would then be presented to the Committee.

The protection performance indicators, 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' were both performing well.

In response to Members' question with regard to PI 14, it was noted that there was an opportunity to charge re-offenders but legislation provided such premises a certain amount of calls. The number of incidents had decreased and the introduction of the Business Support Vehicles would continue to assist with this. The Service would continue to work with repeat offenders and was currently looking to develop a more business friendly approach.

Sarah Warnes, Strategic Enabler for People Support Services, provided an overview of the people performance indicators:

PI 15 'The percentage of employees that have disclosed their disability status had observed a minor improvement in performance to 89% (compared to a target of 100% disclosure).

A number of disability workshops for managers have been run by the Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality (DICE) team, progress continues to be made on providing an inclusive working

environment including the DICE ally scheme, and work continues with Stonewall. The importance of disclosure would be emphasised to managers and staff.

The Service had recently secured position 31 in the Inclusive Top 50 Employer List. Additionally, the Equality Index would be assessing the organisation in the near future.

PI 16 'The number of female uniformed staff', and PI 17 'The percentage of all staff from ethnic minority communities': the number of female uniformed staff was on target at 75. The Service would commence recruitment in 2017 which would provide an opportunity to address this area as well as the percentage of staff from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities.

It was noted that it was important that the Community Membership Model was representative of the West Midlands population. A detailed report of the Community Members was now collated on a six monthly basis. Community Members were currently made up of 49% female, and 24% BME.

In terms of staff progression, 24% of female uniformed staff, and 24% of BME uniformed staff, were in management roles.

In answer to a Members' question with regard to PI 17, it was acknowledged that the percentage of staff from BME communities was lower than that of the West Midlands population. The Service was engaging with these communities as part of its communications surrounding recruitment, targeting under-represented groups. One of the aims was to educate people that working for the Fire and Rescue Service was a wider role than just firefighting. There was evidence to suggest that some people deselect themselves from the application process and that some people did not realise that there can be a good career within the Fire and Rescue Service.

PI 19 'The average number of working days / shifts lost due to sickness – non-uniformed and Fire Control staff', and PI 20 'The average number of working days / shifts lost due to sickness – all staff', demonstrated performance on target and within the tolerance levels, and that attendance management was moving in a positive direction of travel.

PI 21 'The total number of injuries' demonstrates under performance against the tolerance levels. The main trend is slips, trips and falls.

PI 22 'The total number of RIDDOR injuries' demonstrates over performance against the tolerance levels. Performance was particularly good considering the size of the organisation and the type of work that is undertaken.

PI 24 'To reduce the gas use of Fire Authority premises', and PI 25 'To reduce the electricity use of Fire Authority premises': provisional information had been provided and there was some question regarding how the Service collects the information.

20/16 Update on Progress of the Data Sharing Review

With reference to the update on the progress of the data sharing review, Members did not have any further questions or comments.

It was agreed that progress would be reported to the Committee at the next meeting (10 October 2016).

21/16 Update on the reviews of Partnerships and Safeside

It was noted that it was timely to revisit the two previous reviews and that updates would be provided post review and post implementation.

The updates would be reported to the Committee at the next meeting (10 October 2016).

22/16 Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2016/17

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

(Meeting ended at 13:30 pm)

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