

Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee

1st September, 2014 at 12.30 pm
at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham

Present: Councillor Tranter (Chair);
Councillor Spence (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Collingswood, Delaney, Hogarth, Phillips,
Skinner and Young.

Observer: Councillor Shackleton.

19/14 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd June, 2014 be approved as a correct record.

20/14 **An Analysis of Progress of Corporate Performance against 'The Plan' – Quarter Four 2013/2014**

Further to Minute No. 9/14, the Committee noted an analysis of organisational performance against 'The Plan' for the fourth quarter of 2013/2014. This information had been circulated to the Committee for the sake of completeness as progress for quarter one of 2014/15 was now also available (Minute No. 21/14 below refers).

21/14 **An Analysis of Progress of Corporate Performance against 'The Plan' – Quarter One 2014/2015**

Further to Minute No. 20/14 above, the Committee received an analysis of performance against targets set out in 'The Plan' for the first quarter of 2014/15. Members noted that this was the first quarter performance monitoring since the refocus of The Plan agreed by the Authority on 21st July, 2014 which re-aligned the strategic objectives to the Service's three core delivery functions of Prevention, Protection and Response.

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The first quarterly Corporate Performance Review meeting of 2014/2015 took place on 6th August 2014. This quarterly meeting, which was attended by the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, Corporate Board and Strategic Managers, provided a joined up method of managing performance and for providing assurance around the ongoing performance and delivery of priorities, strategic objectives and outcomes set out in The Plan.

The Service's Performance Indicator (PI) performance against its Prevention, Protection and Response level 2 action plans was provided using an info-graphic approach, which provided transparency and enabled performance to be clearly understood. The info-graphic was accompanied by headline statements in support of the performance for each indicator. In order to provide a balanced organisational view of performance, the Service had in place other PIs, predominantly around Human Resources and Safety, Health and the Environment against which it was standard practice to monitor performance. All of this information provided members with an all round organisational performance picture for quarter one of 2014/15.

Members were informed that it had been noted that there were more minor fires in the homes of people who had been unemployed for 12 months or longer; however, there was currently no indication as to why this was the case. PIs 13 and 14 showed how the Service's prevention work with regard to Home Safety Checks and in particular to those members of the community at high risk was progressing.

The Committee also noted that although some of the figures had reduced from green to amber or red this had occurred because of staff leaving the Service through natural wastage; particularly where small numbers of employees were involved this adversely affected the ratio for these groups. Members asked whether in these circumstances the PIs were at the correct level and achievable. The Director Service Delivery responded that officers did try to balance and amend the figures as appropriate and considered this feedback as part of the annual Fire Authority target setting process.

The Director Service Delivery advised members that "near hit" reporting by employees was increasing and that this was viewed as positive and proactive as it showed that staff were acting responsibly and becoming accountable in all of their activities.

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Members congratulated all of the officers concerned in helping to reduce the gas and electricity usage at fire authority premises and on the new format of the monitoring report; it was easy to follow and fit for purpose. It was hoped that the work progressing to encourage employees to declare any disabilities would be successful.

The Chair asked that arrangements be made for one or two members of the Committee, along with himself, be invited to future Corporate Performance Review meetings so that they could see first hand the Service's method of managing performance and the delivery of the priorities, strategic objectives and outcomes of The Plan.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the adoption of an exception type style for the reporting of corporate performance be approved;
- (2) that in support of (1) above, the communication of performance information through a transparent, infographic approach, supported by headline statements, be approved;
- (3) that the Director Service Delivery make arrangements, as appropriate, to invite one or two members of the Committee to future Corporate Performance Review meetings.

22/14 Equality and Diversity Quarterly Update

Further to Minute No. 3/14 (20th January, 2014), the Committee received a quarterly Equality and Diversity update together with a presentation by the Strategic Enabler for Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality (DICE). Members were informed that since the last report a more detailed gap analysis had been undertaken to determine the level of work required to achieve the Excellence level of the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) Equality Framework and its Equality Objectives. The recommendations from this analysis would extend Phase 3 of the Project Plan as previously reported to the Committee by 12 months.

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The recommendations would form part of the DICE Objectives as required by the Equality Act 2010. They would also facilitate the Authority in meeting its statutory requirements, its aspiration and work to achieve excellence in the FRS E & D framework and its alignment to The Plan. This would all work seamlessly as one DICE Strategy that supported the Service in delivering equality outcomes for its diverse communities and employees.

As background to the recommendations, the Committee was informed of:-

- the move of the equality and diversity section to operations and its change in focus and outcomes;
- the extension of the equality and diversity function to include Inclusion and Cohesion – leading to the branding of the section to become Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality (DICE);
- progress against the Excellence level of the Fire and Rescue Sector Equality Framework;
- how they would form the basis of the review of the four year Equality Objectives that the Service was due to publish on 31 January 2015;
- performance against and initiatives involving evaluation, good practice, service delivery and engagement elements of the current Equality Objectives of Accountability, Leadership & Inclusion, Prevention, Protection & Response and Employment & Training.

Members thanked the Strategic Enabler DICE for an excellent report and presentation outlining how the Authority was engaging with its employees and communities.

In response to a member's enquiry it was reported that the Peer Assessment which would be required to ascertain whether the Authority had achieved the Excellence level of the Fire and Rescue Sector Equality Framework would be undertaken by Peer Assessors, who were councillors, directors and equality specialists from other areas, appointed by the Local Government Association.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the progress of the Service in working towards the Excellence level of the Fire and Rescue Services (FRS), Equality and Diversity (E&D) Framework as set out in The Plan (2014 – 2017: 5) be noted;

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- (2) that in line with the Authority's Public Sector Equality Duties under the Equality Act 2010 a report, informing the public and partners of the progress made against the four year Equality Objectives that were established in January 2012 and the alignment of equality objectives with The Plan, be submitted to the Committee at its meeting to be held on 15th December, 2014.

23/14 **Dispute Resolution**

The Committee received a report setting out the number, type and outcomes of discipline and grievance hearings and other dispute resolution including employment tribunal activity which had occurred during the period 1st January, 2014 to 30th June, 2014. It was noted that there had been no failure to agree but one failure to consult raised within the reporting period.

The report also provided a summary of lessons learnt, taking into account issues raised by Trade Union, Representative Bodies, line managers and human resource practitioners.

Members noted that this period's number of grievances was higher than the last and that this was, to some extent, affected by the current industrial action. It was also asked that future information reported to members make clear that the number of grievances rejected were those which were submitted but had not qualified as a grievance.

Resolved that the contents of the report be noted and referred to the Joint Consultative Panel.

24/14 **Work Programme 2014/15**

Members received a draft work programme for 2014/2015. It was noted that the Committee should undertake two reviews within the year and that as yet these had not been identified. The Chair and members would further deliberate suitable issues which the Committee might wish to consider.

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It was agreed that the report on Progress on Implementation of the Equality Objectives 2012-2015 would now be received at the meeting of the Committee on 15th December, 2014 and that members receive updates on the operation of the High Rise facility and Engineering Workshops.

(Meeting ended at 2.00 pm)

<p style="text-align: center;">Contact Officer: Rosemary Jones Democratic Services Unit Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council 0121 569 3896</p>
