



PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

18 JANUARY 2023 at 10:30 am

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillors Davies, Eddy, Monk, Nutland and Payne (Chair)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs Ali and Kumar.

2. EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURES

The ACFO explained the emergency evacuation procedures for the room/building.

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

4. PUBLIC ACCESS

None received for this meeting.

5. CHAIR'S BUSINESS

1. The Chair outlined that meetings were now taking place face-to-face. The meeting would be recorded and uploaded to the Avon Fire Authority (AFA) YouTube channel.
2. The Chair explained the voting system for the meeting, i.e., votes against a motion would be recorded first, followed by abstentions, then votes in favour.

Members and Officers introduced themselves.

6. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 7 OCTOBER 2022.

It was moved by Cllr Eddy and seconded by Cllr Nutland that the Minutes be approved as a correct record subject to the meeting title being changed from 'safety' to 'scrutiny'.

It was RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of 7 October 2022 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting subject to the required amendment.

7. PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee received a report of the Corporate Performance Manager (CPM) outlining the performance of the organisation against targets for the period April to November 2022.

The key points summarised in the report were:

Prevention:

1. Three of the four fire indicators were on target. The exceptionally dry weather in August had an impact upon all three Deliberate Fire Indicators. However, monthly numbers in October and November had been below target and below numbers recorded last year.
2. Sadly, there had been three fire fatalities and 35 injuries reported.
3. Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV) were just off target but improving, however delivering of educational packages was ahead of target. Referrals received from partner agencies, which is where the majority of referrals are received from, had not returned to pre-pandemic levels. Additional contacts through engagement with Stand Against Racism & Inequality (SARI) and local communities.

A Member asked whether there was a reason for the higher urban arson attacks. The CPM answered that there could have been incidents which did not have malicious intent such as a disposable BBQ placed in a bin whilst still alight, which would still be classed as accidental.

Protection:

1. The target for call challenging Malicious False Alarms had been met. The Service was just off target for reducing attendance at False Alarms in business premises.
2. The targets for processing Building Regulations and Licensing Applications had not been met and were just off target, however there was confidence that this would improve as the staffing issues are resolved. Further staff had been recruited but it would take some time for the training programme to become effective.

Response:

1. All response indicators including answering 999 calls were on target. The number of 999 calls received and the number of incidents attended were both up compared to last year, 999 calls by 17% and attended by 14%.

Resilience:

1. It was reported that the Service was off target for reducing shifts/days lost to sickness. High numbers of shifts/days had been lost to COVID-19 in the first few months of the year; however, this was steadily decreasing with 49 shifts/days lost in August. Long Term sickness (over 28 days) remained the main issue, accounting for 60.5% of the shifts/days lost.

2. Paragraph 5.10 was highlighted which showed Avon's benchmark against other services, which was gradually improving against other FRSs.

Improve our Service:

1. It was advised that the Service was on target for reducing Health & Safety incidents that had resulted in lost time.
2. The Service was just off target for reducing carbon emissions. It was reported that this was due to significant increases in appliance fuel consumption and the high number of incidents attended.
3. Revenue Budget variance was on target with zero variance against plan.

Invest in our Staff:

1. The Performance and Development Reviews (PDRs) for staff was on target with 96% in date. It is recognised that this is an area where there is a need to improve consistency of performance and the PDR system would be replaced, which would help to make management easier.

Following questions from Members the following points were made/clarified –

1. The number of Home Fire Safety visits had reduced, as the Service was still not receiving referrals from partner agencies at the same level prior to COVID-19, and further work was needed to increase numbers. It was agreed that the CPM would try to establish the reason for this and report back to Members.
2. Sickness levels after COVID-19 were now not too far off average. The CPM had analysed the number of shifts lost and the occurrences. There were now more occurrences of mental health which the Health, Safety and Welfare team were looking into. This subject was also on the agenda for next week's Service Leadership Team meeting. Further information would be fed back to the Committee.
3. With regards to comparative sickness, the CPM advised that due to confidentiality, he was unable to provide details of the highest rating Service. However, he confirmed that Avon did contact other Services, that were performing better or worse, to see if there were any improvements we could make.
4. With regards to the Service's approach to responding to valid fire alarm requests, the CPM advised that when crews had responded, it could still be a false alarm i.e., staff testing the alarm but not having advised Avon Fire and Rescue Service (AF&RS). Incidents were collated for premises who had high number of alarms and contact made and this information would be included within future reports.
5. It was pointed out that the reason stated for being off target for deliberate secondary fires was due to hot weather, which may continue over coming years. The CPM advised that there would be some actions that the Service could take such as identifying locations and sharing information with the police. In respect of target setting, our current process is to look at the last 6 years data, take the average but to remove the highest and lowest figures.
6. Deliberate fires – it was confirmed that there would be targeted activity to identify prevention measures in the worst areas. The CPM confirmed that the Service held good geographical information and that the new Service Plan covered prevention and protection in these areas.
7. It was asked that as the Service was off target for carbon emissions, were there any other proactive plans in place other than to change the targets? To

replace vehicles would be expensive, is there an opportunity to convert to i.e., biomass fuel? The CPM advised that our Fleet department were aware of these issues and that he was aware that they were looking into alternative fuels or the use of electric appliances.

8. It was confirmed that there would be a report brought to the Committee in July 2023 which would provide an update on the carbon reduction project.

It was RESOLVED -

That the Performance Report for April to November 2022 be noted and approved.

8. TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Committee received a report of the temporary Head of Service Transformation Team (HST).

The key points highlighted were -

1. The Area Manager, Head of the Service Transformation Programme had been seconded to the Industrial Action Planning Team until further notice. The Head of Transformation role was temporarily filled with effect from Thursday 8 December 2022.
2. The Transformation team were still struggling to fill three vacancies, these being a Microsoft 365 trainer, a Digital Developer, and a Business Change Officer. Interviews were taking place for the trainer role and an alternative approach was being considered for the developer role. Recruitment for the Business Change Officer had been halted and other members of the team were continuing to provide assistance. These difficulties were due to the move to Microsoft 365 and the increased demand in the marketplace.
3. The FireWatch upgrade project Manager joined the team on a full time basis from 1 October 2022 and good progress had been made in moving this project forward. This arrangement would be reviewed at three monthly intervals and the Manager would remain on the team on a three day a week basis. The new system would be launched from 7 February 2023.

Following questions from Members the following points were made/clarified –

1. A suggestion was made that other public sector organisations were also experiencing recruitment problems. The Member asked whether the Service had considered joining up with another local Public Sector organisation to share an employee or to buy some of their time. The temporary HST agreed to consider this option and contact other suitable organisations.

It was RESOLVED -

That the report be noted.

9 ROUND 2 HIS MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY AND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES (HMICFRS) INSPECTION ACTION PLAN

The Committee received a report of the Service Liaison Officer (SLO) providing an update on HMICFRS (HMI) Inspection Action Plan. The second 'round 2' HMI inspection report was formally tabled following its publication on 15 December 2021. The latest approved version was included as an appendix.

The key points highlighted were –

1. The action plan was currently 30% completed with 48% of actions in progress and 22% not yet started, some of these were sequentially dependant on the completion of some of the actions that had been started. Of the four actions carried forward from round 1 into round 2, there were two standalone actions, and two which were similar to new actions and therefore were assimilated. The two standalone actions had been signed off as completed, therefore all legacy actions were now complete.
2. The routine biannual data request was completed, checked, signed off and submitted to HMI on 18 November 2022.
3. Following correspondence from HMI on 28 November 2022, preparations were under way for the Round 3 inspection. It would be based again around the three pillars of effectiveness, efficiency and people format. Grades would be awarded against the existing 11 diagnostic questions. There would be a move from four to five graded judgements (with the addition of 'adequate'). There would be a focus on service improvement. Inspections would be undertaken using a hybrid approach of physical on-site inspection and remote virtual interviews.
4. AF&RS had not been listed in the first batch of Round 3 inspections, and the inspection fieldwork was likely to start in late May 2023. This would include a request for documentation and an onsite inspection.

Following questions from Members the following points were made/clarified –

1. In respect of whether the Service was on target before the next visit, the HMI Officer confirmed that some actions had a planned completion date after the start of the Round 3 inspections. However, as with Round 3, any outstanding actions would be carried forward and nothing would be missed.
2. A Member mentioned that 22% of actions were not yet started and progress couldn't be made. The SLO advised that there were not any obstacles preventing the Service from making headway although staffing and monetary issues could delay progress.

It was RESOLVED that the Committee –

- a) Noted the progress made against the most recently approved version of AF&RS's HMICFRS inspection action plan (Appendix 1), discussed its contents and did not make any recommendations or suggestions;**
- b) noted the current HMICFRS inspection activity.**

10 2022/23 CAPITAL PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Head of Finance presented the report which provided an overview of the 2022/23 Capital Programme including operational updates and additional context information for 2022/23 projects.

During the financial year 2020/21 the Fire Authority Chair requested that reports on the Capital Programme be considered by this Committee, to enable further review on an ongoing basis.

The key points highlighted were –

1. The Capital Programme approved for 2022/23, included adjustments for the final 2021/22 carry over of £7.741m.

2. This latest report, based upon spending to the end of November 2022, forecasted that total capital spending will be £4.144m, resulting in an underspend of £3.597m. There had been a delay with the Bedminster project, where the original estimate of costs had increased due to delays in materials and supply chains. There also had been a delay in making the final Fleet payments which would move into the next financial year.
3. Control element may slip into the future year due to national issues in terms of change of supplier, and delays in supply.

Following questions from Members it was confirmed that -

1. There had been a pause in major projects including the rebuild projects at Bath and Weston Super Mare due to the increase in costs with the Bedminster project. It was confirmed that these projects would continue to be explored as part of the capital programme over the next 3 years.
2. The current payment issues with Fleet had been contributed to by supplier delays. The Head of Finance had advised that the Service was exploring the overall fleet strategy and the Capital Prioritisation and Steering Group met regularly to monitor progress. It was confirmed that a paper may be taken to the AFA in the future.
3. Costs had increased within the Bedminster major build largely due to inflation and specifically the price of steel and other construction costs, which could be increased by up to 50% on certain materials. The costs of Contractors had also increased, along with delays to supply chains.
4. The proceeds from the sale of the former HQ had been reserved to fund a number of re-build projects. The Clerk advised that the timelines would be included within the Finance papers at the Extraordinary AFA meeting in February.

**It was RESOLVED that the Committee –
Reviewed key issues within the updates given to provide the required
assurance on the approved Capital Programme.**

11 2022-23 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The Head of Finance presented the report which provided an updated revenue monitoring report for the current financial year, based upon spending at the end of November 2022.

This was the first time the report had been submitted to the Performance, Review & Scrutiny Committee (PRSC), however, it has been decided by the Treasurer that this would now be submitted alongside the capital report at each meeting.

The key points highlighted were –

1. This latest report forecasted that spending against the next revenue budget would be £26k overspent. This was based on the November figures but the Head of Finance was expecting a break-even situation by the end of the year.
2. The pay awards presented an increase in costs.
3. There had been an underspend on a cleaning contract.
4. There had been a significant increase in the utilities budget.
5. Some prices had increased due to factors including the impact of inflation.
6. Some recent large contracts would result in savings going forward – i.e., HR.

Members passed on their congratulations to the Head of Finance especially in view of the current financial situation.

**It was RESOLVED that the Committee –
Noted the forecast spending position against the 2022/23 Revenue Budget.**

12. GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY PROGRESS UPDATE

The Committee received a report on the progress that had been made in respect of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 report and recommendations.

In summary Members noted that -

1. The cost of the project totalled £99,229, with £95,126 already allocated against specific grant funding.
2. Of the 29 internal actions 19 are complete and 10 are in progress. Since the previous update, eight internal actions had their target completion dates delayed. The primary reason for the delays, related to compatibility issues with our communications and controls with other emergency services systems, and external agencies procurement delays.
3. The third phase of the improved tall buildings training for operational crews had been completed. Work is now underway to develop further training and exercises for operational staff to embed the newly published Evacuation Operational Information Note (OIN).
4. Phase 2 of the Inquiry commenced on 27 January 2021 to examine the reasons why the fire at Grenfell happened. The inquiry hearing closed on the 21 July 2022. The panel were now preparing their final report which is expected to be published in 2023.
5. The high-rise residential building work with Bristol City Council (BCC) was almost complete with only two CAD plans outstanding. The Provision of Risk Information System (PORIS) team was liaising with other Unitary Authorities and Unite student accommodation.

Following questions from Members -

1. With regards to the capital still available, it was confirmed that this would be sufficient and there were plans to spend this within the next two months on evacuation packs for fire engines. A new team member was currently working on the evacuation packs including resources and costings.
2. With regards to high rise buildings in the other Unitary Authorities (UA) including three within North Somerset, a Member had witnessed a training evacuation of student accommodation and enquired about the level of risk. It was advised that student accommodations were equipped with plans and 'grab packs', we were replicating the same as BCC high-rise buildings so we had the information required to utilise for training. It was advised that legislation had changed, and from this month owners of buildings over 18 metres high must provide the plans by law to the UAs. PORIS were working on plans to interpret and design them in line with our other CAD drawings.

**It was RESOLVED that the Committee -
Noted the report.**

13 COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING UPDATE

The Collaboration and Partnerships Manager (C&PM) provided the Committee with an update on Collaboration and Partnership working undertaken by the Service since their last submission (July 2022).

The key points highlighted in the report were:

Collaboration Framework and Toolkit -

1. Members were informed that work continued to update the Collaboration Framework and Toolkit, which underpinned the Collaboration Strategy 2021-2026. Completion of the Framework and Toolkit was originally expected in time for this report, however time taken to further consider best practice and our approach had prevented this.
2. A full report of the toolkit will be provided at the next Collaboration & Partnership Working update, scheduled for July 2023. The C&PM was working on an approach and learning.
3. Progress has been made updating the risk assessment and new scoping assessment to ensure that we are collaborating safely. The Service had 34 Collaboration Partnerships in place with 14 in date and 11 in progress.
4. The Service had a new collaboration with the Royal National Lifeboat Institute (RNLI) which engaged in joint training and live water incidents using our drone.
5. The Service continued to work on a number of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to support working at height and regional co-responding. Further detail would be provided once they had moved from planning to live stage.
6. Operation Braidwood - AF&RS continued to support South West Ambulance Service Foundation Trust (SWASFT) and had covered 3267 shifts and had brought 53 patients back to life. The project would finish in March 2023 with personnel returning back into Service.
7. Work with our partner SARI continued and they had attended our HFSV practitioner session. Our Vulnerable Adults team were also working with SARI to provide support for victims of hate crime.
8. Children and Young Persons – our collaboration is under review with Life Skills and the RNLI. This had been reshaped to provide wider opportunities for information and data sharing and ensures focus is directed on the most vulnerable.

Following questions from Members, the following points were made/clarified -

1. Members asked that their thanks were passed onto the employees who collaborated with SWASFT and congratulations given to those who received an award.
2. Had any discussions taken place to extend the partnership with SWASFT especially in view of the current pressures. The C&PM was not aware of this but would make enquiries.
3. It was appreciated that the report contained external partners collaboration and not UAs. The Member assumed that the C&PM had not yet communicated with the Mayor's Office at BCC. The Clerk was unable to advise but felt that any communication would be with a 'lower level' team. The Clerk agreed to look into this further.

**It was RESOLVED that the -
Report was noted.**

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED -

That the next meeting of the PRSC will take place on 20 April 2023 at 10.30am.

The meeting closed at 11.45hrs

Members asked for further information regarding Purdah and AFA meetings which would take place until May 2023 in UAs (excluding BCC). The Clerk advised that as the meetings were 'Business as Usual', AFA meetings were not affected. The Clerk agreed to circulate an email to Members for their understanding.

Chair