



**AVON FIRE AUTHORITY
PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES (PRSC)**

20 APRIL 2023

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillors Davies, Monk, Nutland and Payne (Chair)

The meeting started at 10:30 am

15. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs Ali, Eddy and Kumar.

16. EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURES

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer explained the emergency evacuation procedures for the room/building.

17. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

18. PUBLIC ACCESS

None received for this meeting.

19. CHAIR'S BUSINESS

Members and Officers introduced themselves.

1. The Chair outlined that the meeting was taking place at Police & Fire Headquarters. 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.
3. The Chair mentioned that he would like to thank Cllr Davies for his service to the Committee. This was his last PRSC meeting, and he was wished well for the future.
4. The Chair referred to the proposed new Committee Structure. If PRSC was disbanded, he thanked Members for their hard work on the Committee and wished them well.

20. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 18 JANUARY 2023.

It was moved by Cllr Payne and seconded by Cllr Davies that the Minutes be approved as correct.

It was RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of 18 January 2023 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

21. 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 2022 to February 2023.

Members were advised that the data presented to them included performance details for the last 11 months. Members were advised that it was therefore reasonable to assume that these figures would be replicated up until the end of the financial year. The CPM advised that the full performance information would be provided up until the end of the financial year at the next meeting.

The key points summarised in the report were:

Prevention:

1. Two of the four fire indicators were on target. Deliberate secondary fires remained off target after the exceptionally dry weather in August. Secondary fires were broadly an incident that did not involve a building or vehicle.
2. The completion of Home Fire Safety Visits were just off target and had improved with 90% of the year-to-date target completed. Numbers were gradually improving and getting back to volumes pre COVID-19.

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 were both just off target, however there was confidence that this would improve as the staffing issues were resolved.

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 15% and attended by 12%.

Resilience:

1. It was reported that the Service was off target for reducing shifts/days lost to sickness. The target for this financial year remained at losing no more than 8.11 shifts or days per person. The report confirmed that currently the Service was off target at 10.17. High numbers of shifts/days had been lost due to COVID-19 in the first few months of the year; however, this had steadily decreased.

2. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) would be discussing sickness management at the April 2023 meeting along with launching a new Attendance Management Policy. Actions would be reported back to Members.

Improve our Service:

1. Revenue Budget variance was on target with zero variance against plan.

Invest in our Staff:

1. The Performance and Development Reviews (PDRs) for staff were just off target with 93% in date. The Service was in the process of replacing the PDR system which would make management easier. PDRs would be in a digital format which should improve the completion rate.

Scorecard Metric 2023/24

1. The CPM discussed the metrics for the coming year, which were approved by SLT in February 2023. Although, there were no new metrics proposed there were some changes made. An increase in the number of education packages and Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV) which was included within the refreshed Service Plan.
2. The sickness target had now been agreed and remained the same as for the last 2 years.
3. It was confirmed that a Transformation metric would be introduced and agreed at the next SLT meeting.

Following questions from Members the following points were made/clarified –
A Member thanked the CPM and their team for producing a comprehensive set of statistics. As this could well be the last meeting of this committee, they pointed out that a new Member looking at statistics, may have several questions.

1. What level of scrutiny is there by Members of setting of targets? How hard and challenging are the numbers compared to other Fire & Rescue Services? Are we setting ourselves to fail if our targets are unachievable and set at say 99%?
2. Statistics and targets set behaviours – employees may not bother to strive once they have hit and achieved a target. What happens with the other 10% once the 90% target has been achieved. Members would need to dig down to establish the statistics i.e., response times for the last 10%.
3. The Member's experience meant that often too many targets made things difficult. A member of the public may want to know what the top five targets are in their area and are they being met.

The CPM responded that there was a fine line between measuring too much. Some other Fire & Rescue Services (FRS) provided more information. At SLT, attendees evaluated our key aims of Prevention, Protection and Response, Resilience, Improving the Service and Investing in our Staff. A performance matrix had been created which outlined the Performance Indicators and which are the biggest risk to us.

The Service could provide more information on how we internally set the targets if Members required and include benchmarking with other FRS if possible. There are no national indicators for FRSs so to a large extent FRSs create their own indicators and targets, which are sometimes not directly comparable. However, where we can, we do benchmark and measure for sickness and incident indicators.

With areas such as processing of licencing applications, the CPM was unsure whether there were benchmarking statistics available but offered to investigate to ensure that we are not out of kilter with other FRSs. There was some benchmarking data available through the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC).

The Clerk explained that following the recent Governance review we would be working on a Members/Officer protocol, which would provide an opportunity for Members to provide their input and ideas on what Members and the public wanted to see in reports.

A Member asked about statistics and when the Service does not meet a target. Does the AFA need to take steps to ensure that the level of response is acceptable.

The CPM added that using the example of response times where our average response time is 8 minutes for 90% of calls, for the remaining calls we still try to arrive within the 8-minute response, but some calls would be over 8 minutes due to their distance within Avon, hence why the average is quoted. The Command-and-Control system looked at anticipated time to get to an incident and this is measured against the actual time and large differences are investigated.

The recommendations were moved by Cllr Payne and seconded by Cllr Monk.

It was RESOLVED that the Committee-

a) Discussed and approved the report.

b) Noted and approved the Scorecard metrics for 2023/24.

22. TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Committee received a report of the Transformation Programme Manager Officer Manager (PMO) on behalf of the temporary Head of Service Transformation Team.

The Head of Transformation would return to the role in May. The team would continue to explore avenues to find resources including contracting out to our IT provider and by talking to our partners. The lack of digital expertise had hampered the pace and direction of the programme and some work packages would be carried over to other areas after the programme had finished.

The key points highlighted were -

1. The FireWatch upgrade project Manager remained on the team on a part time basis and the role had been extended until 30 September 2023. This had been a significant piece of work since the system was upgraded in February.
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 Microsoft 365 trainer role on 13 April.
3. The Transformation Programme remained on track in many areas but had fallen behind in others due to a significant lack of digital resource. The team had also experienced challenges with securing stakeholder capacity due to

workloads and priorities which had been impacted by planning for Industrial Action, people leaving and some sickness.

4. At the most recent review an increase in risk was identified linked to the impact of not having had the intended digital resource in place for quite some time and the capacity of the Digital Project Manager. A proposal to increase the Risk Rating in the Corporate Risk Register was being made to SLT at the March meeting and a verbal update on this will be provided at the meeting.

The PMO Manager mentioned the Dignity and Respect toolkit. The team were extremely proud of the system which was unprecedented for the Service and had involved a lot of work and collaboration with Subject Matter Experts.

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

1. The team were thanked for the work already completed and the recruitment issues were recognised. It was asked whether the additional IT costs would take the project over budget. The PMO Manager confirmed it would not as the budget already included the salaries for these roles. The new IT contract now included up to 20 development hours per month, so no extra costs would be incurred.
2. The issues filling the vacancies were noted and that the Service could not offer a salary that was competitive with the private sector. It was asked whether there was a budget to outsource. It was confirmed that there was a number of pieces of work lined up for the IT team to complete. The team were also exploring internal options by upskilling team members to carry out another role within the team. The Service does try not to outsource as this is incredibly expensive.
The Member commented that the Service and AFA needed to ensure that in the long term, these tasks are completed. It may be that we have to use outside contractors. It was commented that the same issues were discussed at previous meetings and no progress was being made. Although we need to protect our spending and budgets, it could be that a 'one time' hit was necessary. The PMO confirmed that they believed that the additional hours provided for in the new IT contract would be sufficient to continue the necessary work.
3. The Service had approached local Universities and there had been one interview, but the candidate had not been suitable.

**It was RESOLVED that the Committee-
Noted the report, scrutinised its contents and did not make any
recommendations or suggestions.**

23 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.

It was explained that the usual practice would be to provide the last version of the inspection plan approved by SLT. However, given the near proximity of the next inspection, the CFO had commissioned an extraordinary review of the

action plan. Therefore, the usual report was not attached to these meeting papers and would be reviewed at SLT the following week. This report would then be provided to HMI as an up-to-date document of the inspection action plan.

The SLO reminded Members of the forthcoming inspection activity for Round 3. This was undertaken by HMI over a 10-week period and concentrated on the pillars of Effectiveness, Efficiency and Our People. This included a number of elements including documentation request, self-assessment and staff survey to employees. On site interaction with staff would take place in weeks 4 (w/c 19 June) and week 6 (w/c 3 July) and virtual interviews with Heads of Departments in week 7 (w/c 10 July 2023).

Following recent media coverage in relation to values and culture within fire and rescue services (including the publication of the Independent Culture Review of the London Fire Brigade), HMI was commissioned by the Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire at the Home Office to produce a 'spotlight report' covering the issues it found during its Round 2 inspections reviewing Values and Culture. Paragraph 5.8 outlined the findings of the recent publication of the report which looked at evidence from all English Round 1 and 2 Inspections. This included 35 recommendations, 20 of which were for local action and at FRS level. These had been analysed and 20 would be incorporated into our HMI action plan.

A Member expressed a level of disappointment about the HMI process. At a recent fire conference, the Member queried with an HMI Inspector about the 'bland inspectorate' and employing people of a similar type and mindset. The Member added that 'if changes are not made, we would be stuck where we are'. He noted that until the HMI were inspecting in a way that is innovative and looking at change rather than numbers, we would be stuck. They commented that the current inspectors were not helping FRS to do better things. A lot of time, money and effort is put in by the 45 FRS and for a value point of view, HMI are not helping us to deliver a future FRS. The Member would like his point recorded within the minutes as the current situation was not helping us to resolve issues raised including with the previous paper.

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.**

24 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 up until 28 February.

The key points highlighted were –

1. The Capital Programme approved for 2022/23, included adjustments for the final 2021/22 carry over, was £7.741m.
2. This latest report, based upon spending to the end of November 2022, forecasted that total capital spending would 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 delays in supply.

The Head of Finance drew Members attention to Appendix 1, which showed £3.4m carry over into the next financial year. It was confirmed that there was slightly less carried over for Fleet and more for the premises budget including Bedminster.

A Member commented that there was improvement in terms of where the AFA was 4 years ago. The value of money is worth a lot less than when the AFA sold the former HQ building. It was noted that it was useful that there was some understanding going forward in terms of gross implications on the capital programme. It was noted that the reports needed to be realistic. In addition, inflation was mentioned within the report, but this could be increased as it was a threat to the AFAs delivery.

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

25 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 February 2023.

The latest report forecasted that spending against the next revenue budget would be £59k overspent. This was a result largely of the additional pay awards for 2022/23. However, there was additional income from the South West Ambulance Service Foundation Trust agreement and also as a result of our cash balances, we have received additional investment income which amounted to £300k.

The Finance Team were currently working on the March year end position; however, figures were not expected to change.

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

26. 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 £97,720 already allocated against specific grant funding.
2. Of the 29 internal actions 19 were completed and 10 were 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 High-Rise Residential Building (HRRBs) 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. One building was currently wrapped in scaffolding.
4. The Premises Information Plates (PIPs) design had been agreed and work had started on the first eight BCC HRRB's in Barton Hill. The on-going target was to complete five per month. The Provision of Risk Information System (PORIS) team were liaising with the other Unitaries and Unite student accommodation to start creating plans for their HRRB's.
5. Phase 2 of the inquiry commenced in January 2021 and closed in July 2021. The panel were still preparing the report which is expected sometime later this year.
6. A training package had been developed in line with the Evacuation Operational Instruction Note and evacuation packs for frontline appliances had been purchased. Evacuation training for operational staff commenced in mid-March.

A Member thanked the Officer for the report and drew Members attention to a new project in central Bristol which could comprise of a 28-storey block of flats. The constrained nature of the site would mean that an incident would be very challenging, and it was really important that the Service were able to deal with buildings of that height. The Clerk pointed out that under new legislation the Service would be involved at much earlier stage of the design of a new building.

A Member noted that the general public were now a lot more aware of high-rise buildings and the risks involved with such high levels. The work that the Service carried out is incredibly important and their thanks were passed on.

**It was RESOLVED that the Committee -
Noted the report, discussed its contents, and made no recommendations
or suggestions.**

27. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED -

That the next meeting of the PRSC would take place on 27 June 2023 at 10.30am subject to changes which might take place following the Governance review.

The meeting closed at 11.30hrs

Chair