

**Minutes of the Meeting of  
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority  
Standards, Audit and Performance Committee  
Held in the Oak Room, Headquarters  
On Thursday, 28 September 2023 at 2.00 pm**

**Present:**

Councillors Burchett (Vice Chair), Blundell, Hignett, Overton, Pardy (Chair) and Thompson

**Officers**

Simon Hardiman	Chief Fire Officer	CFO
Guy Williams	Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Support)	ACFO
James Walton	Treasurer	
Adam Matthews	Head of Operations and Risk	HoOR
Ged Edwards	Planning and Programme Manager	PPM
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Officer	ESO

**1 Apologies for Absence**

Councillor Evans

Avtar Sohal and Willem Smit, External Audit; Andy Bromage, Internal Audit; and the Head of Finance

**2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

None

**3 Public Questions**

None

**4 Minutes**

**Resolved**, with Councillors Burchett and Hignett abstaining as they were not present at the meeting, that the minutes of the Standards, Audit and Performance Committee, held on 27 April 2023, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

**5 Committee Training**

The Committee was asked to consider what training if any they wished to receive in order for them to fulfil their role on the Committee.

**Resolved** that the Chair of the Committee and the ESO will work together to identify appropriate training for the Committee.

## 6 Annual Review 2022/23

This report presented the draft Annual Review (also known as the Annual Statement of Assurance) for 2022/23 and gave the Committee an opportunity to make comment on the draft, prior to its going forward to the full Fire Authority for consideration and approval.

The ACFO presented this report and gave an overview of the Annual Review that was attached at the Appendix to the report.

The ESO noted that an electronic link to the document should have been provided to Members. This will be done in future.

The ACFO advised that the Annual Review is a legislatively required public document, which has been designed to appeal to all communities. The CFO advised that as such, the Service would like to publicise the Annual Review through its social media channels. This will enable the numbers of people accessing the document to be monitored via the analytic data collected on those channels.

Members asked if there had been much feedback from the public on previous years' Annual Reviews. The ACFO explained that the document is part of the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) process and as such helps to capture feedback to inform the Service going forward.

Members also asked if any paper copies were made available to the public, for example in libraries. The ACFO agreed that this would be done this year.

**Resolved** that the Committee recommend the draft Annual Review 2022/23 for consideration and approval by the Fire Authority,

## 7 Review of Whistleblowing Policy

This report requested the Committee to recommend that the Fire Authority approve the Whistleblowing Policy (attached at the Appendix to the report).

The HHRA presented this report and highlighted the two sections that have been added to the Reporting of Illegality and Malpractice – Whistleblowing Brigade Order. These were the section of page 6 of the Order which covers the confidential independent reporting hotline provided by Say So; and the section on page 7 of the Order which details the welfare and support options that are available to support those who do raise concerns.

Members asked if all employees are required to complete General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) training. The HHRA confirmed that all employees complete regular training on this.

Members asked who Say So report to within the Service. The HHRA explained that the Executive Officers and the HHRA receive notification when an issue is reported to Say So.

Since the reporting hotline was introduced, there have been two instances of reports being made which have both been dealt with. In both instances, the reports were anonymised when they came into the Service; in one of the cases, Say So contacted the person reporting the issue for further information and the other case did not give enough information for it to be progressed further.

Members also asked who staff report concerns or issues to, if the behaviour concerned is something that all areas of the Service are doing, including the senior managers. The CFO explained that there is an HMI Reporting Line available to all staff which would be the most appropriate reporting method in these circumstances. Officers undertook to include reference to this in the Brigade Order.

The Committee agreed that the addition of the confidential reporting facility is a very good idea, particularly as it allows staff to maintain anonymity when raising concerns.

**Resolved** that having considered the Whistleblowing Policy, as attached at the Appendix to the report, the Committee recommend that the Fire Authority approve the Policy, with the inclusion of the HMI Reporting Line.

## **8 Corporate Risk Management Summary**

This report updated Members on the status of risks on the Corporate Risk Register.

The PPM presented this report and advised the Committee that two risks have been removed from the Risk Register since the last report to this Committee. These are the Clinical Governance risk as these services have been agreed by the Service Management Team (SMT) and a 24-month contract is in place with an external provider; and the New Fire Kit risk where almost all kit has now been reworked to address the issues with the lining and reissued.

The PPM also advised that one new risk has been added to the Risk Register. This relates to Legal Vehicle Compliance and the Service's duty to comply with road transport legislation. A temporary member of staff is in place in Workshops for 13 weeks to assist with addressing this issue.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the report.

## **9 Annual Governance Statement Improvement Plan 2023/24**

This report summarised the progress made to date against the improvements contained in the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) Improvement Plan 2023/24.

The PPM presented this report and advised that all areas of the AGS are reported and monitored through internal boards, and this is detailed in the Appendix to the report.

The PPM highlighted Area of Review 7 – oversee the replacement of the new Command & Control (C&C) system and reported that it is likely that the Service will be ready to sign off the contract for this within the next week. Current estimates suggest that the project will take 18 months to complete.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the progress made on the 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement Improvement Plan.

## **Performance**

### **10a Corporate Performance Indicators including On Call Duty System Performance – April to June 2023**

This report presented a summary of the Service's performance from April to June 2023.

The ACFO presented the report and highlighted the following points to the Committee.

#### **Corporate Performance Indicator (CPI) 1 – All Fires**

Performance for this CPI is above the upper tolerance limit due to the hot weather in May and June. This is not unusual for those months and there is a pattern of a spike in incident numbers tending to follow summer weather. It is expected that performance will fall back within the tolerance levels during the year.

#### **CPI 2 – Accidental Dwelling Fires**

Performance for this indicator is equal to the performance in the same quarter of 2022/23. It is positive to note that 87% the incidents attended had working smoke alarms in the property.

#### **CPI 3 – Deliberate Fire**

Performance for this CPI is more challenging with a significant increase in incidents during May and June with 38 deliberate fires being reported in both May and June. There were no distinct patterns to the fires recorded within the Shropshire area. In the Telford & Wrekin area, there were small pockets of similar incident types in recognised crime hotspots and identified areas of deprivation but none of these were sufficient enough to warrant single or multiagency tasking or targeting due to the low number of incidents in specific wards. The Service's Prevention Team does, however, continue to work with partner agencies in the areas affected to address issues such as fly tipping.

#### **CPI 4 – Fire Related Deaths and Serious Injuries**

There were no fire related deaths during the reporting period, however there were two incidents where serious injuries were recorded, both of which were deemed to be accidental.

### **CPI 5 – Fires Confined to Room of Origin**

88% of the fires attended during Quarter 1 were contained within room that they had started in. This is possibly attributable to the presence of working smoke alarms in the properties concerned and the occupiers of the properties following fire safety advice.

### **CPI 6 – Injuries Sustained to Staff Through Operational Activity**

Two injuries were recorded to staff during the reporting period; both of which were RIDDOR reportable as they resulted in absences of over 7-days.

### **CPI 7 – Response Standard – Attendance on average of 85% of occasions**

The Service is above target in all areas of the Response Standard with performance achieved being exactly the same as in the same period of 2022/23.

### **CPI 8 – Fires in Regulated Buildings**

There has been a 10% increase in the figures for this CPI when compared to the same quarter last year. The figure of 17 fires in June is an outlier caused by data related to barn fires being included in the reporting for this CPI. Officers are working to rectify this issue and these corrections will be reflected in future reports.

### **CPI 9 - Establishment, Diversity and Firefighter Competence**

Incident Command refresher training is ongoing to ensure that the Service is meeting the legal requirements placed on it.

There has been a significant improvement in the competency levels for Fire Responder Emergency Care (FREC) with only 2% of operational staff awaiting renewal in this competence area now.

### **On Call Duty System Performance**

There have been challenges with availability at Prees which relate to the changes in drivers' hours legislation, but performance has improved for this station in comparison to the same period in 2022/23. There are also issues with Tweedale, where a lot of firefighters also hold wholetime contracts in this Service and in West Midlands Fire Service, which affects availability. Recruitment has always been difficult for Shrewsbury On Call and this is reflected in their availability figures. The Service is looking at On Call availability and sustainability and possible solutions to address these issues through its On Call Sustainability Project.

Members asked if it was correct that Telford Central does not have any On Call crew. The ACFO confirmed that Telford Central is a completely wholetime crewed station, however the possibility of introducing an On Call crew will be considered in the Service's next CRMP.

Members noted a discrepancy in the cumulative totals for CPI 3 - Deliberate Fires, which the ACFO undertook to check.

Members asked why the CPIs do not include road traffic collision and water incident data. The ACFO advised that it is in the Fire Authority's gift to decide what they would like to measure in the CPIs. The CFO added that when these CPIs were introduced there were discussions about developing into the recording of other areas in the future and this will be looked in forthcoming years. Members felt that it was important for the Service to give a rounded picture of all its work, especially if its Prevention work is successful and there is a reduction in the number of fires it attends.

Members queried the risks related to one individual being out of competence and the HoOR explained that competency levels are scrutinised at the Service's internal Performance and Risk meeting and if any of the competencies relate to legislative or risk critical areas, then individuals are taken off the run to mitigate the risk level.

The HoOR also explained that the Service does aim to renew competencies more frequently than required legislatively to take account of the primary employment pressures that On Call employees have. For example, Level 1 Incident Command is renewed annually, even though it only needs to be done every two years; Emergency Response Driver Training (ERDT), i.e., blue light driving, is renewed every three years rather than the required five years. There is a legislative change due which will extend the ERDT course and will include night-time driving. The impacts of this change are being worked through internally. The CFO added that the Service is working well within the tolerances for competencies, and this served it well during the pandemic.

Members asked if the introduction of the 20 mph in Wales will have any effect on the Service's cross border responding, particularly when assisting North Wales Fire and Rescue Service. The CFO replied that he can foresee a potential for an impact on this Service, but this may be more related to the differences in kit used by the Services etc.

Members also asked that the speed restrictions for blue light driving are. The HoOR explained that the Service indicates an additional 20 mph speed when on blue lights, but this is purely a recommendation and drivers must always drive according to the road conditions.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the report.

## **10b Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service Values and Culture Report Update**

This report presented the Service's progress against the recommendations made to the sector in the His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Values and Culture in the Fire and Rescue Services report.

The ACFO presented this report and advised that meeting some of the recommendations is beyond the Service's control as they are reliant on actions being completed by other agencies first.

The ACFO highlighted Recommendation 21 which relates to a full 360-degree feedback process being in place for senior leaders and managers (ACFO equivalent and above). This is in place and will also be rolled out across the SMT, after which the process will be cascaded to leaders and managers across the organisation. This will ensure that Recommendation 22 which requires a full 360-degree process to be in place for all leaders and managers in the Service is met.

The 360-degree feedback for SMT Members will be completed by the end of October 2023 with one-to-one feedback being given to individuals in January 2024. Members then queried if the Service is meeting the target of the 1 September 2023 that is specified in Recommendation 22. The ACFO responded that the Service wanted the 360-degree process to be introduced properly and as such is comfortable that it may not be meeting the specified target date for this recommendation.

The Committee then gave a vote of thanks to Officers for the long-term vision and commitment that they are given to addressing these issues.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the report.

## **Standards**

### **11 Review of Protocols**

**Resolved** that, having noted the minor amendments proposed to the Protocol on Member / Officer Relations and the Protocol on Gifts and Hospitality for Members, the Committee recommend these to the Fire Authority for approval.

## **Pension Board**

### **12 Pension Board Minutes**

The Committee received the minutes of the Authority's Pension Board meeting that was held on 6 July 2023.

The ACFO highlighted the ongoing discussion regarding the issue of the Age Discrimination remedy and advised that it has been announced that the legislation requiring Immediate Detriment (ID) payments to be made will come into effect from 1 October 2023. This Authority has previously not made any ID payments due to the tax implications and legal advice received. The Pension Board did want to ask the Authority to reconsider their decision on this issue, but this is no longer necessary due to the legislation being enacted. An update paper on the ID Remedy issue will be delivered to the Fire Authority at its October meeting.

**Resolved** that the Committee receive and note the minutes of the Pension Board meeting held on 6 July 2023.

The meeting closed at 3.05 pm.

**Chair** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_