

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
Audit and Performance Management Committee
held at Brigade Headquarters, Shrewsbury
on Thursday, 27 November 2008 at 5.00 pm**

Present

Councillors Allen, Hurst-Knight, Jones, Mason and Mellings

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Dr Drummond and Gibbon.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes

Members received the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Performance Management Committee, held on 11 September 2008.

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Performance Management Committee, held on 11 September 2008, be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record

4 Public Questions

No public questions, statements or petitions had been received.

5 Confidential Information

Resolved that the public be excluded from the meeting for item 6 on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of information, which the Government has directed should, for the time being, be kept confidential.

6 Performance Assessment Feedback

The Chair welcomed Pauline Mack, Audit Commission, to the meeting.

Pauline Mack gave a verbal report to the meeting on the 2008 Direction of Travel and Use of Resources Audits.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the verbal report.

The meeting reverted to open session at this point.

7 Performance Assessment – Key Performance Indicators

This report informed Members of the expected score attributed to this Authority for the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) element of the performance assessment 2007/08, and predicted outturn based on the current performance of the KPIs 2008/09.

The Information Officer explained that Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service were predicted to achieve a 4 for this part of the assessment in 2007/08. The prediction for 2008/09 is that there will be 8 KPIs in the Upper Threshold and 2 KPIs in the Mid Threshold.

Councillor Allen felt that congratulations should be conveyed to the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) and all staff for this achievement and suggested that this may be done through a Chief Fire Officer's newsletter. The CFO agreed with this but proposed that this should be sent out in February 2009, when the full and verified results had been released. The CFO also commented that the Audit Commission had recently identified that they saw the KPIs as the best indicator of service quality.

Resolved that the Committee:

- a) Note the report content; and
- b) Agree to monitor action plans necessary on failing or high risk indicators.

8 Performance against Best Value Performance Indicators April to September 2008

This report informed Members of the Brigade's performance against nationally prescribed Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) for the period 1 April 2008 to 30 September 2008.

The Information Officer informed the meeting that a commentary box had been added to Appendix A as requested at the September meeting of the Committee. Each of the appendices to the report was then discussed in detail and a brief summary of the more significant points raised is given below.

Appendix A

- 11a Success or failure against this indicator will vary according to the total number of staff in the establishment. The same is true for BVPIs 16a(i), 16a(ii), 17 and 210. This indicator will be adjusted according to the total number of staff in the establishment.

- 142(iii) Councillor Mellings asked what had led to this indicator now achieving target. The Information Officer explained that this was due to more robust data being obtained and the introduction of various Service wide initiatives.
- 209(iii) This indicator has failed by one dwelling. Councillor Mason asked if there is any estimate of the number of homes in the county that do not have smoke detectors fitted. The Head of Fire Prevention explained that is difficult to judge this but the Service is targeting 'at risk' groups and needs to try and influence behaviour as well as fitting smoke alarms
- 144 This indicator has failed by one fire but is showing improvement from last year.
- 149(i) Performance against all parts of BVPI 149 have improved significantly and is a real success story for the Service however there are concerns about how much scope there is for improving performance further.
- 208 The failure of this indicator is due to the difference of one extra person.

Appendix B

The failure for the availability of wholetime fire appliances is due to there being one occasion when the boat was off the run.

Appendix C

Performance against the Equality and Diversity targets for 2008/09 will be reported in March 2009.

The CFO informed the Committee that a letter is to be sent to Communities and Local Government (CLG) regarding Equality and Diversity Recruitment and Stretch Targets for 2008 – 2013. If CLG agree the targets, then capital funding will be provided to the Service to assist in achieving them.

Appendix D

The Information Officer explained that the incidents recorded as failed in this appendix had only failed by seconds. Work is also in development to improve the response times to water incidents, particularly in high risk areas such as Shrewsbury.

Appendix E

Councillor Allen asked if the targets set by Telford & Wrekin Council for National Indicators 33 and 49 were unrealistic. The CFO commented that they did need to be reviewed.

There was no significant discussion in relation to Appendices F, G, H and I.

Resolved that the Committee

- a) Note the new reporting style and content in respect of performance; and
- b) Having considered the information provided, give comments, where appropriate, for amendments to future reports to aid the regular assessment of performance.

9 Retained Duty System Performance Monitoring

This report provided information regarding the ongoing performance of the Retained Duty System (RDS) in Shropshire.

The CFO explained that there are currently issues regarding the Oswestry appliances. As Oswestry has two appliances it needs to maintain attendance of nine RDS firefighters to ensure that they are both kept on run. There have been several factors which have made this difficult but these are being addressed.

The CFO highlighted Graph C in the report which shows the impact that the Retained Support Officers have had in providing cover for station such as Cleobury Mortimer and Bridgnorth.

Graph D shows that the overall establishment numbers for RDS staff are starting to drop. The CFO commented that initially this had been a concern for the Service but is actually a reflection of the fact that the increase in numbers means that quality can be managed better.

The Community Fire Safety Advocates, who are all RDS firefighters, came into post on 4 November 2008 and initial reports are that their introduction has been extremely successful. 8 RDS staff have also been recruited as Business Fire Safety advocates and are currently being trained to undertake this role.

Councillor Mellings asked if any targets had been set or anything included in the budget with regard to smoke alarm installation, particularly given that the number of smoke detectors being fitted is decreasing. The Head of Fire Prevention explained that Home Fire Safety assessments take longer to complete, hence why less visits are being undertaken and also that engaging with 'at risk' groups can also involve more work and time. The Head of Fire Prevention also commented that there is an issue about the costs of providing smoke alarms for people with special needs, such as hard of hearing, which can cost up to £100 each. The Service is working with Shropshire County Council to address this issue.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the report.

10 Summary of Progress within the Improvement Priorities and Core Business for 2008/09

This report informed Members of progress by exception within the Improvement Priorities Programme for 2008/09 and included a presentation on the Core Business identified under the Core Value area, Community.

The Programme Manager explained that there are three issues which remain open on the issue log. These are

Issue ID 1 – Reduce incidence of fire crime

This is still open because of problems with recruitment but it is hoped that these problems will be addressed by the end of December 2008.

Issue ID 7 – Manage refurbishment/relocation of Shrewsbury and Wellington stations and associated business process improvements

This issue is likely to remain open for some time. Fortnightly meetings have been set up with the architects with regard to the Shrewsbury project and an update on progress with the Shrewsbury and Wellington projects will be given to the Fire Authority at its December 2008 meeting.

Issue ID 8 – provide accurate and timely information through the delivery of a performance management system

The performance management system has been designed and will be demonstrated at the Officer in Charge meetings in December 2008, it will then be rolled out across the Service.

The Head of Fire Prevention gave a presentation on the Core Business identified under the Core Value area, Community, to the meeting. A brief summary of the discussion generated from this presentation is given below.

Councillor Mason asked about the effect of mobile phones on the number of hoax calls. The Head of Fire Prevention explained that when a hoax call is received from a mobile phone, a text message is sent to the number. If a further hoax call is received from the same number then the mobile phone provider cuts off the number concerned.

Councillor Mason asked about issues arising from housing developments, for example the closeness of dwellings and the increase in 3 storey developments. The Head of Fire Prevention explained that there are robust building regulations that are applied to new developments, for example new properties must have hard wired smoke detectors. The real concern however is over older properties which have been converted or renovated.

The CFO thanked the Head of Fire Prevention for his presentation, which the meeting agreed had been very informative.

Resolved that the Committee

- a) note the progress and any actions taken to manage the delivery of the Improvement Priorities that are slipping / failing; and
- b) receive the presentation on the Core Business included within the Core Value area, Community.

11 Annual Governance Statement Improvement Plan 2008/09

This report summarised the progress made to date against the improvements contained in the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) Improvement Plan 2008/09.

Councillor Jones asked if there would be sufficient resources to complete the outstanding improvement area, which relates to a review of current employment policies. It was confirmed that there should be no problems with completing this by the new improvement date of April 2009.

Resolved that the Committee note the progress made against each of the improvements contained in the Fire Authority's AGS Improvement Plan 2008/09.

12 Quarterly Progress on the Corporate Equality Action Plan

The purpose of this report was to update Members on the progress of the actions identified within the Corporate Equality Action Plan (CEAP) which are being monitored through the Directorate Business Plans.

The CFO reported that the Diversity Forum meeting was to be held at Bridgnorth Fire Station on 2 December 2008.

Councillor Allen commented that he had contact with several disability support groups in the Telford and Wrekin area and undertook to pass contact details for these groups to the Head of Fire Prevention.

Resolved that the Committee

- a) note the progress on the actions in the CEAP; and
- b) note the additional items as agreed by the Equality and Diversity Steering Group to be added to the CEAP.

13 Audit Training for Members

This report informed Members of specific training priorities identified as the basis for a training programme.

Councillor Mason commented that organising the audit training sessions for before Fire Authority meetings would open the training to a wider audience. The meeting agreed that this approach should be tried first, with a session on the role of the Audit Committee being arranged for before the Fire Authority meeting in February 2009.

Resolved that the Committee

- a) confirm its training priorities;
- b) confirm an initial session to cover the role of the Audit Committee be arranged for before the Fire Authority meeting in February 2009; and
- c) ask that a full programme be arranged to deal with its other priority areas, in conjunction with broader training plans of the Authority.

The meeting closed at 6.45 pm

Chair.....

Date.....