

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority
Audit and Performance Management Committee
held at Brigade Headquarters, Shrewsbury,
on Thursday, 7 December 2006 at 5.00 pm**

Present: Councillors Lt Col Allen (Chair), Hurst-Knight, Mellings, Minnery (from 5.10 pm) and Tandy

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Picken.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes

Members received the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee, held on 7 September 2006.

Resolved: *that the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 7 September 2006, be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record*

4 Public Questions

No questions, statements or petitions had been received from members of the public.

5 Performance Plan 2006 – 08 Direction of Travel Statements Progress Update

This report informed Members of progress to date against the Direction of Travel Statements contained within the Fire Authority's 2006 – 08 Performance Plan.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer presented this report and talked Members through the structure of the table in the appendix to the report. It was pointed out the 'Progress to date' column provides a summary of output, as this column would be unmanageable, if completed fully.



The Audit Commission has completed the Direction of Travel, Use of Resources and Value for Money assessments. The results of these assessments will not be formally published until March 2007 but initial feedback is that the results are promising.

Councillor Hurst-Knight asked about progress on the 'outreach vehicle', referred to in Corporate Objective 1. The Chief Fire Officer reported that work on this is virtually complete and it is anticipated that the vehicle will be delivered on target.

Councillor Hurst-Knight also asked about Member development, which is referred to in Corporate Objective 9. The Chief Fire Officer explained that a report on the outcome of the Member Development Reviews had been submitted to the Human Resources Committee. This report proposed a one-day seminar for Members on the issues that were most significant, followed by three more scheduled training sessions throughout 2007. These proposals will be brought before the Fire Authority on 20 December 2006 for approval.

Councillor Mellings commented on how useful the 'Progress to Date' column was and praised the Service's commitment to Community Fire Safety.

Councillor Minnery arrived at this point (5.10 pm).

Councillor Tandy asked if there were any areas of the report, where the Service was not performing well or which could be viewed as potential risks. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer explained that a shared priority report is being produced to identify areas of risk but that at the moment there were no areas for concern. The Chief Fire Officer felt that areas, which need increased resources, such as the data quality and elderly persons posts, could be highlighted in this report. Councillor Mellings asked about sources of funding for these areas. The Chief Fire Officer explained that the funding will need to be found from next year's budget and the issue is to be discussed at the Fire Authority meeting on 20 December 2006.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer suggested, and Members agreed, that the table be amended in future reports to include a 'risk and issue' column.

Resolved: *that Members note the contents of the report in respect of progress against the Direction of Travel Statements*

6 Performance against Best Value Performance Indicators April 2006 to June 2006

This report informed Members of the Brigade's performance against nationally prescribed Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) for the period 1 April to 30 September 2006.

The Programme Manager gave a commentary on each of the indicators, included in Appendix B, and answered questions from Members. A brief summary of the more significant points raised is given below.



- 142(ii) There was a slight rise in this indicator in July. It is anticipated that this is a seasonal rise and that the target is likely to be achieved, if the current downward trend continues.
- 143(i) Councillor Minnery asked if the title of the graph was correct, as the dates given are April 2005 to September 2006. This is correct as the graph shows a trendline for both 2005/06 and 2006/07.
- 144 This indicator reached 100% in June but has since dropped. It should, however, reach its target. This is a Key Performance Indicator and will need to be monitored closely, as the upper and lower performance thresholds are very close. Councillor Allen asked if education had any impact on this indicator. It was confirmed that educating firefighters to record fires properly had had an effect on this indicator.
- 146(i) It is unlikely that the target for this indicator will be reached. It was noted that the 'better' and 'worse' labels on the graph are the wrong way round.
- 149(i) There is a good downward trend on this indicator. Councillor Allen asked if this was due to the fact that many buildings are now non-smoking. This has little effect and the improvement is mainly due to education and better maintenance of equipment.
- 149(ii) + (iii) These are both new indicators and it has been difficult to set targets for them.
- 206(ii) This indicator has risen between July and September and further analysis is needed to identify the reasons for this increase.
- 206(iv) Councillor Allen asked for a definition of a secondary fire. These are fires that occur in abandoned vehicles but not those that have been abandoned after being stolen.
- 207 This is a new indicator and there have been some issues about the definition of non-domestic properties. The CIPFA (Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy) definition is those properties that are rateable but there are requirements to report on some properties, which are not rateable. The Department for Communities and Local Government has recognised these anomalies.
- 209(ii) This indicator seems to show that performance is dropping, however it should not be assumed that smoke detectors are not activating because they have no batteries or are faulty. It could be that there has been a quick response time by crews or that the occupiers have followed fire safety advice.

The table on Local Standards shows that performance against the target for attendance of five firefighters at fires is good. The target for the attendance of



eight firefighters is not being met but the introduction of extra large cabs and retained recruitment should help to address this.

Performance for the attendance of the rescue tender at road traffic collisions is not on target. It does, however, depend on the location of the incident, as there are some parts of the County that cannot be reached, from Wellington, within 30 minutes. Plans are in place to address this by introducing Ford Rangers, carrying rescue equipment, at several stations around the County.

Councillor Minnery queried the performance figures for September. The Head of Performance and Risk undertook to investigate the reasons for this for the next meeting.

11c Councillor Minnery queried the figure for the number of top earners in the Service. On previous indicators it was 14 but it is 18 on this indicator. This will be rectified in the next report.

17a It is possible that wholetime appointments made in January may have a positive effect on performance against this indicator.

Appendix D shows the availability of the Service's retained and wholetime firefighters. Retained appliance availability in September has improved and the aim is for the retained availability to increase, whilst the occasions where crews are supernumerary decrease.

There was a query on the graph for wholetime availability at Telford Central, which showed a low figure for August 2006. The Head of Performance and Risk undertook to investigate how this had been measured.

Appendix E provided information on accidents on duty. The Health and Safety Manager was unable to attend the meeting but The Head of Performance and Risk gave a summary of those 'on-duty' accidents, since November 2005, which had required time off work. The meeting agreed that this information should be provided as a verbal update only. Members were pleased that there had been no major accidents and acknowledged the impact that the Health and Safety Officer's work had had on reducing the number of accidents

Appendix F shows the number of primary fires by station and, from an Integrated Risk Management Planning point of view, it is possible that Oswestry may need looking at in future.

Councillor Tandy asked what work was being done on fires at Christmas, for example work on electrical safety etc. There is a specific Christmas campaign and a national campaign. Crews also go out into the town centres to speak to the public about fire safety.

Councillor Tandy also commented on the cultural audit. This will be carried out in January 2007 with the results being available in April 2007. Councillor Allen asked if there was expected to be any reluctance amongst staff about



completing the questionnaire. Some apprehension amongst staff is anticipated but the questionnaire is confidential and anonymous so this should help to allay any fears.

Having considered the information provided, Members

Resolved: *that the report content in respect of performance be noted and that no amendments be made for the next report*

7 Internal and External Audits: Data, Information Technology and Communications

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer gave a verbal update on the progress of Brigade Order 16 on Data, Information Technology and Communications. As explained at the last Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, this Brigade Order has been rewritten and was going through consultation.

The consultation period for the Brigade Order has now finished and it has been sent to the representative bodies for comment. The Order will be published by the end of December 2006.

The order forms part of a three-part strategy, which has been developed in response to the gaps identified by the internal auditors report. The other two parts of the strategy are the procurement of a performance / management information system and the employment of an Information Officer to co-ordinate data capture and to ensure quality control of data.

Resolved: *that Members note the progress with regard to Brigade Order 16 on Data, Information Technology and Communications*

8 Statement on Internal Control Improvement Plan Progress

This report informed Members of the progress being made against the Fire Authority's Statement on Internal Control Improvement Plan 2006/07.

The Head of Performance and Risk reported that the Brigade's Policy Group had approved the extension of the target date for creation of Departmental Risk Registers. The completion date for this item is now April 2007.

Councillor Hurst-Knight asked for further information about the staff handbook (item 6.2). This has not yet been started but it is anticipated that it will be similar to the Fire Authority Members' handbook and will combine all necessary information for staff in one source.

Councillor Mellings asked when the Brigade Order referred to in item 4.1 will be completed. This should be ready very shortly.

Councillor Mellings also asked if any follow-up work had been undertaken after the circulation of the Anti-Fraud and Corruption strategies to staff.



Currently any further information is circulated on the 'Pink' Brigade newsletter with those members of staff, who are in a more sensitive position, e.g. budget holders, being updated on a one-to-basis when necessary.

Resolved: *that Members note the contents of the report*

9 Summary of Complaints and Compliments 2005/06 and 2006/07

This report advised Members of summary details regarding the compliments and complaints received during 2005/06 and the first six months of 2006/07 (April – September).

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer explained that the Service does not seek to overturn complainant's remarks but uses them as a learning point and to inform service improvement.

As a result of the Equality Impact Assessments, the ethnicity of complainants will be recorded from now on.

Complaints are not currently published on the Service's website due to the difficulties of ensuring that sensitive information is not revealed in the public domain.

It has been decided that, in future, any compliments received will be acknowledged with a standard letter. Members agreed strongly with this decision.

Resolved: *that Members note the contents of the report*

The meeting closed at 6.45 pm

Chair.....

Date.....

