

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
Strategy and Resources Committee
held via Microsoft Teams
on Thursday, 18 March 2021 at 2.00 pm**

Present

Members

Councillors Carter, Hartin (Vice-Chair), Lavery, Mellings (Chair), Pardy, Roberts and Wynn

Officers

Rod Hammerton	Chief Fire Officer	CFO
Simon Hardiman	Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Support)	ACFO (SS)
Dan Quinn	Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery)	ACFO (SD)
James Walton	Treasurer to Fire Authority	Treasurer
Germaine Worker	Head of HR and Administration	HHRA
Natalie Parkinson	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer	EDIO
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Officer	ESO

1 Apologies for Absence

None

2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None

3 Public Questions

None

4 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 28 January 2021, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

5 Committee Work Plan 2021/22

This report reviewed progress against the Strategy and Resources Committee 2020/21 Work Plan and put forward a 2021/22 Work Plan for consideration and approval by Members.

Resolved that the Committee

- a) Note progress made against the Strategy and Resources Committee 2020/21 Work Plan; and
- b) Approve the Work Plan for 2021/22, attached as an appendix to the report, without amendment.

6 Committee Terms of Reference

A review of the Strategy and Resources Committee Terms of Reference and delegations is currently being undertaken by Officers and the Chair of the Committee. This review follows the governance changes that were agreed by the Fire Authority in June 2019.

Officers will meet with the Clerk in the last week of March to finalise the outcomes of the review with any resulting amendments to the Terms of Reference being taken forward to the Fire Authority's Annual Meeting in June 2021 for ratification.

Resolved that the Committee note the update.

7 Review of Member Role Descriptions

This report asked Members to review the Role Descriptions for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee.

There was a discussion regarding the possible expansion of the first bullet point under Main Responsibilities in both Role Descriptions to include Senior Officers. However, the Committee concluded that this amendment was not necessary as there is a direct relationship between the Chief Fire Officer and the Chair and Vice-Chair.

Resolved that the Committee agree the Role Descriptions for Chair and Vice-Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee, as set out in the Appendix to the report.

8 Outline Report for the Introduction of New Corporate Performance Indicators

This report provided information and recommendations for consideration and agreement by the Strategy and Resources Committee in relation to work currently being undertaken by the Service to introduce a new set of corporate performance measures.

Councillor Wynn joined the meeting at this point (2.20 pm)

The Chair introduced this report and explained that this Committee has delegated powers to agree performance indicators and targets; with the Standards, Audit and Performance Committee then being responsible for monitoring performance against those targets.

The Fire Authority has agreed that a new strategic planning framework should be implemented across the Service. This includes the development of a new suite of Corporate Performance Indicators (CPIs) including two additional targets, the application of tolerances to CPIs and a move towards trends and forecasting in performance monitoring.

The ACFO (SS) then presented the report and talked through each of the proposed CPIs. A synopsis of the points raised and discussed for each CPI is set out below.

CPI 1 – All fires

Officers recommend that a 5% tolerance band be applied to this indicator due to volatility in terms of the variance in year on year figures

CPI 2 – Accidental Dwelling Fires

Officers propose that a 10% tolerance be applied to this CPI which links to the Service's prevention activity. Officers believe that this gives a realistic target which is achievable and stretching.

CPI 3 – Deliberate Fires

It is proposed that a 7% tolerance be applied to this indicator. This is representative of the variance in performance between the 2015/16 figure and the projected performance figure of 6.3% for 2021/22.

CPI 4 – Fire related deaths and serious injuries

The Service will continue to separate fire related deaths and serious injuries to enable more meaningful analysis of performance and to present a clear picture in terms of severity. Reporting to Authority and Committees will include a narrative overview of incidents. Due to the nature of this CPI, it is not deemed appropriate to apply an upper and lower tolerance to it.

CPI 5 – Fires confined to room of origin

This is a more recently implemented indicator which aims to give a measure of the impact of Prevention and Protection activity. Setting a 2% tolerance for this CPI will make this a stretch target

CPI 6 – Injuries sustained to staff through operational activity

It is the Service's ambition to achieve zero injuries to staff, so it is therefore not appropriate for upper and lower tolerances to be set for this CPI.

Members commented that whilst all the CPIs are important, this is probably the most important as the safety of staff is vital.

CPI 7 – Response Standard – monitored against 3 categories of Urban, Town & Fringe and Rural

It is proposed that the Service monitor and report performance against each of the three identified areas with the aim of meeting response times on 85% of occasions. The benefit of splitting performance monitoring into the three distinct areas is that it allows the direction of resources as necessary and in response to performance.

The CFO commented that this response standard is as set out in the Services Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). The fundamental change away from an aggregate performance figure will allow specific identification of issues and areas affected.

Members commented that the Fire Authority need to be aware of the response standards having been through the consultation process before being adopted in the CRMP. It is possible that this change may be picked up again by the communities of Shropshire as it directly affects them. The CFO explained that a news item has already been broadcast on local radio about this issue but there has been no further feedback. The response standard for urban areas has not changed but the new standards do enable the Service's performance to be seen clearly. It also informs better dialogue with rural areas and communities.

CPI 8 – Fires in regulated buildings

This is a new indicator which is directly linked to the work of the Protection Department who check compliance with the Regulatory Reform Order (RRO), and issue enforcement notices linked to this. Incident numbers are currently low, and it has been difficult to work out how to measure performance so this CPI may be amended after the first year of performance monitoring.

The CFO commented that Protection increasing their scrutiny of business feeds into the HMICFRS Inspection which concluded that whilst the Protection Department are performing strongly, there were areas for improvement.

CPI 9 – Diversity, Establishment and Firefighter competence

This is a new indicator which is linked to People and enables comparison of performance to the Service's HMICFRS Inspection report. There is currently no tolerance level proposed for this CPI, but Officers suggest that there should be an aim of achieving 90% against each skill set.

The Committee requested that a performance update on these CPIs be brought to the Committee in 6 months' time as opposed to the usual 12 monthly update so that their impact can be monitored closely.

Members queried if the Service's CPIs are in line with those of Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service. The ACFO (SS) confirmed that they are and explained that Officer to develop suitable CPIs for Finance and Environmental issues in the future.

The Chair commented that it was important for the Committee to have considered these CPIs in detail as they are important for the Service and the Authority as a method of measuring delivery and performance. Further information is included in the Service's Performance Framework.

Members also recognised that these CPIs provide an opportunity for the Service to benchmark performance against other fire and rescue services.

Resolved that the Committee

- a) Note the report and acknowledge the work undertaken to determine the new Corporate Performance Indicators for the Service; and
- b) Approve the proposed Corporate Performance Indicators for 2021-2022, inclusive of set tolerances.

9 Service Plan 2021-2025

This report updated the Committee on the latest position regarding the Service Plan 2021-2025.

The CFO explained that the Service Plan is the bridging plan between departments and the Service's strategies. As such this Plan is directed at the operational level of the Service and care is taken to avoid duplicating the contents of the CRMP.

Resolved that the Committee

- a) Note the draft Four Year Action Plan; and
- b) Agree that the Service Plan 2021-2025 will be presented to the Fire Authority at its meeting in June 2021.

10 People Strategy End of Year Report

This report provided an update on the achievements that have been made against the People Strategy 2016-2020 and presents the new People Strategy for 2021-2025.

The Chair thanked all Service staff for their work and commitment over the last 12 months. The response and involvement of employees has been exemplary.

The HHRA presented this report and highlighted the following achievements:

Developing Leadership Capacity

- The introduction of the Career Progression Gateway as the new promotion process
- The adoption and launch of the Workplace Charter to inform staff behaviour at work
- The implementation of a new streamlined and simplified Individual Performance and Development Review

Organisational Development and Engagement

- The development of monthly attendance management together with systems for managing Covid-19 testing and absence
- The continued maintenance of effective relationships and engagement with Representative Bodies
- Achieving the highest UK overall engagement score across fire and rescue service benchmark data for the 2019 Staff Survey

Developing Skills and Capacity of the Workforce

- Learning Online Environment (LEO) is now fully functioning and improvements are being seen in end user experience and course attendance levels
- Consideration of options for developing specialist areas of training with several of these options being taken forward to ensure training is delivered to the same standard across the region

Resourcing the Service

- Two wholetime recruitment processes have been undertaken during 2016 to 2020 with the successful recruitment of 24 firefighters
- Critical work has been undertaken in relation to positive action for engagement with key groups from Women, LGBTQ+ and BAME communities
- A number of successful career pathways have been created for young people through the Apprenticeship Scheme, enable and intern / graduate schemes

Reward and Recognition

- An Employee Benefits package has introduced to reinforce the culture of the Service and show that is a desirable employer to work for

Health and Wellbeing

- Employee Health and Wellbeing site has been developed on the Service's Portal giving access to a wide range of information and support on various issues
- Provision of staff training on Mental Health First Aid, Suicide Prevention and TRiM practitioners

Members praised the work that has been undertaken and the associated achievements since 2016 and recognised that there is still more to come. They also praised employees' response to the Covid pandemic and the Service's significant involvement in vaccine delivery.

Resolved that the Committee

- a) Note the contents of the report; and
- b) Approve the new People Strategy for 2021-2025.

11 Gender Pay Gap Report

This report explained Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service's (the Service) obligations under the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Information Regulations 2017) to publish the Service's annual Gender Pay Gap figures.

The EDIO presented this report and explained that the Service's Gender Pay Gap is due to the job roles its male and female employees work in and the salaries that these roles attract. The detail of the salary quartile bands is set out on page 5 of the report.

The EDIO also explained that various initiatives have been introduced by the Service with the aim of reducing the Gender Pay Gap. Of particular note is the recruitment of Voices Representatives for specific groups within the Service. The role of these representatives is to be a voice for those groups, a point of contact, gain feedback and initiate ideas and projects to support those groups.

Members commented that the report demonstrates a lot of good work that has been undertaken by the Service and praised all those involved in the initiatives. Members asked if the information contained in the report could be publicised on more platforms such as social media to demonstrate the work undertaken by the Service. The EDIO advised that there is good use of social media platforms already but there may be scope for greater publicity, both in publications and with local community groups. The CFO also advised that the Service does take opportunities that arise to raise issues such as this.

Resolved that the Committee note the 2021 data contents of the 2020 report for publishing on the Service's website and the Government website www.gov.uk.

12 Equality Monitoring Statistics

This report provided Members with an overview of the Service's Equality Monitoring Statistics and how this data is used.

Resolved that the Committee note the report.

13 Progress on Implementation of the Equality Scheme Action Plan

This report updated Members on progress on the main actions identified in the Equality Scheme Action Plan from March 2020 to February 2021.

The EDIO presented this report and highlighted the following actions and achievements that have been undertaken as part of the Single Equality Scheme Action Plan.

- Positive Action programme implemented to encourage under-represented groups to apply for Service roles
- Implementation of Covid Age Calculator after Equality Impact Assessment by the Service
- Completion of 2-day Mental Health First Aid course for Managers
- All employees made aware of Time to Talk Day
- Reasonable adjustments programme for those employees with disabilities has continued
- Successful recruitment of Voices Groups representatives
- Delivery of Officer and Service Managers Equality issues briefing
- Feedback sessions on Staff Survey delivered to employees
- Involvement in the creation of a multi-agency video to increase understanding of dementia
- Promotion of inclusion events to staff
- Attending and supporting local events and group such as the Rainbow Film Festival and Fairness, Respect, Equality Shropshire (FRESH)

The EDIO also advised that the Single Equality Scheme Action Plan is updated three times a year following meetings of the Service's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group.

Members praised the work that has been undertaken in this area.

Resolved that the Committee note the report.

14 Reasonable Adjustments Update

This report provided Members with an overview of the reasonable adjustments made to support employees in their work roles.

The EDIO presented this report and advised that the majority of the 26 current reasonable adjustment cases are for employees with dyslexia with a range of adjustments in place, including for example specialist dyslexia tuition, use of specialist software and recording of training sessions to aid process and short-term memory.

The Service can claim back a proportion of the costs of reasonable adjustments from Access To Work however there has been a lower than usual spend in this area due to the ongoing Covid restrictions.

The EDIO also highlighted that the Service has again been recognised for its good practice in supporting neurodiverse employees, particularly those with dyslexia, by winning the 'Supportive Employer' Award at the Dyslexia Awards for the West Midlands Region. The Service's good practice has also been shared with a Dr B A Clark in America who is using this as an example in dyslexia awareness raising in the American Fire Services.

Members congratulated Officers on the Supportive Employer award and thanked Officers for all their work, especially concerning dyslexia.

Resolved that the Committee note the report.

Before closing the meeting, the Chair thanked the Committee for the work that is has undertaken. The Chair also particularly thanked Councillor Roberts who will leave the Fire Authority on 6 May 2021.

The meeting closed at 4.00 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....