

PEOPLE COMMITTEE

(Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority)

26 July 2024

Present:

Councillors Clayton (Chair), Carter, Coles, Kendall, Peart and Trail BEM (Vice-Chair)

Apologies:

Councillor Atkinson

* **PC/24/1** **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2024 be signed as a correct record.

* **PC/24/2** **Performance Monitoring Report 2024-25: Quarter 1**

The Committee received for information a report of the Assistant Director - Corporate Services (PC/24/8) detailing performance as at Quarter 1 of 2024-25 against those Key Performance Indicators agreed by the Committee for measuring progress against the following three strategic priorities as approved by the Authority:

- 3(a). Ensure that the workforce is highly trained and has the capability and capacity to deliver services professionally, safely and effectively;
- 3(b). Increase the diversity of the workforce to better reflect the communities we serve, promoting inclusion and developing strong and effective leaders who ensure that we have a fair place to work where our organisational values are a lived experience; and
- 3(c). Recognise and maximise the value of all employees, particularly the commitment of on-call firefighters, improving recruitment and retention.

In particular, the report provided information on performance against each of the following key measures:

- operational core competence skills (beathing apparatus; incident command; water rescue; safety when working at heights or in confined spaces; maritime; driving; and casualty care);
- fitness testing (including support offered for red and amber groups);

- health and safety (a general overview of the work undertaken on station audits and the risk from contaminants, accidents [including near misses]; personal injuries; vehicle incidents (together with the correlation to appliance mobilisation) and reporting against the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR));
- sickness and absence (including musculoskeletal, mental health and other absence) for wholetime, on-call, support, Control and casual staff, proportion of sickness absence per reason, details of the health and wellbeing support offered by the Service;
- summary on capability, disciplinary and grievance cases over the past 12 month period, and a comparison to the previous year;
- strategic workforce planning including details of staff turnover and attrition in all categories of the workforce; and
- an overview of the People Services Systems project.

These areas were expanded upon in more depth at the meeting as follows:

- operational core competencies - all performance measures were on or above target of 95% (green) with the exception of Working at Height (WAH) and Confined Spaces (SHACS) which was at 91.9% (amber). The Academy was about to separate out old WAH qualification standards from the existing figures and fully migrate to the new SHACS standards which should impact reporting of performance in this area making it more accurate;
- fitness - it was noted that 1504 staff had been tested as of 11 July 2024 and 1448 (96%) had met the required standard with 15 staff failing to meet the required fitness level with 8 staff on long term sickness. The question was raised as to the age groups of those failing the test and whether the tests were fit for purpose. The Clerk to the Authority advised that a presentation on fitness would be given at a future Members' Forum to provide such information;
- health and safety – following a Reporting of Incidents, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) incident at the Academy Breathing Apparatus facility, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) had visited the site, reviewed the facility and accident investigation report and issued the Service with a notice of contravention. This had been acted upon swiftly by the Service and the requisite response had been issued to the HSE by 19 July 2024 which had been deemed suitable and sufficient;
- Accidents - there had been a decrease in the overall trend for accidents during the 12-month rolling period although the quarter 1 accident numbers for 2024-25 were up by 2 on the previous quarter and down 30 for the same quarter in 2023-24. There was 1 level 3 safety event which related to the RIDDOR report above;

- There were 13 near misses in Quarter 1 of 2024-25, representing a 13% (2 events) reduction in reporting from the previous quarter. The benefits of near miss reporting continued to be communicated by the Health and Safety Team;
- Personal injuries- there were 9 in quarter 1 of 2024-25 which showed an 18% reduction on the previous quarter. The injury figures in general remained low with the trend line showed a continuous reduction over the 12 month period;
- Vehicle accidents – there were 32 vehicle incidents in quarter 1 of 2024-25, an increase of 7 over the previous quarter. There were 7,136 mobilisations in the same period with 0.4% resulting in a vehicle related safety event with Medium Rescue Pumps more frequently involved in accidents than other appliance types;
- RIDDOR – there had been 2 reports during quarter 1 of 2024-25, 1 of which was an over 7 days” injury event and the other the reportable event at the Academy referred to above. The report also set out a 2 year comparison of RIDDOR reporting types compared against the final total for 2023-24. A five year comparison was also included which showed a notable downward trend since 2020-21;
- Sickness absence – the Cleveland report for 2023-24 had been published now and showed an increase in sickness absence at national level for different staff groups as follows:
 - On Call – 10% increase;
 - Wholetime – 13% increase; and
 - Support staff/Green Book – 24% increase.

Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service was reported at an average of 11.09 days/shifts lost as compared to the national average of 9.54. Musculoskeletal (31.5%), mental health (19.5%) and “other” (29.2%) absence formed the main reasons for sickness absence within the Service. This reflected the enormous amount of work that had been undertaken by the Service to impact this area of concern with the number of cases at its lowest since August 2023;

- Health and wellbeing support – the report set out the breadth of support available including (but not limited to) physiotherapy, counselling, occupational health and wellbeing champions. There had been 44 physiotherapy referrals in quarter 1 of 2024-25 and it had been noted that there had been a slight increase in manual handling issues which was being investigated further;
- Capability, disciplinary and grievance cases were covered in depth for the 2023-24 year with the following noted:
 - 19 formal capability cases;
 - 17 disciplinary cases; and
 - 25 grievances.

The report set out the reasons behind the cases in each of these areas;

- The report provided an overview of the work being undertaken on diversity and inclusion issues within the Service;
- An update on strategic workforce planning was also included which set out an analysis of turnout and attrition rates together with starters and leavers. The Committee asked about the average length of time that On Call staff stayed with the Service which the Head of People Services indicated could be included in future reports.

***DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The Meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 11.55 am