

COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE
(Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority)

11 November 2022

Present:

Councillors Chesterton (Chair), Biederman (Vice-Chair), Coles (vice Brazil), Cook-Woodman (vice Radford), McGeough, Sully, and Randall-Johnson (vice Partridge)

Apologies:

Councillors Brazil, Partridge and Radford.

* **CSC/22/1** Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2022 be signed as a correct record.

CSC/22/2 Strategic Priority 1 and 2 Performance Measures:

* **a** Quarter 4 of 2021-22 and Quarters 1 of 2022-23

The Committee received for information a report of the Director of Service Delivery (CSC/22/9) on performance by the Service in:

- Quarter 4 of the previous (2021-22) financial year; and
- Quarter 1 of the current financial year (2022-23)

against those Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) associated with the following two Strategic Priorities as approved by the Authority for 2021-22 (Minute DSFRA/21/ refers):

Strategic Priority 1: “Our targeted prevention and protection activities will reduce the risks in our communities, improving health, safety and wellbeing and supporting the local economy”; and

Strategic Priority 2: “Our operational resources will provide an effective emergency response to meet the local and national risks identified in our Community Risk Management Plan”.

The performance status of the Service KPIs was based on the following criteria:

Succeeding	The KPI was achieving its target
Near Target	The KPI is less than 10% away from achieving its target
Needs Improvement	The KPI is at least 10% away from achieving its target

In summary, the report identified that Quarter 4 performance (2021-22) against the KPIs was:

	Succeeding	Near target	Needs improvement
Priority 1	9	8	2
Priority 2	10	4	0

There were 2 Priority 1 KPIs needing improvement in this quarter which related to:

- KPI 1.1.2.1 – the number of dwelling fire fatalities; and
- KPI 1.1.4.1 the number of home fire safety visits completed, which varied from target by 17.1% (14781 completed visits against a the target of 18000). The report identified the main factors behind the ability to deliver the expected level of productivity, together with actions intended to secure performance improvement.

In quarter 1 of 2022-23, the report identified that performance was:

	Succeeding	Near target	Needs improvement
Priority 1	10	8	1
Priority 2	7	6	1

There were 2 KPIs in this quarter needing improvement which related to:

- KPI 1.1.2.1 – the number of dwelling fire fatalities; and
- KPI 2.1.4.2. – percentage of operational risk information in date at level 4.

It was noted that there were exception reports for all 4 of the KPIs which had underperformed as included within the report circulated.

In debating the report, the following points were raised:

- that the fire fatalities in both quarters were due largely to the age and lifestyle choices made by the victims but the Service continued to target resources to individuals most in need via the Home Fire Safety visit programme;
- There was evidence to support the view that performance on fire fatalities was improving as this was based on a five year average and that the preventative work being undertaken was thus succeeding;
- despite being below target in quarter 4 of 2021-22, the number of home fire safety visit had improved as a result of efforts made to improve the productivity of the wholetime staff;
- that, in setting targets for prevention work, it was necessary to balance the quantity of visits undertaken with the quality of outcomes. In general terms, prevention activities were targeted at those groups identified as being most vulnerable;

- the underperformance in quarter 1 of 2022-23 on the percentage of operational risk information in date at level 4 was due largely to the outcome of the Covid-19 pandemic. Action had been taken to temporarily increase the number of inspectors in place following a number of retirements to assist in catching up with the visits.

The Committee commented that it would be helpful if:

- the reporting of the statistics could be consistent as there were differences in the statistics set out in the reports between quarter 4 of 2021-22 and quarter 1 of 2022-23 (such as on hospitalisation of casualties); and
- that a review of the Service’s response times was undertaken to ensure they were fit for purpose. It was noted that current response times were based on the risk to the community as set out within the Authority’s Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). This risk information had been cascaded down in Local Risk Management Plans and the Deputy Chief Fire Officer undertook to present information on this to a future meeting of the Committee.

It was noted that there were separate, in depth reports elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting in respect of Home Fire Safety Visits performance and the Fatal Fire Deaths Review.

NB. Minutes CSC/22/2b, CSC/22/3, CSC/22/4 and CSC/22/6 also refer.

* b

Quarter 2 of 2022-23

The Committee received for information a report of the Director of Service Delivery (CSC/22/10) on performance by the Service in Quarter 1 of the current financial year (2022-23) against those Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) associated with the following two Strategic Priorities as approved by the Authority for 2021-22 (Minute DSFRA/21/ refers):

Strategic Priority 1: “Our targeted prevention and protection activities will reduce the risks in our communities, improving health, safety and wellbeing and supporting the local economy”; and

Strategic Priority 2: “Our operational resources will provide an effective emergency response to meet the local and national risks identified in our Community Risk Management Plan”.

The performance status of the Service KPIs was based on the following criteria:

Succeeding	The KPI was achieving its target
Near Target	The KPI is less than 10% away from achieving its target
Needs Improvement	The KPI is at least 10% away from achieving its target

In summary, the report identified that Quarter 4 performance (2021-22) against the KPIs was:

	Succeeding	Near target	Needs improvement
Priority 1	13	7	2
Priority 2	7	6	1

There were 3 KPIs with a status of “needs improvement” which were:

- KPI 1.1.2.2 – number of dwelling fire fatalities;
- KPI 1.10.1.2. – rate of other primary fire hospitalisations per100,000 of population; and
- KPI 2.1.4.2. – percentage of operational risk information in date at level 4 tactical plans.

In terms of the areas needing improvement, the Director of Service Delivery advised that there had been two dwelling fire fatalities this quarter (KPI 1.1.2.2), both of which involved factors such as age and lifestyle choices. There had been a delay in the response to one of the fatalities due to information on a local road closure not being communicated amongst the watch but action had been taken to ensure this did not happen again. In this case, however, there was evidence to support the point that the delay did not impact on the scale of the fire nor could the fatality have been prevented.

It was noted that, despite the target for percentage of operational risk information in date at level 4 tactical plans needing improvement, there had been a significant improvement since quarter 1 of 2022-23.

In addition, there had been a significant improvement in the delivery of Fire Safety Audits and an increase in target due to the point that the new staff appointed had achieved their qualifications which meant that more detailed audits could be undertaken.

The Committee enquired as to whether there was a national database in place setting out the lessons learned from fatal fires. It was noted that the Service always picked out lessons learned from coroner’s reports and that the National Fire Chiefs’ Council was looking at the provision of a national database currently.

* **CSC/22/3**

Home Fire Safety Visits Performance

The Committee received for information a report of the Director of Service delivery (CSC/22/11) that set out details of the Service’s Home Fire Safety Visits performance since the previous report to the Committee in February 2022 (Minute CSC/21/14) refers). The report set out the performance in 2022-23, the actions being taken to address the improvement in performance needed and comparisons against the number of accidental dwelling fires from 2012-13 to 2021-22.

It was noted that the target for home fire safety visits in 2022-23 was 18,000 using a combination of operational crews and specialist staff. In the period 1 April 2022 to 30 July 2022, the Service had delivered 6049 home fire safety visits of which 3803 had been delivered by Home Safety Technicians and 2225 by Wholetime operational crews. It was anticipated that the Service was on track to meet the target at the year end.

An independent of Home Fire Safety Visits had been undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Fire & Rescue Services under prevention activities in 2021-22. There were two areas for improvement, namely:

- The Service needed to evaluate its prevention activity so it understood what worked; and
- Safeguarding training should be provided to all staff.

The Director of Service Delivery assured the Committee that this work was being addressed. The Committee enquired as to the position on data sharing with partners so that the vulnerable in the community could be targeted for home fire safety visits. The Director of Service Delivery replied that there had been some success with data sharing but acknowledged that this was challenging. Reference was also made to a difference in performance between wholetime watches and specialist technicians and the question was raised as to whether there was some resistance to this work being undertaken. The Director of Service Delivery stated that the number of visits undertaken on wholetime stations may vary due to other areas of operational response whereas the technicians were a dedicated resource. The Committee also drew attention to the position on the Equality and Risks Benefit Analysis and requested that a link was included in future reports to this so it was accessible.

Attention was drawn to the position on the Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV) App as set out in paragraph 5.1 of the report circulated given the high level of investment placed into Information Technology in recent years by the Authority and the point that this work was not being delivered. The Director of Service Delivery replied that there had been discussions at Executive Board level in respect of the performance of the HFSV App and a Corporate Risk had been raised. An external review had been commissioned upon the performance in respect of home fire safety visits together with consideration of the IT capacity issues, the results of which were due very shortly. The Committee requested a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Authority on 12 December 2022 setting out the issue in depth.

NB. Minute CSC/22/6 below also refers.

* **CSC/22/4 Fatal Fire Deaths Review**

The Committee received for information a report of the Director of Service delivery (CSC/22/12) that set out the process behind fatal fire reviews or significant fires in order to enable the Service to learn from previous incidents and to adapt to future needs.

It was noted that the Service’s target was to reduce fatal fires within Devon & Somerset to zero. The report set out the number of fatal fires within Devon & Somerset since 2013-14 which was 12. This had decreased to 4 in 2018-19 but had since increased in 2021-22 to 6. The Service had commissioned two investigation reports into fire deaths in the South West region to understand the most likely causes and risk factors associated with accidental fire deaths. The first report covered the period 2008-2013 and the second covered 2013-17. Seven risk factors were identified from these two reports with causes of fire changing within this time period. The risk factors were as identified within paragraph 2.5 of report CSC/22/11. The Service was aware that it could not reduce fatal fire deaths without assistance from partners and it was through this avenue that it was able to target its prevention activities towards the most vulnerable in society.

* **CSC/22/5** **Fire Engine Availability**

The Committee received for information a report of the Director of Service Delivery (CSC/22/13) setting out the Service’s performance on fire engine availability covering the period December 2016 to November 2021, together with the latest seven months from December 2021 to June 2022.

The performance reports were split into 3 key areas, namely:

- Standard pump availability (112 appliances);
- Risk prioritised pump availability (56 appliances); and
- risk dependent availability (11 appliances).

The targets set were:

- standard pump availability - a minimum of 85% availability;
- risk prioritised availability - a minimum of 98% availability; and.
- risk dependent availability - to achieve a minimum of 85% availability.

The performance for standard pump availability over the five years from December 2016 to November 2021 with update to June 2022 was:

	Dec-16 to Nov-17	Dec-17 to Nov-18	Dec-18 to Nov-19	Dec-19 to Nov-20	Dec-20 to Nov-21	Dec-21 to Jun-22
First appliance availability	95%	91%	91%	94%	91%	90%
Second appliance availability	71%	65%	65%	73%	76%	70%
Third appliance availability	54%	45%	69%	87%	79%	NA
Overall appliance availability	87%	82%	83%	88%	87%	85%

The table above showed that overall pump availability had now recovered to the level of 5 years ago following a decline through 2017 to 2019. The much improved performance in 2020 reflected the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown periods which enabled many staff to declare availability at time they would not normally have been free.

The Director of Service Delivery advised the Committee that there was a huge programme of work ongoing to increase the recruitment and retention of staff in order to bolster appliance availability. He was confident that any decline in performance had been stabilised and that the work on prioritising recruitment and retention was starting to plug any gaps in availability. Performance had also been impacted in the past by the change in legislation surrounding driving qualifications but work had been instigated to ensure that the required training was available now. It was noted that a report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee addressing the Service's risk critical plans in accordance with the CRMP and expectations of HMICFRS.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the contents of the report be noted as suitable evidence supporting scrutiny of strategic objectives 2a as agreed by the Authority namely:
 - To provide response resources at times and in locations relevant to identified risks of fires and other emergencies;
- (b) That a follow up paper be submitted to the Committee within the next 12 months as part of the forward agenda.

NB. Minute CSC/22/8 below also refers.

* **CSC/22/6**

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Areas For Improvement Action Plan Update

The Committee received for information a report of the Deputy Chief Fire officer (CSC/22/14) setting out the progress that had been made against the His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Areas for Improvement as set out in the Action Plan appended to the report.

There were two actions directly related to the work of this Committee together with the progress made to date which were set out below, namely:

- HMI-1.-2-202203 – the Service should evaluate its prevention activity so it understands what works – this was in progress; and
- HMI – 1.2-202204 – safeguarding training should be provided to all staff – this had not been started as yet.

NB. Minute CSC/22/3 above also refers.

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

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