

PEOPLE COMMITTEE

(Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority)

24 April 2024

Present:

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

Apologies:

Councillors Atkinson and Carter

* **PC/23/15** **Minutes**

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

* **PC/23/16** **Performance Monitoring Report 2023-24: Quarter 4**

The Committee received for information a report of the Assistant Director - Corporate Services (PC/24/4) detailing performance as at Quarter 4 of 2023-24 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;
- diversity (although a separate report on the Annual Diversity Data was included elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting);
- 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 and Confined Spaces (SHACS) which was at 92.8% (amber). The reasons behind this were explained at the meeting;
- fitness, it was noted that 1504 staff had been tested as of 18 March 2024 and had met the required standard with 11 staff failing to meet the required fitness level;
- the Health & Safety team had completed all of the audits in respect of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH);
- Accidents - there had been a decrease in the overall trend for accidents during 2023-24. The quarter 4 accident numbers were down by 12 on the previous quarter and down 12 for the same quarter in 2022-23. Vehicle related safety events remained the greater proportion of safety events though;
- There were 12 near misses in Quarter 4 of 2023-24, a 15% (3 events) increase on reporting from the previous quarter with a total of 70 recorded incidents for the year. The benefits of near miss reporting continue to be communicated by the Health and Safety Team;
- Personal injuries- there were 57 in 2023-24 showed a reduction of one event on the previous year. There were 11 injuries in quarter 4 of 2023-24 representing a 15% 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 144 vehicle incidents in 2023-24, an increase of 4 over the previous year. quarter 3, the same number as in quarter 2. There were 32,400 mobilisations in the same year with 0.4% resulting in a vehicle related safety event. The Organisational Road Risk Group continued to meet monthly to monitor the position and to increase communication proactively to raise awareness of the areas where vehicle accidents were occurring;

- RIDDOR – there had been 5 reports during quarter 4 of 2023-24 which were all “over 7 days” injury events. The incidents were all being investigated further. There were 10 “over 7 day” incidents, 2 “dangerous occurrences” and 2 “specific injury” incidents in 2023-24 in total;
- It was noted that the changeover to the new People Services system had resulted in issues with reporting on the position on sickness absence and associated trends at the year end. This would be reported in depth at the next meeting together with national comparisons available from the Cleveland report. Musculoskeletal injuries was now the main causes of absence, however, with mental health absence dropping to third behind other causes which was a positive position as it showed that the interventions made had been successful. It was noted that the Service continued to promote the support available to staff absent due to mental health issues;
- The report provided an overview of the work being undertaken on diversity and inclusion issues within the Service, a matter which was covered in more detail in a report later in the agenda (Minute PC/23/17 refers). An update on strategic workforce planning was also included which included an analysis of turnout and attrition rates together with starters and leavers. The Committee requested that a line setting out the total numbers of each group of staff on attrition rates together with the total be added to future reports which the Head of People Services undertook to include.

* **PC/23/17** **Diversity Data Annual Report 2023**

The Committee received for information a report of the Assistant Director, Corporate Services (PC/24/5) setting out the Service’s Diversity Data Annual Report for 2023 in accordance with the requirement placed on public bodies under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 to publish all information pertaining to the makeup of its workforce. The report covered all protected characteristics including gender, disability, ethnic group, religion and sexual orientation.

The key findings included (but were not limited to):

- Female Wholetime new starters in Crew Manager and/or Watch Manager positions rose by 12.5% to 25% in 2023;
- The percentage of female promotions in Wholetime positions rose from 5.6% to 10.3% in 2023;
- Total promotions for support staff were 16.7% male and 83.3% female, an increase of 29% for female staff;
- No applicants who identified as People of Colour were hired in support staff roles in 2023 (21.3 % of applicants).

The report set out a number of key recommendations, progress against which would be reported back to the Committee in due course.

* **PC/23/18** **His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Cause of Concern and Areas for Improvement Action Plan**

The Committee received for information a report of the Chief Fire Officer (PC/24/6) outlining progress to date against the Action Plans developed to address both the Cause of Concern and Areas for Improvement identified following the most recent Service inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

In terms of the Cause of Concern and 14 Areas for Improvement identified by HMICFRS, 8 had been linked to the People Committee for tracking.

The key point highlighted was that all actions under the Cause of Concern had been completed now and the recommendation for closure approved by the Executive Board on 19 March 2024.

There were three Areas for Improvement marked currently as "In Progress – Off Track" and the reasons behind this were set out within the report.

* **PC/23/19** **People and Culture Update**

The Committee received for information a report of the Chief Fire Officer (PC/24/7) setting out the progress made against the 35 recommendations in His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published report into values and culture in the fire and rescue service. 20 of these recommendations were specific to the fire and rescue service and 14 required action at national level with 1 specific to the Police.

One recommendation (REC24 – Monitoring and Evaluating Feedback) had been closed following review by the HMICFRS Governance Board and the Service's Executive Board since the previous meeting of the Committee. 4 actions were "in progress" (as below) with the reasons behind this also set out within the report:

- REC09– background checks;
- REC12 – staff disclosure, complaints and grievance handling standard;
- REC14 – Misconduct allegations standard; and
- REC32 – diversity in succession planning.

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