

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	DSFRA/25/9
MEETING	DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY
DATE OF MEETING	17 FEBRUARY 2025
SUBJECT OF REPORT	PEOPLE COMMITTEE OVERVIEW - 24 JANUARY 2025
LEAD OFFICER	Clerk to the Authority (& Monitoring Officer)
RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>That the report be noted.</i>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>On 24 January 2025, the arrival of Storm Eowyn prompted the issuance of severe weather warnings across the country. To ensure the safety of attendees, the in-person People Committee meeting scheduled for 10:00 AM that morning was cancelled. The papers prepared for that meeting, which had not required Committee decision, were reviewed during an online workshop which was open to all Authority Members.</p> <p>The Workshop considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • performance against the three strategic priorities, for the period October to December 2024, that are usually delegated to the People Committee for monitoring; and • the progress made against the Action Plan resulting from the 2021/22 His Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection and its subsequent recommendations.
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	None.
EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS	An initial assessment has not identified any equality issues emanating from this report.
APPENDICES	None.
BACKGROUND PAPERS	Performance Monitoring Report 2024-25: Quarter 3 HMICFRS: Action Plan Update.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. On 24 January 2025, the arrival of Storm Eowyn prompted the issuance of severe weather warnings across the Country. To ensure the safety of attendees, the in-person People Committee meeting scheduled for 10:00 AM that morning was cancelled.
- 1.2. The reports prepared for the cancelled Committee Meeting did not require an agreement or a decision from the Committee. Therefore, to ensure that the Authority still received the information contained within those reports, an online workshop was instead held. This workshop was open to, and well attended by, Authority Members.
- 1.3. This report provides the Authority with an overview of the proceedings of that Workshop, organised under the headings of the two documents considered.

2. PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT 2024-25: QUARTER 3

- 2.1. The report detailed performance, as at Quarter 3 of 2024-25, against those Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) agreed by the People Committee for measuring against the following three strategic priorities:
 - 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.
- 2.2. The report provided information on performance against each of the following areas based on a red, amber, green system, which were then explored in more detail as summarised in paragraphs 2.3 to 2.16:
 - Operational Core Competence Skills;
 - Fitness;
 - Health and Safety including the reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR)
 - Capability, Disciplinary and Grievance case summary (for the last financial year);
 - Strategic Workforce Planning including Recruitment and Retention; and
 - People Services System Project

- 2.3. Operational Core Competency – Maritime Level 2: as of 16 January 2025, the Hot Villa had returned to normal operating use and it was anticipated that this competency would move back in to the “Green” during Quarter 4 of 2024-25.
- 2.4. Operational Core Competency – Working at Height and Confined Spaces (SHACS): Currently graded as “Red”, options were being considered to increase course delivery of the SHACS training modules to move this competency back to “Green”.
- 2.5. Fitness: As of 15th January 2025, 99% of operational staff had achieved the requisite fitness testing standards. Of the remaining 1%, the Service had identified steps to support staff towards re-achieving the standard.
- 2.6. Accidents: The Service had identified an increasing trend in the rolling 12-month Accident data. When comparing this to the mobilisation data, it was identified that there had been a 50% increase in mobilisations during Quarter 3 however accidents had increased by just 17% during the same period. It could be surmised that accidents were not rising in line with mobilisations which was a positive outcome.
- 2.7. Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR): whilst RIDDOR events were lower than in 2023-24, there had been two RIDDOR events during Quarter 3 which were currently undergoing investigation.
- 2.8. Sickness and absence – Mental Health: The Service had seen a repeat, from 2023, of an increase in Mental Health reports during the months of October to December 2024. A large percentage of these absences were from corporate staff rather than operational staff. The Service was looking into possible contributing factors (including workplace and personal life stresses) and recognised that each case was unique to the individual. There was a breadth of support available to staff which included (but was not limited to) counselling, occupational health, Health and Wellbeing advisors, access to Firefighter’s Charity workshops, and the Jump Start January initiative.
- 2.9. Health and Wellbeing – Trauma Informed Practice: The Service had experienced a positive impact from the use of Trauma Informed Practice at its Wholetime stations and, with the continued support of the Firefighter’s Charity, would be rolling out this practice at other stations too. The Fire Fighters Charity would be invited to a forthcoming Member’s Forum where the charity would have the opportunity to present on the beneficial work they conduct in collaboration with the Service.
- 2.10. Health and Wellbeing – Occupational Health: While the delivery of Occupational Health services was showing improvement, there remained certain challenges, particularly in processing medicals for On Call recruits and routine medicals. The Service was considering options actively for future improvements.

- 2.11. Capability - It was noted that paragraph 3.2 of the report referred to historical data that the Service held. For the financial year (FY) 2023-2024 there were 19 formal capability cases compared to 7 cases in the FY 2022-2023.
- 2.12. Disciplinary - Breaches of Service Policy and cultural issues continued to be the primary reasons for disciplinary cases within the Service. To address these concerns, the Service would be implementing training for all employees on the new Workers Protection Act 2024 and on preventing sexual harassment in the workplace.
- 2.13. Grievance – The Service aimed to resolve grievance cases informally through mediation, in the first instance, wherever possible. Of the 9 reported cases in the 24/25 financial year, to end of December 2024, 8 had remained in the Service thereafter.
- 2.14. Performance - promoting inclusion: The Service had planned an event on 8th March 2025 coinciding with International Women’s Day to encourage the breaking down of barriers and stereotypes. The People Committee would be provided with an update on the outcomes of that event.
- 2.15. Turnover and Attrition: The Service is currently reviewing its approach to recruiting professional and technical staff to ensure that the roles are appealing to high-calibre applicants. Advertising these roles as short-term positions, in an effort to address financial challenges, may be limiting the number of suitable applications received.
- 2.16. People Services Project: The new system had been launched in November 2025. Full digitisation of employee records was anticipated to be in place by the end of March 2025.

HIS MAJESTY’S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY & FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES (HMICFRS) AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT UPDATE

- 3.1. This report outlined progress to date against the Action Plans developed to address both His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Service’s (HMICFRS) Areas for Improvement (from the 2021/22 inspection report) and the subsequent national recommendations.
- 3.2. The Actions and Recommendations explored in greater detail during the meeting were as follows:
- HMI-3.1-202208 (Secondary Contracts), HMI-3.2-202210 (Temporary Promotions) and HMI-3.4-202213 Selection and Promotions: The Service had completed consulting on the revised Recruitment Policy and was confident that it would achieve the 31 January 2025 deadline for publishing the final version.
 - HMI-3.4-202215 (High Potential Staff): The Service had paused this action until it had clarified its understanding of what potential, and high potential, looked like.

- REC09 (Background Checks), REC12 (Staff disclosure, complaint and grievance handling standard) and REC14 (Misconduct allegations standard): The Service had identified 1634 employees that required DBS checks, or re-checks. The composition of this 1634 included a range of staff requiring enhanced DBS checks (having previously held standard DBS checks), 757 On Call staff re-checks, and 538 support staff standard DBS checks. Additional resources had been secured to facilitate the checks; however, it was acknowledged that the project would require a considerable amount of time to complete. The sequence of the checks had been organised based on the assessed risk level. DBS checks for new starters as of July 2024 were in place.
- REC03 (Watch Movements): The Service had experienced challenges around moving promoted staff into new watches and would be reviewing its position on this.
- REC07 (Misconduct Policies) and REC08 (Allegations of Misconduct): This remained a topic of national focus. The Service had commissioned an audit into this area, which would not meet the HMICFRS deadline but would ultimately provide a more robust system that exceeded minimal requirements in the future.

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