



DORSET & WILTSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Local Performance and Scrutiny Committee held on 28 August 2024, 10.00am at Room 106 at the Civic Centre, BCP Council Civic Centre, Bourne Avenue, Bournemouth.

Members present:

Cllr Paul Hilliard (Chair)
Cllr Cameron Adams
Cllr Richard Herrett
Cllr Lisa Northover
Cllr Clare Weight

Officer attendance:

Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO), Director of Community Safety, Andy Cole
Area Manager (AM), Stuart Gillion
Democratic Services Officer, David Shaw

Eight members of the public were in attendance.

24/15 Welcome

24/15.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed Members.

24/16 Apologies

24/16.1 No apologies were received.

24/17 Code of Conduct and Declarations of Interests

24/17.1 The Chair asked the meeting for any disclosures of pecuniary interests under the Localism Act. There were no disclosures

24/18 Public questions

24/18.1 The meeting noted public questions submitted and read out by Firefighter Liam Jackson, the Branch Secretary, Poole - Fire Brigades Union, regarding the Resourcing and Savings programme. Details of the questions provided and the Chair's reply are contained in the appendix attached to the minutes

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(minute 24/25 post refers).

24/19 Review and approve minutes of the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Local Performance and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 21 February 2024

24/19.1 The Chair asked Members to review and approve the minutes from the previous meeting.

24/19.2 RESOLVED: That the minutes be confirmed without amendment and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

24/20 Review and approve minutes of the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Local Performance and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 12 June 2024

24/20.1 The Chair asked Members to review and approve the minutes from the last meeting.

24/20.2 RESOLVED: That the minutes be confirmed without amendment and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

24/21 Action progress report

24/21.1 The Democratic Services Officer reported that no actions had been taken at the meetings on 21 February 2024 and 12 June 2024 and that there were none outstanding from previous meetings.

24/21.2 RESOLVED: Members noted that there were no actions outstanding.

24/22 Performance monitoring and briefing

24/22.1 Area Manager (AM), Stuart Gillion presented to Members the Performance monitoring and briefing for quarter 1, which covered the three priority areas overseen by this Committee:

Priority 1 Help you to make safer and healthier choices.

Priority 2 Protect you and the environment from harm, and

Priority 3 Be there when you need us.

A link to the presentation can be found [here](#) .

24/22.2 Priority 1 - Help you to make safer and healthier choices.

24/22.3 AM Gillion highlighted the value of partnership working, including the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Community Safety Partnership, the BCP Serious Violence Duty Task and Finish Group, the Road Safety Partnerships, the Dorset Safeguarding Adult Board (DSAB) and the Local Resilience Forums. In reply to a question from the Chair, the officers outlined the multi-agency preparation for potential public disorder

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following recent national disturbances.

- 24/22.4 AM Gillion reported that the availability of on-call appliances was 80.6%. wholtime appliance availability was 95.8%, which was a good figure and within target. AM Gillion continued that there were a number of initiatives to improve on-call availability. These included a review of current on-call staff contracts of availability, succession planning to maintain availability and support recruitment and targeted recruitment campaigns.
- 24/22.5 The percentage of operational competence in date of staff was good and in line with corporate targets, with all exceeding 90%.
- 24/22.6 AM Gillion drew attention to the social media activity which was aligned to the National Fire Chiefs Council campaigns, for example regarding smoking, escape routes and outdoor fire safety. The key prevention safety messages were shared across various social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram and Nextdoor.com. A total of 130,973 engagements were seen across all platforms. The most seen post on Facebook was regarding Deaf Alarm Systems; this post reached 9,219 people. A post about escape routes explaining the importance of keeping stairwells and hallways clear of clutter was popular with the public. In reply to a question from the Chair, it was confirmed that a multi-agency approach, including the National Health Service, was taken towards publicity campaigns.
- 24/22.7 Details were provided on road safety events and also the number of education inputs in quarter 1. In the quarter, 3,684 children and young people had received educational input, comprising 2957 via their main education provider, 712 via pre-schools, nurseries, children's groups and ad-hoc engagements and 15 children attended a story session. Three visits by the education team delivered the heathland/wildfire lesson to 880 students in Upper Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. It was noted that the Service did not currently have a Road Safety Co-ordinator in Dorset, including BCP, and the reasons for this were explored.
- 24/22.8 There were four firesetter referrals in the quarter and five firesetter cases remained open, with one case being closed. The officers answered questions from Cllr Lisa Northover as to how firesetters came to the attention of the Service, how specialist education was provided and how those most in need were prioritised.
- 24/22.9 There were 534 safe and well visits completed in quarter 1, which compared to 531 visits in the same quarter in the previous year. Safe and well visits were now more targeted. A total of 62 Safeguarding referrals were raised by staff. Cllr Cameron Adams asked if there was a correlation between, for example, a reduction in the number of safe and well visits and an increase in the number of fire incidents. The officers observed that there had been a trend for a reduction in the number of accidental dwelling fires, but an increase in the number of incidents attended by the Service. The number of fatalities and injuries had also fallen. There was not a target for the number of safe and well visits but service demand was kept under review.

- 24/22.10 The number of accidental dwelling fires in quarter 1 was 41 compared with 52 in the same period in the same quarter in 2023.
- 24/22.11 **Priority 2 - protect you and the environment from harm**
- 24/22.12 Wholetime operational crews had carried out 186 business fire safety checks in the quarter across the Service relating to risk based low level fire safety activity.
- 24/22.13 AM Gillion reported that 83 automatic fire alarm were attended in non-domestic premises in the quarter compared with 128 in the previous quarter. The call challenge procedure would be extended to 24 hours (from 8:00am to 6:00pm at present) to reduce further unwanted automatic fire alarm calls and provide savings. In response to a question from Cllr Adams, the cost savings, both cashable and non-cashable, resulting from the change in the call challenge procedure would be made available to Members.
- 24/22.14 **Priority 3 - Be there when you need us**
- 24/22.15 The average response times were 07.10 minutes for sleeping risk first pump, 07.21 minutes for other buildings first pump and 07.55 minutes for road traffic collisions first pump. In reply to a question from Cllr Clare Weight, the officers explained that the average response time for the Service for sleeping risk first pump was 9.30 minutes and that there was not a consistent approach between services nationally on how response standards were measured and recorded.
- 24/22.16 There had been no potential fire deaths in the quarter 1 period, with two incidents remaining with the potential for fire deaths that were awaiting a Coroner's verdict. Details were provided on the Operational Effectiveness Database (OED), which was to evaluate and improve operational performance.
- 24/22.17 Members noted the summary of incidents presented at the meeting.
- 24/22.18 The officers answered Members' questions on the Service's involvement in the multi-agency planning for the Bournemouth Air Show including the emergency scenarios considered, how business as usual would be delivered and that costs to the Service were recorded but not recharged.
- 24/22.19 **Demand Summary**
- 24/22.20 The Key Performance Indicators for the quarter were explained to the Committee. Attendance was for 337 automatic fire alarms which resulted in a false alarm; 41 accidental dwelling fires; 69 deliberate fires (primary and secondary) and 218 special service incidents attended.
- 24/22.21 In reply to Members' questions the officers provided further details on special service incidents, for example technical rescues in water/flooding, animal rescues and bariatric cases. The officers would also clarify for the Chair the decrease in special attendances, for example assisting the

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ambulance service with collapsed persons behind doors, which had fallen from 341 cases year to date to 49 (Note: subsequent to the meeting it was established that the correct figure was 233 year to date).

24/22.22 The Chair thanked AM Gillion for the presentation.

24/22.23 RESOLVED: Members scrutinised and noted the performance for quarter 1 2024

24/23 Matters raised by Members (agreed with the Chair)

24/23.1 The officers responded to questions raised by Members relating to improving on-call availability, inconsiderate parking on roads that restricted access to appliances, providing fire safety messages to students who would be commencing/returning to colleges and universities following the summer break and the outcomes of installing electric BBQ's on the Bournemouth seafront to discourage the use of portable BBQs.

24/24 Date of Next meeting

24/24.1 The Chair confirmed the date of the next Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Local Performance and Scrutiny Committee meeting as 19 November 2024 from 10.00am.

The meeting closed at 11.20.

Signed: _____

Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority meeting – 28 August 2024**24/25 Public Questions****24/25.1 Firefighter Liam Jackson, Branch Secretary, Poole - Fire Brigades Union****24/25.2 Question 1 REF: Poole08.28.1**

“Poole Fire Station being one of the busiest WDS station in the service operationally. Poole Firefighters have 13 Service roles to maintain for public protection, as opposed to the usual 5 on a 1 pump station. If Poole is reduced to a single WDS appliance, there will likely be a severe reduction in prevention activities carried out. In April 2024, Poole carried out 43 Safe & Well visits, 5.75 hours of Community Education, 25.8 hours of Risk Information and 7.17 hours of Business Fire Safety checks. This was carried out whilst responding to 172 incidents, which is 648% more incidents than Amesbury, 320% more than Dorchester and 105% more than Springbourne. At best, the prevention figures will be halved. The practical reality is that there will be very little prevention activity carried out at all, based on the additional competencies that are needed to be maintained. This is in addition to the annual Quality Assurance of both Rope and Water skill sets for all other WDS stations. Are the committee comfortable with this reduction of key prevention activities for their constituents and BCP residents, especially as they are now paying more for the Fire & Rescue Service?”

24/25.3 Question 2 REF: Poole08.28.2

24/25.4 “On the 19th of August, staff received confirmation Poole Fire Station will lose its 2nd full-time fire engine, providing unique inaccessible incident access and wildfire capabilities. The same crew also staff Technical Rescue assets, providing specialist services to animal rescue, water rescue, incidents above and below ground, as well as assisting the Ambulance Service with bariatric patients. Staff were also told by the Service that Christchurch Fire Station would be downgraded from providing a full-time, 24 hour fire engine, to a day time only guaranteed cover. The Retained Duty System (on-call) will provide a part-time fire engine overnight. Whilst these reductions are being made, Amesbury fire station has already been upgraded to a full-time day crew system. Dorchester is intended to become day-crewed. Westlea is to be upgraded to a 24 hour full-time fire station. Both Dorchester and Westlea upgrades do not feature in the Community Safety Plan 2024-2028. How do BCP Fire Authority Members expect to justify to the electorate, the intended increase in Council Tax next April, when fire resources are being funnelled away from the BCP area and invested elsewhere in the Service, essentially expecting them to pay more for less”.

Statement from Chair of the Committee– 28 August 2024 - Response to public questions from Firefighter Liam Jackson, Branch Secretary, Poole - Fire Brigades Union

“The role of the BCP Local Performance and Scrutiny Committee is to oversee the delivery of priorities outlined in the Community Safety Partnership across the BCP area. It is very important to note that whilst the members of the committee are all councillors of BCP, our role on the Fire Authority is to deliver a fire and rescue service for all the residents across the whole of Dorset and Wiltshire.

As with many public sector organisations, Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service are facing significant financial challenges. There is a programme of work in place to make sure the Service is sustainable for the future, meets the requirement for all fire and rescue services to review their community risk profile and provide value for money services to our communities.

Officers have kept Members informed at each stage of this work and we are aware that the Chief Fire Officer has made the decision, under his delegation, to remove the second fire engine, crewed by wholetime firefighters, at Poole fire station and change the duty system at Christchurch fire station. Poole fire station will maintain the first fire engine, also crewed by wholetime firefighters and a fire engine crewed by on-call firefighters. Christchurch fire station will maintain a wholetime response during the day, 7 days a week, when demand is highest and their on call appliance. We are grateful to the On Call firefighters at both Christchurch and Poole who continue to provide excellent levels of availability.

We are assured these changes will have a minimal impact on the ability of the service to respond to incidents in BCP and will provide an opportunity to redeploy wholetime firefighter posts to other fire stations across the service, including Westlea and Dorchester, resulting in a significant improvement in the response available in those areas, this is seen as a positive step.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff across our Service area for the work they do, every day, to provide the high level of service to all of our communities.”