

Performance report - Quarter 2

Finance & Audit Committee

1 July - 30 September



DORSET & WILTSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE

Priority: Making every penny count

KLOE (Key Lines of Enquiry) 6: How well do we use resources to manage risk?

KLOE 6 Summary

The updated Strategic Assessment of Risk (2023) is now published on the Service's website and provides context and direction for the development of the Authority's revised Community Safety Plan (CSP) 2024-28. The new CSP is currently being drafted, along with an operational review of emergency cover to support future decision making. The Authority will receive the draft CSP in February 2024 for consideration and approval to go to public consultation during the spring.

The procurement team continues to prepare for the transition to the new e-Tendering Procurement Hub. This is currently expected to go live as of 1 April 2024. The new procurement legislation it is expected to receive Royal Assent in October 2023. It is understood that there will be additional transparency requirements, administrative and pre-engagement activities required, which the Service is keeping a keen eye on, due to the impacts of the changes and resources within our team.

The Authority's second Modern Slavery statement was approved at the Authority meeting in September 2023, which shows its commitment to eliminating discrimination and exploitation in its business dealings and through our supply chains. This is now published on the Service's website and has been uploaded to the government portal.

The Service was successfully accredited to the International Standards Organisation's ISO 55001 in Asset Management during May 2023. This has assured against the Service's robust and strong approach to its asset management. The Service will now be assessed twice yearly, to ensure it continues to maintain accreditation.

The Service has approved investment for a vehicle telematics system to monitor the usage of our white fleet. The data will be used to optimise the scheduling of our vehicles and adjust our routes to reduce fuel consumption, increase efficiency, and the overall size of the fleet required. This will also support the Service to reduce our carbon footprint.

The cyclical estate programme for 2022/23 is largely complete, although some work has been carried over into 2023-24. This was largely down to delays in procurement with the increased budget provisions, due to inflation. In 2022 material costs increased by an average of 40%. This is being carefully considered, planned for and managed by the Service.

The solar panel installations at the five key sites have commenced, with two stations now complete. Following completion of the remainder sites the Service will be working to analyse the impacts upon energy usage and consumption. Additional sites are being identified for the wider delivery of the programme during 2024-25. The Heat Decarbonisation Energy audit has been undertaken during quarter 2 and the Service expects the delivery of the report in quarter 3. This will help the Service to future plan activities to support the activities to reduce our carbon footprint.

Information and Communications Technology capital and revenue programmes remain broadly on track, albeit with some amendments to the programming of activity to accommodate and plan for the worldwide supply issues resulting from the coronavirus pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine, as well as ongoing supplier price increases some of which are financially significant. There are some expected and some unexpected cost increases arising from inflationary pressures, changes to supplier offerings (e.g. cloud only) and costs due to supply chain disruption. These will also be reported to the Authority in December and February as part of setting this year's budget and Medium-Term Finance Plan.

KLOE 6 sub-diagnostic

To what extent are business continuity arrangements in place and how often are they tested?

The Service continue to use Business Continuity Institute's (BCI) Good Practice Guidance (2018) to align to, ensuring that our arrangements are effective and strong. As part of our business-as-usual practise, to ensure the preparedness of the Service, a horizon scan is undertaken on an annual basis, reviewing emerging threats and risks posed to the Service and its communities. This scan is cognisant of local and national risk registers and the National Security Risk Assessment. The most recent review was undertaken in quarter 1 and this provides the basis of our business continuity planning and work for the next 12 months. In undertaking our annual horizon scan the Service uses a number of documents to support its delivery. This year the BCI horizon scan has been delayed until November, therefore the Service will review its internal scan against this, once published.

The Service's corporate risk management arrangements were assured by internal audit last year, with 'substantial' assurance awarded. Through these robust risk management arrangements, the Service has a healthy understanding of the current and future risks and threats to the Service. This approach to risk aids in the areas of focus and priority within our business continuity arrangements. Our business continuity provisions are well-established and embedded and along with our risk management approach ensures the continued maintenance of our critical activities and service delivery through challenging times.

Our last audit into our business continuity arrangements received substantial assurance in 2018, the Service has also had these arrangements assured by the His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspectorate

through both full inspections and also through the thematic 'response to covid' inspection. A subsequent full internal audit will be undertaken in quarter 4 this year. Business continuity arrangements within the service are well utilised and tested. Each business continuity occurrence results in a debrief where any learning is captured and implemented.

Our business continuity, significant event and risk management arrangements remain well embedded and assured, aligned to ensure the Service continues to meet the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act (2004).

The Service is identified as a Category 1 responder as part of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and through this is an active partner on both the Dorset and the Wiltshire & Swindon Local Resilience Forums. Through this the Service leads the training and exercising groups, supporting, undertaking and delivering the exercise and training programmes across the two counties. This quarter the Service has undertaken 14 multi-agency exercises across the two counties.

KLOE 6 sub-diagnostic

To what extent do we show sound financial management of non-pay costs, including estates, fleet and equipment through benchmarking, contract renegotiation and procurement?

The Service continues to follow the national and local level regulations, including the Public Procurement Regulations, when procuring goods, services and works. As part of this the Service is required to ensure that the principles of transparency and fairness are applied throughout all stages of the procurement processes. Our approach is published on the Service's website.

Procurement procedural and managerial arrangements continue to be in a positive position, with a continued focus and approach to collaborative procurements to support our approach to value for money. The Service continues to make good use of national procurement contracts, which includes actively promoting and partaking in collaborative/ joint procurements. The Service is currently participating in collaborative procurements for:

- A command-and-control system with the Networked Fire Services Partnership, led by Hampshire County Council procurement team. This is currently out to tender. This procurement also includes Kent Fire & Rescue Service, due to them joining the partnership.
- Liquid Fuel, led by the Crown Commercial Services with several public sector bodies participating in a mini competition exercise. This will enable the Service to have one contract to cover our bulk fuel supplies for both Estates and Fleet.

- Fuel Cards including electric vehicle cards and charging within the provision. The Procurement is being led by Bluelight Commercials, Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Service and Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service.

The Procurement Manager continues to engage with Crown Commercial Services and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) to explore the opportunity for a collaborative procurement of our New Mobile Data Terminals, Android tablets with docking stations and services. In addition, the Service is using national frameworks for several upcoming procurements including training, information and communication technology, property, estates and fleet.

The transition to the new e-Tendering Procurement Hub continues. This is currently expected to go live as of 1 April 2024. In addition, the Service continues to ensure it is kept up to speed with the progress of the new procurement legislation, it is expected that Royal Assent will be given in October 2023. It is understood that there will be additional transparency requirements, administrative and pre-engagement activities required, which the Service is keeping a keen eye on, due to the impacts of the changes and resources.

Officers continue to work with both internal and external stakeholders, including suppliers, to strengthen relationships and planning to meet the ongoing challenges resulting from the pandemic, European Union exit and the general uncertain economic position.

The Authority approved its Modern Slavery Statement in September 2023, which is now published on the website and uploaded to the Governments Portal. As agreed, this will be reviewed annually as part of the Statement of Assurance.

KLOE 6 sub-diagnostic

To what extent do we understand what assets we are responsible for across the Service and how do we demonstrate effective management of these assets?

The Service continues to experience challenges with our supply chains. The Service continues to monitor the situation with our suppliers and look for alternative supply channels where it is possible or required. In addition, the Service continues to plan ahead and make orders earlier where possible.

In line with the Authority's Asset Management policy, the Service aligned its working practice to the principles of the ISO 55001 Asset Management Standard and were accredited to the standard in May 2023, following a three-day audit. The Service will now

be open to audit twice a year, by the British Standards Institute, which it will be required to pass to maintain accreditation to the standard. The ISO 55001 Asset Management Standard is an internationally recognised standard that outlines the best practices for asset management. By aligning its working practice to this standard, the Service is ensuring that its assets are being managed efficiently and cost-effectively.

The Service has approved investment for a vehicle telematics system to monitor the usage of our white fleet. This system will enable the Service to accurately measure the amount of fuel used, the number of trips taken, and the distances travelled, as well as providing valuable data about vehicles and the routes they take. This data can then be used to optimise the scheduling of vehicles and adjust routes to reduce fuel consumption, increase efficiency, and the overall size of the fleet required. This will also support the Service to reduce our carbon footprint. The Service has placed an order for its first fully electric vehicle (van) which is due to be delivered early quarter 3. This will be trialled across several departments to help evaluate the suitability of electric vehicles. Both the telematics system and electric vehicle trial will allow the gathering of data, which will help the Service develop an electric vehicle implementation strategy.

The cyclical refurbishment programme has progressed with onsite work starting during quarter 2. The majority of the 2022-23 cyclical refurbishment programme has now been completed, with some work going over into the 2023-24 year. This was largely down to delays in procurement with the increased budget provisions required due to inflation. Material costs continue to be high, which is being carefully considered and managed by the Service. In 2022 material costs increased by an average of 40%. This includes structural steel seeing a 79% increase, timber at 45%, concrete reinforcement bars at 84%, insulation at 30% and metal windows and doors at 20%..

KLOE 6 sub-diagnostic

To what extent do we understand and manage our impact upon the environment?

The Environmental Team engages with staff across the service to champion and lead the Service's green agenda. The team currently consists of two members of staff, and the Service is currently out to recruit for a Building Surveyor to support this work.

The commissioned Heat Decarbonation Energy specialist audit was completed during quarter 2, with the Service expecting to receive the report in quarter 3. This audit will provide a comprehensive overview of the Service's current energy usage and emissions, as well as provide recommendations for how to reduce carbon emissions. The Service will use the energy audit report to inform decisions and help evaluate potential investment opportunities.

Environmental impact assessments form part of everyday work across the Service, with these linked to our projects, decision-making, and procurement. This aids the Service to make sustainable decisions considering our impact and carbon footprint. By conducting these assessments, the Service can identify potential issues that need to be considered before making a decision. This allows them to make more informed decisions that protect the environment and reduce the Service's carbon footprint.

The Service have now completed two installations of photovoltaics (solar panels) at both Blandford and Marlborough Fire Stations. Three more stations will have panels installed before the end of this financial year. The photovoltaics will generate electricity during the day and the stations will use this electricity to power their facilities, reducing their energy bills. An evaluation of these installations will help determine the efficiency of the project and the expected payback period.

Behaviour change continues to be a priority for the Service, and this is achieved through education and data sharing. The Service has provided data on waste and energy usage at each fire station and regular communications are provided to staff to ensure they are up to date with the latest waste and energy efficiency practices. The Service also continues to encourage team members to use more sustainable resources for their operations, such as reusable items and energy-efficient technologies.

The e-learning package for environmental awareness is in place and is a mandatory requirement of the induction programme for new starters.

The NFCC has published a toolkit with guidance and case studies of good practice. The Service will use the toolkit to help create effective strategies for learning and training our staff. The Service will also use it to guide the design and implementation of our learning interventions. Finally, the Service will use it to evaluate the effectiveness of our learning programme.

KLOE 6 sub-diagnostic

To what extent do our plans address the risks identified in the integrated risk management plan?

The Strategic Assessment of Risk (SAR) is the initial document to ensure the Service identifies and understands existing and future risks and threats affecting the Service and its communities. This document serves as a foundation for shaping the revised Community Safety Plan (CSP). The most recent SAR was recently published and covers 2023-25 and can be found on the Service website. In quarter 4 of 2022-23, the document underwent consultation with our key partners, leading to final approval during this same quarter. It incorporates essential local, national, and global references, in addition to conducting Group Level PESTELO (political, economic, social, technological, environmental, legal and organisational) analyses aligned with the four

community groups. This information, combined with our risk and demand data and an organisational review, consolidates the SAR's findings.

Our SAR plays a crucial role in guiding decision-making and planning throughout the Service and supports the development of the forthcoming iteration of the CSP, which is underway and set for Member approval and publication in 2024-25. In crafting the new CSP, the Service is committed to maintaining alignment with the Fire Standards Board's Community Risk Management Plan standard. The rollout of this revised CSP will be complemented by an extensive Fire Cover Review, which is presently being developed with good progress being made.

KLOE 6 sub-diagnostic

To what extent do we demonstrate effective management of Information and Communication technology?

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) capital and revenue programmes are continually reviewed against the ICT Strategy and the scheduling is adapted to meet the changing needs of the Service. As hardware or software needs to be upgraded or replaced, there are significant cost increases which are increasingly difficult to contain. In addition, software suppliers are now sometimes changing their contract offerings to less favourable positions or moving to cloud only solutions. This is putting additional strains on revenue budgets. Some key areas of work include:

- Developers are progressing with migrating IBM Notes systems into Office 365 in line with the Digital Transformation Programme.
- Procurement for the ICT asset management system is currently being scoped, with some delays due to ICT and procurement capacity.
- A positive report was received from the latest ICT Health check, which required less reactive activity due to the ongoing proactive work completed by the team.
- Back up mapping and storage review complete. Procurement to commence shortly.
- Third party support is being reviewed in the event of a cyber-attack or natural causes ICT issue, to assure alignment to business need. Officers are working to align multiple services into one to achieve increased value for money across new Firewalls and Wide Area Network.
- Telephony Project is now into the next phase with all laptop users moving to MS Teams, enabling internal and external calls by end of November. This will make better and more efficient use of our software and avoid some renewal costs on legacy software.

KLOE 7: How well are we securing an affordable way of managing the risk of fire and other risks now and in the future?

KLOE 7 Summary

Financial management and governance remain strong, and the Service is consistently rated highly in audit and inspection processes.

With inflation still stubbornly high and general economic pressures not showing signs of abating, the Service remains concerned about the medium to longer-term impact on the Authority's financial position. As well as additional cost increases, it is possible to foresee that there will be further funding pressures on the Service moving towards a General Election and new Parliament, with the Government needing to reduce the national debt and balance overall public spending.

The Service continues to engage with all relevant stakeholders to influence the debate on financial sustainability for fire and rescue services and, in particular, to maintain increased council tax flexibility. The Chief Fire Officer is influencing the national debate through his role as Chair of the NFCC Finance Committee. This includes detailed discussion around planning for the 2024-25 Local Government Finance Settlement and positioning the sector in readiness for the next Comprehensive Spending Review. Along with other fire and rescue services, the Service recently wrote to the Local Government Minister and Chief Secretary to the Treasury setting out our case.

The Service had to make more budget reductions in 2023-24, despite a better than expected funding settlement and the £5 council tax flexibility. Additional savings will be required in setting budgets for 2024-25 onwards without a further improvement in funding. Taking account of the operational pay awards for 2022 and 2023 that were agreed after the budget as set, and the 2023 pay offer made to corporate staff (as yet not agreed), the latest Medium Term Finance Plan deficit forecasts are £1m for 2024-25, rising to £1.8m for 2026-27. The Service do now expect government grant funding for 2024-25 to increase in line with the recently announced September CPI figure of 6.7%, which will help to a degree. The Services awaits news on further council tax flexibility being made available. The Chancellor is due make his Autumn Statement announcement on 22 November 2023.

KLOE 7 sub-diagnostic

To what extent do we understand and take action to mitigate our main or significant financial risks?

For some time now, the Service have been engaging with local Members of Parliament (MPs), the Home Office and NFCC to influence the debate on financial sustainability for fire and rescue services and, in particular, lobby for council tax flexibility. This has included briefing sessions for local MPs and letters from the Chair and Chief Fire Officer to relevant government ministers. In October the Service again wrote to the Local Government Minister and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury putting our case forward for continued council tax flexibility for 2024-25. Without this continued flexibility it is very likely that the Service will need to look for further savings to ensure that it remains in a sustainable financial position.

The audited financial statements for 2021-22 were signed off by the Finance & Audit Committee in December 2022. Our auditors, Deloitte LLP, provided an 'Unmodified' opinion on the Statements and updated the Committee in March 2023 with the outcome of the Value for Money work. This also showed an 'Unmodified' opinion. Unfortunately, the Service are still waiting for formal sign-off of the Statements, which has been delayed due to auditing of pensions information. Deloitte LLP are making good progress with their audit of the 2022-23 financial statements.

South West Audit Partnership completed their scheduled internal audits for 2022-23 with the two financial reviews gaining a 'Substantial' assurance opinion. For 2023-24 they will be reviewing payroll and pensions in quarter 3 and fuel cards and procurement cards in quarter 4.

KLOE 7 sub-diagnostic

To what extent do we have a track record for achieving savings and avoiding any residual future budget gaps?

Members approved the 2023-24 budget and new Medium Term Finance Plan in February 2023. Despite the improvement in funding and the £5 council tax flexibility, the Service also had to make some difficult decisions to reduce spending. These decisions are guided by the work of the Resources and Savings Programme which has a schedule of work which includes regular reviews of our financial assumptions and options for making further savings and efficiencies.

KLOE 7 sub-diagnostic

To what extent is our use of reserves sustainable and promoting new ways of working?

The current plan for reserves and general balances was approved by the Fire Authority in February 2023. Levels of reserves and general balances have been reviewed further in compiling the 2022-23 Statements of Account and the levels of reserves are in line with expectations. The Finance & Audit Committee were updated on the current position at the July 2023 meeting. The reserves plan and general balances risk assessment will be reviewed and updated through the budget setting cycle, with a new plan to be approved in February 2024.

KLOE 12: How effective is the Occupational Health and Safety management system in the Service?

KLOE 12 Summary

The Service continues to exhibit a strong health and safety performance. There are no strategic issues to raise with Members. The work-related absence due to physical injuries or ill health quarterly is up from 121 to 389 days over the same time last year. In this quarter, 12 people are contributing to these figures. Of the 12 people, eight are designated long term sick or in long term recovery and their days lost account for 93% of the total for quarter 2. The number of reportable incidents to the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 has decreased over the same quarter last year by one from four to three.

KLOE 12 sub-diagnostic

How well structured and embedded is the Health & Safety policy, practices and culture to ensure a safe and legally compliant Service?

The Health and Safety Committee, and the associated department, continues to monitor the robust arrangements in place. Health and Safety arrangements across the Service continue to operate well, with no causes for concern to raise, and in accordance with externally accredited standards. Our trend analysis within the report is based on the same time as last year to allow for seasonal influences. Our next audit by British Standards Institute auditors will be in November of this year. Our trend analysis is based on the same time as last year to allow for seasonal influences.

- The work-related absence due to “physical” injuries or ill health quarterly trend is from 121 up to 389 days over the same time last year. In this quarter, 12 people (incidents) are contributing to these figures. Of the 12 people eight are designated long term sick or in long term recovery and their days lost are 93% of the total for quarter 2.
- Manual handling is one of the highest injury categories within this quarter; just under a half (49%) of the days lost are due to this category.
- The reporting category with the largest increase is the ‘injury/harm’ category rising from 19 to 27 over the same time last year. All injury/harm incidents are reviewed by the health and safety team supported by operational and training staff to monitor for trends. The health and wellbeing team are also notified of each occurrence to allow for support as required by the member of staff.
- The number of reportable incidents to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) has decreased over the same quarter last year (four down to three). The three ‘over seven days’ absences, all were injuries from manual handling incidents, two within the training environment and one with an operational incident involving a bariatric rescue.

KLOE 13: Are effective governance and decision-making arrangements in place?

KLOE 13 Summary

The Authority and Service has sound governance arrangements in place that are working well. Both have been audited through a peer review and internal audit mechanisms with good levels of assurance being awarded. The Service has aligned its governance, from performance through to assurance to the Key Lines of Enquiry from HMICFRS.

The Authority has provided approval for an application to be made to join the South West Audit Partnership, the relevant paperwork is currently being finalised with the Authority’s legal team.

The Statement of Assurance for 2022-2023 was prepared, along with its supporting information, for the Authority meeting in September 2023. During this meeting Members approved the document and this has subsequently been published on the Service's website.

Members can be assured that the Service is proactively managing its information compliance requirements. There are strategic and tactical processes that broadly align to the principles of British Standards Institute 27001.

Information management and security arrangements are operating well and pleasingly the Service was re-accredited to the national Cyber Essentials security standard, giving additional assurance of the robust arrangements in place. The Service are moving across to a new standard developed by the Home Office and when this is approved the Service will be moving away from the Cyber Essentials security standard.

The Digital Transformation Programme is progressing well and is on track to deliver migration of files and systems from IBM Notes to Office 365 against the agreed timescale. This is enabling the Service to review and streamline its processes and systems to maximise efficiency and productivity in terms of workloads and licence costs, as well as strengthening data management.

KLOE 13 sub-diagnostic

How well does the Fire and Rescue Authority have oversight and scrutiny to ensure that the Service is appropriately effective and efficient in ensuring the safety of communities from fire and other risks?

The Authority has five key priorities and performance against these are overseen and scrutinised by Members on a quarterly basis. Priorities one, two and three are reviewed at the four Local Performance & Scrutiny Committee meetings. These took place to consider quarter 1 performance in August. Priorities four and five were reviewed at the Finance & Audit Committee at their meeting in July for quarter 4 performance and September for quarter 1.

The performance reports and presentations at these meetings provide details on the effectiveness and efficiency of the Service, as well as looking at how the Service is supporting, developing, and ensuring the health and wellbeing of its people. The annual report is approved by Members and published each year in September, along with a Statement of Assurance providing assurance of the previous year's governance, finance, and operational matters. The process of developing the Statement of Assurance received a 'substantial' assurance rating from internal audit and was commended by the Local Government Association peer review team led by the Chair of the Authority. The internal audit annual report from South West Audit Partnership awarded the Service an overall grade of 'substantial assurance' following delivery of the 2021-22 audit programme.

The Authority oversees and scrutinises the development and delivery of the Community Safety Plan (CSP), which includes the Service undertaking consultation and community engagement. A reviewed CSP will be brought to Members in February 2024. A presentation of overall performance against each priority is provided to the Authority at six and 12-month intervals.

KLOE 13 sub-diagnostic

How effective and efficient are our governance arrangements?

The Authority and Service continue to have a well-established and harmonised framework for performance management, reporting, and oversight. This robust system connects performance reporting from the Community Safety Plan and the Authority's five priorities down to team and watch levels. These reports are gathered and presented through our performance management tool, Cycle, and comprehensive station-level performance dashboards.

The Authority and Service have taken deliberate steps to ensure alignment with His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) methodology, from policy development to operational implementation. This alignment is substantiated by our Key Lines of Enquiry, which adhere to the inspectorate's judgment criteria and their 'good' rating standards. To sustain this alignment, a periodic review against the 'good' criteria is conducted annually, along with quarterly performance reports to provide ongoing evidence supporting the Service's pursuit of a 'good' rating. This approach has undergone audit scrutiny by our internal auditors, the South West Audit Partnership (SWAP), who granted it a 'substantial' assurance rating.

The Service's assurance arrangements are comprehensive, involving inspections, internal audits, British Standards Institute audits, external audits, and peer reviews. These, in conjunction with our internal assurance mechanisms, contribute to the development of the Statement of Assurance. The Authority approved the 2022-23 Statement of Assurance at their meeting in

September 2023, which provided assurance in line with the inspectorate's methodology. The Statement of Assurance and supporting information for 2022-23 has now been published on the Service's website.

The internal audit annual report, conducted by SWAP, conferred an overall grade of 'substantial assurance' to the Service following the 2022-23 audit programme. The internal audit programme for 2023-24, was collaboratively developed by: SWAP, the Service, and the Chair of the Finance & Audit Committee, and was ratified by Members in March 2023. Audit reports are reported quarterly to the Finance & Audit Committee.

KLOE 13 sub-diagnostic

How effective and efficient are we at managing data?

Members can be assured that the Service is proactively managing its information compliance requirements. There are strategic and tactical processes that broadly align to the principles of British Standards Institute 27001 and are detailed in the supporting documentation associated with the Statement of Assurance, which was approved by Members in September 2023.

There were 58 Freedom of Information (FOI) requests due for response in quarter 2, all of which were responded to within 20 working days. The average response time was nine days which is an improvement from last quarter and the trend continues to improve. This quarter there has been a considerable increase in FOI requests, this has been due to the publicity concerning the Bibby Stockholm barge with 18 requests (30% of the total requests received). Due to the complexity of these requests an extension was put in place to consider the public interest test for the exemption that the Service applied. These requests have been time consuming and complex, involving other organisations (i.e. Dorset Council, Home Office).

Seven subject access requests were received in quarter 2 and one very complex subject access request was responded to from the previous quarter. There have been two further subject access requests which have been very complex and have resulted in an extension to three months.

In quarter 2, 13 complaints were due to be responded to. Of these 85% were resolved within 14 days (or within the date agreed with the complainant). Of these complaints, 77% were not upheld and none needed referring to senior management.

Pleasingly, there were 27 compliments this quarter.

There was only one security incident reported this quarter. The Service continues to monitor progress against our cyber action plan and is focused on work to ensure third party cloud services have multi factor authentication in place. The Service has completed a gap analysis against the NFCC Cyber Assessment Framework at the request of the Home Office. Our submission was returned on in October confirming that the Service has fully achieved 33 of the 39 controls, with six being partially achieved which will be ported to our Cyber Action plan.

A mitigation plan from the annual ICT health check conducted in June is being monitored to ensure all high and medium risks are prioritised.

All staff are expected to complete Information Security/Data Protection e-learning to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities regarding data. The Service monitors the completion rate of this e-learning and escalates to Officers if required. As of 30 September 2023, 86% of all employees had completed their mandatory data protection and cyber security training.

Progress against the General Data Protection Regulations action plan is progressing well and the concept of privacy by design is being embedded into Service processes, through data protection and information risk impact assessments. Work is continuing to manage retention periods for information held in archive and legacy systems and ensure these are applied to new systems and processes.

The Digital Transformation Programme is progressing well and is on track to deliver migration of files and systems from IBM notes to Office 365 against the agreed timescale. The programme is enabling the Service to review and streamline its processes and systems to maximise efficiency and productivity in terms of workloads and licence costs, as well as strengthening data management. The specification for procurement for the HR Management Information System solution will be progressed during quarter 3.

Priority: Supporting and developing our people

KLOE 8: How well do we understand the wellbeing needs of our workforce and act to improve workforce wellbeing?

KLOE 8 Summary

Long-term absence was the largest contributing factor to the absence figures in quarter 2 across all staff groups and musculoskeletal was the highest causation of absence for all staff groups this quarter.

The Service has a corporate target to achieve average sickness levels lower than the previous five-year average. The cumulative target (wholetime/corporate/fire control) for quarter 2 was 4.3 shifts lost per person, but this was exceeded with a cumulative actual figure of 4.8 shifts lost person, therefore the target for this quarter was not met. There was an improvement in on-call absence figures. The number of days lost per person in quarter 2 was 3.9 which showed an improvement on quarter 1 (4.5 days) and was below the quarterly target of 4.0 days lost per person.

In quarter 2, 92% of staff passed their fitness test and ten new fitness improvement plans were put in place for staff which includes the provision of advice and guidance on fitness improvement, including weight management and nutritional information. As a result, a total of 22 fitness improvement plans are now in place.

Sickness absence is well managed through our dedicated health and wellbeing team who work closely with line managers and Human Resources Business Partners. Sickness procedures are robust and a range of support mechanisms such as counselling and physiotherapy are in place to support staff including, through a cost benefit analysis, funding for private investigations if it is considered that NHS waiting times are delaying treatment and/or recovery. NHS waiting times remain an area of concern and as a result one low value private treatment request was approved in quarter 2.

During quarter 2 the Health & Wellbeing team participated in National Fitness Day and ran a two-day health check clinic, carried out by the NHS LiveWell Dorset team. The Service also promotes and participates in free preventative Wellness Workshops provided by the Firefighters Charity. The Workshops have been developed with the aim of empowering fire service staff to live healthier and happier lives; the Workshops cover topics such as physical, mental health and social health.

KLOE 8 sub-diagnostic

How well do we understand the wellbeing needs of our workforce and act to improve workforce wellbeing?

The Service has a robust and audited health and wellbeing programme to support staff which is overseen by Officers. A range of health and wellbeing procedures are in place which outline all the support mechanisms available to all staff including mental health support, peer support and other external self-service provisions.

Absence management continues to be a key focus for the Service with robust monitoring arrangements in place. Long-term absence was the largest contributing factor to the absence figures in quarter 2 across all staff groups and Musculoskeletal was the highest causation of absence for all staff groups this quarter.

The Service has a corporate target to achieve average sickness levels lower than the previous five-year average. The cumulative target for quarter 2 was 4.3 shifts lost per person (wholetime/corporate/fire control), but this was exceeded with a cumulative actual figure of 4.8 shifts lost person, therefore the target for this quarter was not met. This means the longer-term trend analysis shows average sickness levels beginning to increase. There was an improvement in on-call absence. The number of days lost per person in quarter 2 was 3.9 which showed an improvement on quarter 1 (4.5 days) and was below the quarterly target of 4.0 days lost per person.

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Sickness absence is well managed through our dedicated health and wellbeing team who work closely with line managers and Human Resources Business Partners. Sickness procedures are robust and a range of support mechanisms such as counselling and physiotherapy are in place to support staff including, through a cost benefit analysis, funding for private investigations if it is considered that National Health Service (NHS) waiting times are delaying treatment and/or recovery. NHS waiting times remain an area of concern. The Service are seeing reduced waiting times in some cases, but on occasions NHS specialists/consultants are advising patients not to go privately. One low value private treatment request was approved in quarter 2. This ad hoc approach to private funding is neither a short- or long-term fix and meetings have taken place with private health insurance providers such as Benenden and Westfield regarding concessions that can be offered to staff should they wish to pursue private medical or health care.

Management of long-term absence is more complex than short-term absence as the illnesses/conditions may be serious and involve surgery and recovery time. With any long-term absence, staff are referred to occupational health from day 28 of the absence for advice and recommendations.

The Health & Wellbeing team participated in National Fitness Day and ran a two-day health check clinic, carried out by the NHS LiveWell Dorset team. The programme was designed to spot early signs of stroke, kidney disease, heart disease or type 2 diabetes. The LiveWell clinicians held discussions with each attendee about their lifestyle choices and provided advice and guidance with regards to fitness and nutrition. Based on the positive feedback from staff that attended, the Service will be looking to hold further clinics.

KLOE 9: How well trained and skilled are staff?

KLOE 9 Summary

The Service continue to conduct training delivery in accordance with the Annual Training Action Plan and on-call quarterly training programme. Our training delivery is supported by additional e-learning modules and virtual delivery. Our competence recording system, which covers all staff, developed with a private sector partner, has been successfully embedded with competence levels monitored by Officers.

A new Learning & Organisational Development dashboard has been commissioned to ensure transparency and up-to-date information can be obtained on demand.

KLOE 9 sub-diagnostic

How well do we understand the skills and capabilities of our workforce?

All operational members of staff are required to maintain competence for their respective roles. Operational competence is demonstrated by satisfactory performance at real incidents, during simulations, exercises, drills or centrally run training courses. The operational training programme has continued in standard delivery format in quarter 2. Training delivery continues to be supplemented by additional e-learning and virtual course delivery.

Our competence recording system, which covers all staff, developed with a private sector partner, has been successfully embedded. Officers monitor competence levels to ensure that staff are allocated to appropriate operational license courses. Maintenance of skills training is delivered through localised training in line with the training planners and the needs of the station.

A new Learning & Organisational Development dashboard has been commissioned to ensure transparency and up-to-date information can be obtained on demand. This will significantly reduce the need to use the system analysts and ensure that issues can be recognised and rectified prior to reporting deadlines.

KLOE 10: How well do we ensure fairness and diversity?

KLOE 10 Summary

The opportunities for feedback from our staff are aligned to the internal communications and engagement plan and have included a range of channels and methods to ensure the involvement of all parts of our workforce. Communications plans are a standard element of the project management process to ensure that stakeholders engage in Service projects.

Robust workforce and succession planning arrangements are in place that support each stage of the employment cycle. Heads of Department complete an annual department succession plan and a five-year retirement profile is monitored regularly to aid wholetime recruitment decision making.

The Service continue to use social media as a key part of our positive action work. Community profile information is available to crews, so that the Service can target our 'Have a Go' recruitment and social media campaigns. This information also enables the Service to better support and strengthen our community engagement activities.

The diversity of our workforce is monitored on a quarterly basis and our corporate target to improve the diversity of our workforce as a whole compared to the last five years continues to make positive progress with our actual workforce diversity in quarter 2 being 23.5% against a target of 21.9%.

Equality data of all starters and leavers is captured to monitor trends and of the 51 new starters in quarter 2, 15 were commencing employment as on-call firefighters; 93% were male. Of the 14 new Wholetime Duty System (WDS) starters 13 were male and one was female. There were 22 new corporate starters and 50% were female.

There were 48 leavers in quarter 2, ten females and 38 males. The primary reason for leaving for all staff was due to retirement (17 members of staff). 54% of leavers were aged over 50 but analysis of the responses to exit interview questions has identified no particular trends in terms of sexual orientation, disability, ethnic origin or religion and belief.

Of the 48 leavers this quarter, 42 were offered leavers discussions (87.5%). Of those that were offered a leavers discussion, four declined. A new mandatory exit interview process was launched on 1 September 2023, which will result in improved completion rates alongside the ability to undertake deeper analysis to aid organisational learning and improvements.

KLOE 10 sub-diagnostic

How well do leaders seek feedback and challenge from all parts of the workforce?

The Service has a structured approach to staff communications and engagement. An internal communications engagement plan is in place to ensure there is opportunity for all parts of the workforce to provide feedback and challenge to leaders which was a focus for the latest His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection.

In quarter 2, the new Culture Development Committee was established and had its first meeting during this quarter, which has enabled work to begin towards developing a new Culture action plan.

The Service engaged with staff in quarter 1 to provide ideas for savings. The Service have been analysing the suggestions during quarter 2, working with managers to provide responses to staff. Over 90 individual responses were received, and the Service are taking forward just over 30 ideas to improve efficiency.

The Service continues with structured and regular one-to-ones and team meetings over the phone, in person and using video calls in line with our smarter working approach.

The Service continues to engage with representative bodies on a regular and structured basis through liaison meetings attended by senior managers. This enables effective and timely two-way dialogue between the Service and staff representatives. Good local relationships are being maintained.

KLOE 10 sub-diagnostic

How well do we identify and address potential disproportionality in recruitment, retention, and progression?

The Service's recruitment processes are transparent and reviewed to ensure there are no unintentional barriers to recruitment. A wide range of initiatives are in place to support our work to increase the diversity of our workforce. The Service continues to use social media as a key part of our positive action work. Community profile information is available to crews, so that the Service can target our 'Have a Go' recruitment and social media campaigns. This information also enables the Service to better support and strengthen community engagement activities.

The Service's promotions processes have been designed to promote fair promotion opportunities for all. The new process is embedded and the number of people entering the promotion process continues to increase.

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KLOE 11: How well do we develop leadership and capability?

KLOE 11 Summary

All joiners are invited to a corporate induction with two corporate inductions taking place in quarter 2. The one-to-one personal review process is embedded with completion monitored to ensure that all staff have at least one personal review during a 12-month period.

Following promotion, staff meet with the Learning & Development team to identify the development programme appropriate to their role. The Service's Leadership Development Programme ensures leaders at each level in the organisation are equipped with the skills to successfully carry out their role.

Middle and strategic managers attend our Leaders' Forum which consists of two hour 'bitesize' workshops on a bi-monthly basis and cover a range of cultural and leadership topics aligned to our Strategic Assessment of Risk. Corporate staff are also encouraged to complete development pathway activities relevant to their role.

Supervisory managers undertake their initial incident command training using the facilities at the Fire Service College, which enables them to be assessed at a range of incidents. A comprehensive and structured rota group training programme is in place for Flexible Duty Officers. This ensures skills are refreshed and provides a good practice forum to share and learn from incidents recently attended.

The Service's apprenticeships cover a wide range of areas including Operational Firefighter, Emergency Contact Handler (Control Firefighters), Leadership Development, Finance, Human Resources and Facilities Management. Figures for quarter 2 show that 33 Service personnel are undertaking apprenticeships which represents 2.05% of staff.

Our coaching procedure also supports staff in their development. The Service have several coaches qualified at the Institute of Leadership & Management level 3 and level 5. Our Learning Hub provides a one-stop blended learning resource and is widely used by staff.

KLOE 11 sub-diagnostic

How well do we manage and develop the individual performance of our staff?

Two corporate induction sessions were held in quarter 2. The first, in July, had 13 attendees and the second, in September, had 20 attendees (33 attendees in total this quarter). Where individuals are not able or fail to attend the corporate induction within the agreed timescales, this is escalated to the line manager to ensure attendance.

Following the corporate induction, a survey regarding the effectiveness of the process is sent out. All respondents across both sessions confirmed the induction met or exceeded their expectations. Respondents were positive about the informative and engaging content, the informal nature of the session, the opportunity for corporate and operational staff to come together and the quality of the presentations. Following feedback from the previous quarter, attendees were invited to change tables partway through the session to meet more people and this change received positive feedback.

Another way that the Service evaluates how successful the induction period has been for a new starter is data from probation reviews. Year to date, since 1 April 2023, 43 probations have been met, one has been extended, and no staff contracts have been terminated during their probation period. There are 15 final probation reviews outstanding at the end of the quarter.

The one-to-one personal review process ensures that a discussion and appraisal take place at least once a year and focuses on wellbeing, performance and development. One-to-one reviews are recorded over a rolling 12-month period and completion rates are monitored. Trend analysis suggests that reviews tended to be conducted quite evenly over the 12-month period.

KLOE 11 sub-diagnostic

To what extent are the career pathways of all staff effectively managed?

Following promotion, staff meet with the Learning & Development team to identify the development programme appropriate to their role. The Service's Leadership Development Programme ensures leaders at each level in the organisation are equipped with the skills to successfully conduct their role. Middle and strategic managers attend our Leaders' Forum which consists of two hour 'bitesize' workshops on a bi-monthly basis and cover a range of cultural and leadership topics aligned to our Strategic Assessment of Risk. Corporate staff are also encouraged to complete development pathway activities relevant to their role.

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