



Minutes

Name of meeting	FIRE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY PANEL
Date and time	MONDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2010 COMMENCING AT 6.00 PM
Venue	COMMITTEE ROOM ONE, COUNTY HALL, NEWPORT, ISLE OF WIGHT
Present	Cllrs Julie Jones-Evans (Chairman) Heather Humby, Arthur Taylor, Jerry White
Present (non voting)	Cllr David Williams
Cabinet Members	Cllr Barry Abraham
Officers Present	Steve Apter, Marian Jones, Stuart Love, Zoryna O'Donnell, Martin Thomas, Simon Wiggins

6. [Minutes](#)

RESOLVED:

THAT the Minutes of the meeting held on [7 July 2010](#) be confirmed.

7. [Declarations of Interest](#)

Cllr Julie Jones-Evans declared a personal interest in Minute 11, as she had been recently appointed to the fire modernisation members review board.

8. [Forward Plan](#)

It was noted that the Forward Plan covering the period October 2010 to January 2011 had recently been published. There were no items on plan which came within the remit of the panel.

9. [Performance Management](#)

Members reviewed the performance management report submitted to Cabinet on 27 July 2010, and in particular areas which came within the panel's terms of reference. The committee questioned why the target for the number of primary fires attended had been missed. The Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) Operations and Resilience stated the 90% target quoted was a stretch target and confirmed that all areas were under focus, including the turn out time and the time taken from the station to the incident. It was

re-emphasised that failing the target did not relate to one particular station and could relate to peak times. The Strategic Director for Economy and Environment told the committee the target had since been revised to reflect a more realistic figure of 80%. It was noted that the stretch target had been introduced during the stages of the fire modernisation programme, which had impacted on achievability.

The Panel raised the performance of the co-responder being below target and it was stated this would be met once calculated at the end of the year with the target remaining realistic and achievable. In addition, whilst in the West Wight and Ventnor areas there was an identified need, there were no plans to expand the co-responder provision Island wide.

Hampshire fire authorities' response to call outs through notification by automatic alarm systems was discussed, with members asking if a similar stance of sending a manager in a car to assess the need would be adopted by the service. In addition they enquired as to whether fining persistent repeat offenders had been explored. The strategic director stated that through focussing, which had included the three biggest offenders, the number of false alarms had been halved. In addition he stated that calls of this nature were challenged to assess the required response, although consideration of charging for false alarms was ongoing.

The Panel noted that appliances continued to provide support for helicopter landings at Seaclose to assist with patient transfers and asked for an update on the review of their necessity to attend. The ACO stated that discussions were taking place to reduce attendance at future landings to one appliance. It was noted that the purpose of their attendance was more to assist ambulance staff than to provide fire cover.

RESOLVED :

THAT the report be noted.

10. [Budget 2010/11 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2011/14](#)

Members were given a brief summary on the current financial positions within the Economy and Environment Directorate and Community Services Directorate from the Strategic Director for Economy and Environment and the Head of Community Safety Services respectively.

Economy and Environment

Members were shown the revenue position as at September 2010 for the entire directorate. Highlights included a £516k shortfall in parking income and an overspend of £38k within Fire and Rescue. By way of balance Planning Services showed an underspend of £427k. The Strategic Director for the Economy and Environment reiterated that this was the current position and remained open to future risks and pressures.

The Strategic Director provided a summary of the revenue position specifically for the Fire and Rescue service. The overspend of £361k within Prevention and Protection related to rebalancing of salaries through the modernisation programme. Confidence was high that the overall overspend of £38K for the service could be managed down through a more targeted approach.

With regard to the current capital position, the budget of £4.696m was approved at the beginning of the year and had been reduced in year to £1.7m. Whilst the complete expenditure of the allocated budget was currently behind target, it was anticipated that the budget would be exhausted by the end of the financial year. During the summary of the capital costs of the modernisation project, which amounted in total to £8m, members raised concern that works had not started on the Ventnor or Newport stations.

The Strategic Director confirmed that works on the improvements at Ryde had commenced earlier that day, although a number of issues remained to be resolved at Newport and Ventnor. Members were advised that any works on these projects would not start until the outcome of the Government's comprehensive spending review was known. It was further reiterated that all corporate projects could be put under review based on the outcomes of the assessment and it would be a political decision as to which projects received the limited council resources.

Members enquired about the amount of pressure being applied to Government regarding the regional control centres. The Strategic Director stated considerable pressure was being brought to bear from the Chief Fire Officers Association and that Government was due to make a decision shortly. However, it had to be appreciated that the Government was in a difficult position, considering how much had already been invested and that some authorities were in a more critical position sustaining adequate cover than that of the Island. It was confirmed that a total "Blue Light" control centre on the Island had been researched but was unviable.

Community Services

The Head of Community Safety Services briefed the members on the current budget position as at the end of August 2010. The total net budget for the Community Services Directorate was £47m, of which over £38m was spent providing adult social care. It was noted that whilst the budget for adult social care was forecast to overspend by £3.6m, the Community Safety budget of £2.6m was currently forecast to underspend by £52k.

Members were given a summary as to how the overspend in adult services had been calculated and shown a number of steps being put into place to achieve significant savings. The Panel considered the Community Services savings strategy 2010/11 demonstrating where areas creating £100k+ of savings had been identified. It was noted however that the £71k savings under the review of street based functions would not be achieved within this financial year due to there remaining a number of salary protection issues to be resolved.

A breakdown of the Community Safety budget as at August 2010 was provided, with attention being drawn to two areas which had significantly contributed to the stable budget position. These were Community Safety which included CCTV, Dog Wardens and vacancy management within the Community Safety Partnership. The other area was Admin Support, which had enabled areas including Consumer Protection to deal with 60% of enquiries at the first point of contact. Members were told that the underspend had not led to a reduction in the level of service. In addition, teams were undergoing further training and whilst the workloads of officers dealing with Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) had increased, through careful management a quality service

continued to be provided. It was further stated that it was too early to gauge if the reduction of Environment Neighbourhood Officers (ENOs) would cause problems and that the impact of the spending review was currently unknown.

Superintendent Mellors of the Hampshire Constabulary provided members with a summary of the possible impact of the spending review. He stated that as funding came from the Home Office budget it was possible the level of the reduction may not be fully known until December 2010. Members were told that 10 – 12% of savings may be achievable through efficiency savings but any reduction above this would require the service to undergo fundamental change.

Members were told that there was little appetite for the merger of forces, although discussions would be underway between forces and partners regarding the establishment of new ways of working and sharing resources. The sharing of air support or serious crimes officers were given as examples.

RESOLVED:

THAT the reports be noted.

11. **Fire and Rescue Service modernisation programme**

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACO) gave members an overall Fire Modernisation project update. As had previously been stated there was currently a 3-6 month delay with the delivery of the Newport site as this was tied to the commercial sale of land. The Ventnor project was approaching the tendering stage with a few issues to be resolved with the Asset Management department, although the access issues had been concluded with the land owner. The Strategic Director stated that whilst progress had been made on both projects, any further advances were on hold until the impact of the spending review had been assessed.

Works on improvements to Ryde station had commenced earlier that day, which would provide 100% appliance availability and increase the levels of data gathering. It was noted the design would compliment the existing building, bringing access into compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). Additionally it would allow attendees of the Life project to use the facilities and provide a community aspect to the station. Upon completion in February 2011 the building would provide accommodation for 13 whole time fire-fighters achieving the overall aim to increase Island resilience.

The whole time crewing of the Sandown station was progressing well and out of the 32 applicants, 21 were to be interviewed. Additionally the station would undergo a refurbishment to improve the facilities for the whole time crew members.

Members raised concern regarding the proposed Newport site and the conflict the location may have with a recognised footpath. The Strategic Director stated there would be a legal process that would need to be undertaken to introduce a permanent diversion, although he was confident this could be achieved without further delay to the project.

The outline business case for Fire Control had been agreed at Full Council on 22 September 2010 and work was now underway on production of a full technical business case in conjunction with the Fire Control Centre in Reigate, Surrey.

RESOLVED:

THAT the report be noted.

12. [Isle of Wight Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment of Community Safety 2009/2010](#)

Members received a presentation from the Partnership Support Manager, Martin Thomas, which gave an overview on the Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment.

The Panel was given an explanation of the purpose of the assessment and reminded of the priorities within the partnership plan 2008-11. The Partnership Support Manager advised members on the achievements made against the priorities, and highlights included:

Reduce Crime

All crime across the Island had reduced by 10%. Domestic burglary had reduced by 16% and violence against a person had reduced by 11%. It was noted that the Pubwatch scheme had worked well and contained 138 members. However, concerns were aired by Superintendent Mellors over sustaining police support with less resources and the amount of premises issued with 4am licences.

Members were concerned to note that numbers of sexual offences had increased by 14% and were informed that a number of historic incidents had been logged during 2009/10 which attributed to the increase. The 15% rise in the levels of fraud and forgery were levelled against the economic downturn, with criminals turning to fraud as an income stream.

Domestic violence remained a serious issue on the Island with possible links to sexual abuse. The Panel was given a summary as to what had been put into place, although it was generally accepted there was more to be done. The level of the problem was highlighted by the number of cases which were considered by meetings of the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC), at which 27 high risk cases had been considered by the last meeting. This remained a key performance target for the police and was a serious issue on the Island.

Reduce Substance Misuse

It was noted that the issue required a two pronged approach: criminal justice tackling the supply of illegal drugs and alcohol and treatment which assisted those who were identified as abusers.

The Panel questioned how "legal highs" were being tackled and told the level of the problem was comparable with other areas. One of the difficulties was the speed of creation of new substances and dealing with the public perception that they were safe.

Education was provided through information being available on the council website and talks being given to pupils at Island High Schools.

Amongst the achievements, members noted that the number of drug offences had increased by 15% when compared with 2008/09. The Panel was informed this was a direct result of increased detection levels. Superintendent Mellors stated this was an increase he was willing to accept and that within this field the Island's detection rate was 80-90%. It was further acknowledged that the figure was directly affected by the various festivals during the summer months.

Regarding treatment, no significant increase in the numbers requiring assistance had been noticed and help was available through the needle exchange, community alcohol partnership and drug intervention programme. The Panel was notified that the National Indicator (NI039), which measured the rate of hospital admissions per 100,000 population target, had been missed. This was attributed to both a high level of alcohol abuse on the Island and the significant efforts to improve reporting mechanisms.

Reduce Anti-Social Behaviour

The number of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) incidents recorded had fallen by 21% when compared with 2008/09 and this had been achieved through issuing Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and Anti-Social Behaviour Orders or through community initiatives. These included an ASB Summertime plan initialising alcohol seizures, the use of re-deployable CCTV or social diversion activities such as working with young people on community projects.

The Cabinet Member for Fire and Community Safety believed there were opportunities where the council could work smarter using planning processes and the advice given by the police on applications under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act. It was confirmed that the police remained a consultee on planning applications and that through careful design of building programmes it was possible to design out crime. The Panel believed this would be a useful subject as part of a future members planning training session, with the assistance of the police.

Recent Trends

It was highlighted to members that the June – August 2010 crime data figures when compared with the same period in 2009 showed increases in almost all categories. The Partnership Support Manager stated this could be linked to the impact of managing pressured budgets but also improved reporting and detection levels. It was acknowledged that the pressures on budgets would increase in the future and that this would need to be tackled through improved effective partnership working across all of the agencies, correctly targeting the limited resources available.

RESOLVED:

- (i) THAT the report be noted.
- (ii) THAT members receive an update on the Domestic Abuse Action Plan which was an item discussed by the Panel in March 2010.

- (iii) THAT the Panel recommends a training session be included in the members training programme with regard to the section 17 duty to consider crime and disorder issues when considering planning applications and ways in which crime can be “designed out”.

CHAIRMAN