

Scrutiny Performance Working Group

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 7th January at 1:00pm, Training Suite A+B, Cumbria House, Carlisle.

Present:

Chair – Cllr Bill Wearing;
Cllr Geoff Cook;
Cllr Marjorie Rae;
Cllr Mark Wilson.

Cllr Stan Collins;
Cllr Carni McCarron-Holmes;
Cllr Val Tarbitt;

Officers in Attendance:

Julie Crellin – Director of Finance;
Colin Cox – Director of Public Health;
John Beard – Assistant Chief Fire Officer;
Emma Graham – Performance and Intelligence Manager;
Hannah Hayes – Policy and Scrutiny Officer;
Rob Howieson – Policy and Scrutiny Officer.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Hilary Carrick.

2. Minutes and Actions from the last meeting.

Members reviewed the minutes from the last meeting, Cllr Wearing as Chair asked on behalf of Cllr Carrick if a number of discrepancies with the minutes be amended. These discrepancies were noted and, notwithstanding these discrepancies. the minutes were agreed as a correct record.

The group then considered a number of briefing notes which had been circulated in advance of the meeting. When reviewing the note on highways activity, Members requested further information on the two areas discussed within the note.

Action: It was agreed to request that an officer from the Highways Service attend the next meeting of Scrutiny Performance Working Group to provide further information relating to questions which Members wished to ask in relation to the Highways Hotline, Service Centre & Area Teams and the County Council's relationship with Highways England.

The Chair then asked Cllr Wilson to give an update on Delayed Transfers of Care (DTOC) performance, which is part of his remit as chair of Adults' Scrutiny Advisory Board. Cllr Wilson explained that Adults' Scrutiny Advisory Board will be considering DTOCs at their next meeting due to be held in the following week with Members looking to understand why performance has started to decline despite a period of improvement. Members' discussion then covered how health systems are prepared to address performance, the role of safeguarding and the need for Scrutiny to undertake further activity to continue to challenge DTOC performance and mitigating activity.

Cllr Wearing then provided a verbal update on the recent Task and Finish Group on Absence. Cllr Wearing explained that all five recommendations are expected to be accepted and the report from Scrutiny and the Council's response will be considered by Cabinet on Thursday 30th January.

Actions: An officer from the Council's Highways Service to be asked to attend the next meeting of Scrutiny Performance Working Group to respond to questions raised by Members during January's meeting.

3. Update on Childhood Obesity within Cumbria

Colin Cox, Director of Public Health was in attendance to discuss performance relating to Childhood Obesity within Cumbria.

Colin began by explaining that partners within Cumbria held a summit on obesity two years ago designed to consider the increasing rates of childhood obesity at reception and year six age, measured as part of the National Childhood Measurement Programme, and to identify systematic activity to reduce rates across Cumbria.

Members then heard that since the summit, young people have been measured over a longer period of time, which allows partners to identify the drivers increasing rates of childhood obesity and understand how rates of childhood obesity are projected to increase moving forward.

As Colin informed Members that Cumbria has seen a reduction in obesity at year six, Cllr Wearing queried if the change was seen as a significant reduction. Colin agreed that the reduction hadn't been significant but suggested to Members that activity will have a greater impact on younger children as they grow up.

Cllr Wilson then asked Colin if there are any academic studies taking place currently to explore the links between food consumption and obesity. The discussion highlighted that such research would be useful with Colin explaining that sufficient resources and capacity isn't available to deliver this research.

Cllr Collins then sought clarity on the basis of obesity measures. Colin responded to Cllr Collins' question by explaining that adulthood obesity is measured by BMI whilst childhood obesity has a more complex measurement process based on percentile increases.

The discussion then considered the link between rates of obesity and levels of deprivation. As Members considered national level data, Colin was able to explain that the rates of children becoming obese increased at a quicker rate on the scale of deprivation compared to children who were classed as overweight. Members went onto discuss reasons for these trends and considered the role of school meals, parents' understanding of meal preparation and the role new Children Centres contracts will play in supporting a whole-family approach.

The conversation with Members then progressed to consider developments with the healthy weight summit. Colin informed Members that Cumbria was the first two tier council area within the country that achieved full sign up to the healthy weight declaration and went onto explain that further partners such as Cumbria Association of Local Councils, North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust and the network of Early Years Providers have also signed up to the declaration.

In response to questions from Members relating to sign up from partners in South Cumbria, Colin explained that relevant health partners operate across both Lancashire and South Cumbria which impacts on health partners' ability to commit to such programmes. Colin went onto confirm that discussion is taking place with partners in South Cumbria to identify activity which can be committed to.

Cllr Rae then asked Colin if any activity is undertaken within schools to support young people classed as Overweight or Obese. Colin responded by explaining that schools are asked to deliver a number of additional programmes to support young people when they may not have the expertise to deliver all programmes. Members then heard that the best approach would be to have a bespoke childhood obesity service that could deliver targeted interventions. Colin informed Members that the County Council or NHS partners do not have sufficient resources or capacity to deliver such a service.

Colin then progressed the discussion by explaining proposed activity moving forward. Members heard that the Healthy Weight Declaration had progressed into a Childhood Obesity Partnership with Colin setting out to Members that although a number of programmes and partnerships are in place, there is more that the partnership can do in the future.

As part of the discussion, Colin explained that a key area of future focus is food with the County Council's Public Health Consultants being tasked with setting up food partnerships across Cumbria. Members then sought further clarity on the role and purpose of food partnerships. Members heard that partnerships will bring together public and private sector partners to identify activity that can promote and increase the provision of healthy food throughout the county.

Cllr Collins then wished to understand if supermarkets will be involved in the food partnerships. Colin informed Members that individual supermarkets generally have to conform to their organisation's national policy but highlighted to Members that some supermarket managers have discretion to support local initiatives.

As the discussion on obesity came to a close, the Chair asked Colin to provide an update on how Public Health activity is helping to reduce the rate of A&E admissions, which is a measure within the Council Plan Delivery Plan. Colin informed Members that NHS England's Long Term Plan highlights the NHS' intention to move to a more preventative model that sees public health services having a key role to play.

However, Colin asked Members to consider that reductions in the Public Health Grant impacts on the reach of Public Health services to support the prevention agenda and A&E admissions. Despite this, Members heard that the County Council's Public Health team had been successful in persuading North Cumbria Integrated Health Care NHS Foundation Trust to fund preventative obesity support and is working with South Cumbria's Health Partners to introduce such services. Colin closed the item by explaining that wider services can help reduce pressure on A&E admissions.

4. Update on Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service Performance

John Beard, Assistant Chief Fire Officer for Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service, then joined the meeting to provide an update on Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service's performance for Quarter Two.

John opened the discussion by outlining the Fire and Rescue Service's new internal governance structure and the adoption of Power Business Intelligence (BI), which allows managers across the service to review performance in real-time.

The discussion also referenced the recent inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS). Members heard that the outcome of the inspection was as officers expected with the service developing an action plan to address the areas of improvement stated within the outcome report.

John then progressed the discussion by taking Members through the different performance themes measured within the Fire and Rescue Service's Performance Dashboard. Members firstly considered Response Standards with John explaining that the ten-minute performance standards were met 64% of the time against a target of 80%. John responded to Members' questions by explaining that the lead officer attending the incident has to manually confirm that the appliance is in attendance which can impact on response times. The discussion provided assurance to Members with John explaining that training is being deployed to improve practice.

Cllr Bill Wearing then asked John if the service has sufficient levels of on-call firefighters to meet response targets. John reminded Members that the provision of on-call firefighters continues to be a national challenge whilst informing Members that Cumbria has above the national average number of on-call firefighters. John also reminded Members that recruitment activity needs to continue to ensure Cumbria has sufficient provision of on-call firefighters to meet response time targets and deliver a sustainable service.

Members also asked John to provide an update on pilots for the three person crewing model. Members heard that pilots had been successful with plans to roll out the model across the county. John went onto explain the impact of the three person crewing model will start to be seen in Quarter Three reporting and is expected to support the Fire and Rescue Service to meet targets for response times.

The discussion then moved to consider casualty rates. John reminded Members that although the casualty rate has increased this is over a short period and explained that casualty rates need to be considered over a longer period in order to understand trends. The conversation relating to casualty rates also considered road traffic collisions, John informed Members that although performance is above target human factors have to be considered. Members heard that the Fire and Rescue Service is working with Highways and Blue Light Services to better target those who are involved in collisions and are from Cumbria. Members then heard that this will allow training courses to be targeted at those who reside within Cumbria.

Cllr Val Tarbitt then asked John to explain who makes decisions about what services are sent to an incident. John informed Members that it is usually the first responder and depends on the nature of the incident. Julie Crellin, Director of Finance, also asked how the use of intelligence could ensure the right vehicle is mobilised for an incident. John informed the group that improved tracking systems allow all vehicles to be monitored and went on to explain that this enables the most appropriate vehicle which is nearest to the incident to be mobilised.

Members then considered performance in relation to fires. Members learned that the rates of accidental fires are significantly below target level with John going on to explain that this performance demonstrates the long term impact of preventative education in relation to accidental fires. John also reminded Members that the performance relating to accidental fires does experience spikes with John giving examples of the influence of social media and school holidays.

John then moved to review performance relating to false alarms. Members heard that the Quarter Two rate is performing better than target with John explaining that the Fire and Rescue Service only attends false alarms where there is a perceived risk to life. John then responded to questions relating to commercial property by explaining that the Fire and Rescue Service looks to work proactively with businesses to ensure alarm systems are functioning effectively. Cllr Wilson then asked John to discuss performance relating to Farm Fires with the Group.

Action: As part of this discussion, John agreed to provide breakdowns of Farm Fires and the dispatched vehicles for Members who wished to receive this information on an individual ward level.

Continuing with the discussion of performance relating to false alarms, Cllr McCarron-Holmes raised a question relating to the provision of smoke alarms in new-build properties. John responded by explaining that legislation requires all new properties to have hard wired smoke alarms when built with the number of alarms required dependent on the size of the property.

In relation to the Assisting other Agencies section of the Fire and Rescue Service's Scorecard, Members heard that Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service carries out a range of activity to support other organisations. In particular, Members were informed about the Emergency Medical Response (EMR) programme, which sees firefighters provide cardiac arrest provision across Cumbria. John explained to Members that all firefighters receive extensive medical training with the EMR programme being piloted within Millom and Cockermouth currently. Members then questioned if funding can be recouped from organisations that the Fire and Rescue Service support. In terms of the EMR programme, John explained that whilst the programme operates as a pilot, it will work on a cost-neutral basis. However, John informed Members that the programme is expected to operate through a cost-recovery model once fully implemented.

The discussion then considered performance relating to flooding, John informed Members that although there are not specific targets, Cumbria has responded to less than the previous year's quarter two. Cllr Cook asked John if the Fire and Rescue Service can be dispatched to coastal emergencies. John responded by explaining that in-water coastal emergencies are the responsibility of the Coast Guard with the Fire and Rescue Service addressing inland water incidents.

Members then reviewed the performance relating to Special Service Calls. Cllr Wilson asked if there had been any learning from the recent incident at Dixon's Chimney in Carlisle. John confirmed to Members that Multi-Agency and Internal debriefs had taken place with learning shared through national forums to support other Fire and Rescue Services which may experience similar events.

The group then moved into a wider discussion about the role of the Fire and Rescue Service and the public's perception of the Fire and Rescue Service's role. This discussion included John suggesting that the Fire and Rescue Service needs to consider its approach to proactive public relations, and Julie also discussing with Members how the Fire and Rescue Service addresses its budgetary and on-call pressures.

This wider discussion also considered how the Fire and Rescue Service can transform perceptions of the role of Firefighters to increase the public's understanding of the range of activity which the Fire and Rescue Service undertakes. John added to this discussion by explaining to Members that transforming perceptions will help to increase recruitment from a range of groups who wouldn't usually consider a career in the Fire and Rescue Service.

Emma Graham, Performance and Intelligence Manager, suggested that data and insight could be used to identify pockets of good practice which could be developed as case studies. The group suggested to John that such case studies could be used as part of recruitment practice moving forward.

As the item came to a close, John considered the themes of Prevention, Protection and People with Members. In terms of Prevention, Members heard that the delivery of Safe and Well visits is above the half year target. In terms of Protection, John informed Members that the bringing together of different audit teams will help improve performance relating to Commercial Fire Premises Audits, and in relation to People activity is in place to reduce rates of sickness absence and improve rates of appraisals.

Action: Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service to provide breakdowns of Farm Fires and the mobilised vehicles for Members who wished to receive this information on an individual ward level.

5. Quarter Two Corporate Performance Monitoring Report 2019/20

Julie then introduced the 2019/20 Quarter Two Corporate Performance Monitoring Report which was considered by Cabinet on Thursday 19th December.

Julie provided Members with an overview of the Quarter Two position of the Outcomes and Measures within the Corporate Performance Monitoring Report. Members heard that thirty-nine Outcomes were rated as Green and on target, thirteen Amber and within 10% of target, and two Red and performing below the expected level. Twenty-four measures were rated as Green and on target, with five Amber and within 10% of target, and nine Red and performing below the expected level.

Julie then progressed the item to highlight areas of declining performance that Members may wish to consider. This discussion began by considering performance relating to the reshaping of Adult Social Care Services. Members discussed that with the introduction of new ways of working and roles, this may represent an opportunity for Scrutiny Performance Working Group to consider the impact of these changes on performance in the CPDP actions and measures related to Delayed Transfers of Care, Integration, Reablement and Integrated Care Communities.

As part of this discussion, the Chair suggested that Cumbria's Health and Wellbeing Board has a role to play in managing performance in relation to Delayed Transfers of Care. The Chair therefore suggested to the group that Delayed Transfers of Care performance is raised at the next meeting of Scrutiny Management Board, which can make a referral for consideration to a future meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

From a budget perspective, Julie advised Members that the 2019/20 budget forecast, which has been reported as a Red indicator, involves recognised budget pressures which relate to Children Looked After, Placements for Young Adults with Complex Needs and Home to School Transport, particularly in relation to young people with SEND. Julie confirmed to Members that moving forward, there is the commitment to implement a strength-based approach to these budget pressures to identify how funding can be used differently in order to reduce demand and support financial sustainability.

As the discussion progressed, Members also considered outcomes relating to educational attainment. Emma informed Members that the Council's Learning Improvement Service works proactively with schools to identify activity which can improve levels of attainment.

Cllr Tarbitt, as chair of Children and Young People's Scrutiny Advisory Board, confirmed that an item on attainment is due to be considered at the Board's next meeting in February. Cllr Wearing as Chair asking Cllr Tarbitt to keep educational attainment under review.

Considering the performance of the Council's Revenue Budget, Julie cited the recognised budget pressures previously discussed within the agenda item whilst informing Members that the delays in the delivery of Medium Term Financial Plan commitments also creates budgetary pressures. Members went on to hear that the principal item of non-delivery relating to 2019/20 relates to the Promoting Independence Transformation Programme but the expectation is that that budget pressure will begin to be mitigated once workload is addressed.

Julie closed the item by explaining that whilst the Q2 report to Cabinet set out Council expects to achieve its budget outturn for 2019/20, 2020/21 will be another difficult year to achieve outturn position and the Council, unlike some other County Councils, does not have significant reserves to assist management of pressures. 2020/21 represents the budget cycle in which the Council needs to achieve increased pace of transformation and implement new ways of working in order reduce the rollover of budget pressures and to achieve financial sustainability. Currently, uncertainty remains in the absence of government announcements beyond 2020/21.

Action: The Chair to raise the current performance of Delayed Transfers of Care at the next meeting of Scrutiny Management Board and ask that a referral is made into a future meeting of Cumbria Health and Wellbeing Board for consideration.

6. Future Agenda Items

The Chair and Members agreed to request that Cath Whalley, Assistant Director - Adults, attend March's meeting to discuss the Adult Social Care restructure, whilst also discussing the impact of new roles and ways of working on areas of performance such as Delayed Transfer of Care, Integration, Reablement and Integrated Care Communities.

Arising from the budget discussion, Members agreed to request an update on Home to School Transport Services, especially for those with SEND.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 4:00pm.