

## **SE27. Performance Report – Scottish Fire and Rescue Service**

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services presenting the local performance of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 December 2018.

The report summarised performance against the local Fire and Rescue Plan 2014-18. The Plan was based on:-

- The Scottish Government's overarching vision for public services;
- Strategic priorities set by Scottish Ministers;
- National outcomes within the National Performance Framework; and
- The Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland 2013. This set out 4 Strategic aims for the service and 7 national equalities outcomes.

The plan also identified 7 local priorities. These were:-

- Priority 1 - Local Risk Management and Preparedness
- Priority 2 - Reduction of Accidental Dwelling Fires
- Priority 3 - Reduction in Fire Fatalities and Casualties
- Priority 4 - Reduction of Deliberate Fire Setting
- Priority 5 - Reduction of Fires in Non-Domestic Property
- Priority 6 - Reduction in Casualties from Non-Fire Emergencies
- Priority 7 - Reduction of Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals

Prior to considering the Service's performance members of the committee raised a concern about the potential impact of public parking at major events, on staff access to Falkirk Fire Station. Mr Lockhart confirmed that there were no parking restrictions on the access road and that at times this could cause difficulties for staff. He had discussed the issue with the Council and was seeking a remedy. The committee asked for a report on the problems together with potential solutions.

The committee discussed the increasing, in England and Wales, role of the Fire Service in working with agencies such as the Ambulance Service in non fire related incidents and sought more information on the prevalence of this in Scotland and on the Service's capacity to fulfil its key obligations. Mr Lockhart set out the key functions of the Fire Service stressing the need for the service to retain capacity to respond to incidents and to be ready for what might occur. Instances of fire had reduced over the years, due in part to the preventative work of the service. However this did not mean that there had been or should be a reduction in capacity. In England and Wales, he confirmed some Fire Services had signed agreements with the Ambulance Services. However trade union concerns had led to this being halted. Any widening of role should result in formal negotiations. As a result there had been negotiations at the National level on finding a solution. Mr Lockhart explained that as preventative work increased, such as home fire safety visits, Fire Fighters had less operational experience. Perversely the best preparation for Fire Fighting was real life experience, which was contrary to the aim of reducing fires. This meant that there was a need to ensure that training was optimal. He concluded that if the Fire Service was to take on

the wider role the training required would similarly widen. There was a need to improve on the 'emotional intelligence' of the service, for example in dealing with people in emergency situations such as medical incidents when their needs differ from their needs in a fire situation.

The committee discussed whether closer links with other agencies and the need to be increasingly cost effective could see, as is the case in Europe, co-location of Emergency Services. Mr Lockhart confirmed that while there was no appetite at Scottish Government level to combine the Fire and Ambulance Service, locally there had been co-location in Falkirk previously. The services both had different resourcing profiles in terms of staff and equipment but nonetheless both services were in dialogue locally.

The committee then turned to instances of deliberate fire raising at Polmont Young Offenders Unit and sought detail on the preventative work in place to reduce this. Mr Robertson discussed a number of initiatives which had been put in place to instill fire skills and embed life safety messages to the young people. The Service also offered home fire safety visits and visited family members. In addition it was hoped that a national smoking ban would lead to a reduction in fire raising.

The committee then discussed the performance in regard to Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UWFAS) which had reduced by 12% on the previous comparator period. There had been increases however in the Bonnybridge, Larbert and Falkirk North and South wards. Members sought clarity on whether the rise, in Bonnybridge and Larbert area had been due to the number of alarms at Forth Valley Hospital and sought detail on the preventative work between the service and the NHS in this regard. Mr Lockhart explained that, in general terms, the hospital was looking to improve its performance and reduce UWFAs. There was one to one engagement with key staff on site, for example in monthly meetings held by the services UWFA champion. He explained that generally the hospital would not evacuate as a result of an alarm. Similarly the service did not attend, automatically, each alarm. The service aimed to work with organisations such as NHS to manage its processes and responses.

## **Decision**

**The Committee approved the report and acknowledged progress by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service in meeting its priorities and requested a report on parking issues, together with solutions, around Falkirk Fire Station.**