



MINUTES

POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR ESSEX AND ESSEX COUNTY FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES BOARD

2 September 2019, 14.00 to 16.30pm, GF01, Kelvedon Park

Present:

Jane Gardner (JG)	DPFCC (Chair)
Pippa Brent-Isherwood (PBI)	CEO, PFCC's office
Karl Edwards (KE)	Director of Corporate Services, ECFRS
Rick Hylton (RH)	Deputy Chief Fire Officer, ECFRS
Glenn McGuinness (GM)	Deputy Finance Director, ECFRS
Anthony Maude (AM)	Head of Performance and Scrutiny (Fire), PFCC's office

Apologies

Roger Hirst (RH) PFCC

1 Welcome and apologies

JG welcomed all to the meeting and confirmed that apologies had been received from RH. There were no other apologies.

2 Minutes of the last meeting

There being no amendments to the minutes of the last meeting on 29 July 2019, they were approved.

3 Action Log

67/18 Complaints and Grievance Policy

It was clarified that the Grievance Policy was in the process of being finalised in time for the September Strategic Board. Dates for dip sampling had been agreed. Propose close.

10/19 Kerslake Review

Civil Contingency Act response item to be included in the Annual Report. This item has been referred to the Strategic Board. The draft report will be sent to RH prior to being tabled for the Strategic Board. Propose close.

12/19 Treasury Management Strategy

Paper is being presented to this Board. Propose close.

19/19 Fire and Rescue Plan – Deep Dive

Awaiting news from HMICFRS before this can be taken forward. A communication is expected shortly.

22/19 Performance report – Environmental Stewardship

The discussion between the Chief Constable and the CFO has taken place. To be placed on Commissioner's briefing to take this forward. Propose close.

Action: 34/19

Environmental stewardship co-operation to be placed on Commissioner's briefing forward look.

23/19 HoBs Closure Report

The final HOBS closure report is currently completed but is dependent on a survey of end users which is required for lessons learned. These will be brought back for the November meeting.

25/19 Risk Based Inspection – activity update

Paper is going to the Strategic Board in September on this. Propose close.

28/19 Budget review – Draft Annual Accounts - Reserve Statement

The reserve statement has been prepared. This is a holding statement in the absence of the Medium Term Financial Plan. The level of reserves is known, as well as those which will be earmarked. It was agreed that on the basis of this a decision sheet should be prepared and sent for agreement.

Action: 35/19

Decision sheet to be completed to accompany reserves statement.

30/19 Budget Review – April 2019 – pensions virement

Decision sheet submitted. Propose close.

32/19 Budget Review – July 2019 IT business case

This represented a significant amount of money, and it was worth workshoping prior to a formal paper being prepared. It needs a full explanation of risks and benefits. This is also closely linked to the Medium Term Financial Plan. Seek date close to 17 September to workshop, and an extraordinary Strategic Board in October.

33/19 Forward Look – Everyone matters

Agreed paper to be presented in November.

4 Budget Review

- 4.1 GM updated the Board on the financial situation. There continues to be an underspend. All staff budgets are underspent. On non-pay there is an underspend, however this will disappear in due course and there is likely to be a draw on reserves, especially for IT. There is likely to be £740,000 call on the general reserve, and £1.6 million from ear marked reserves.
- 4.2 In response to a question on availability on appliances, RHy said that the conversion of the day crewed stations was key in making up wholetime numbers. To get more people trained, use was being made of the Fire Service College – which means internal instructors now free for day to day training. There were also transfers from other services, and not moving grey book staff to support roles for the time being.

- 4.3 JG noted staff were down in performance and improvement which was agreed. There was also a gap in technical fire safety. GM said that there were some issues with recording this on Civica and that was now being looked into. KE said that an establishment review would take place to make sure the figures compare correctly. JG said it was concerning that there were 21 on-call leavers. KE said a number of these had converted to wholetime.

5 Monthly Performance Summary - July

- 5.1 RHy presented the July monthly summary report. RHy noted that calls had fallen, which was generally weather related. RHy also noted that false alarms due to apparatus was at a relatively low level, and this is where there should be some concentration of activity to bring them down. In relation to attendance times, the ten minute attendance time was still not being met, but RHy said that the Service should meet the target. Availability fell, as it always tend to do during the summer period. With regard to Additional Shift Working it was noted that in spite of high levels of spend in this area, availability had fallen. RHy said that this was due to not having enough firefighters, but also the leave policy also needs to be addressed, as it is currently inefficient and does not assist with planning and forecasting. PBI said that in terms of availability it might be worth having annual seasonal comparisons.
- 5.2 In terms of incidents, the main cause was arson which is seasonal. JG asked whether this was being addressed by the joint education teams – and RHy said it was. JG said is there something Community Safety Partnerships could do in this area? RHy agreed, but said the levels were low for a county for the size of Essex.
- 5.3 RHy said in terms of health and safety Essex does really well, and in terms of many issues such as water contamination in tanks, is ahead of many other authorities. JG asked that the health and safety team be thanked for their hard work. JG asked about road collisions and whether this was due to parked cars. RHy said that the Service self-insures for the first £5,000, so crews can make a difference in terms of overall costs. PBI asked could more be done to encourage better parking? KE said there were joint messages with the Ambulance Service which could be conveyed such as ensuring house numbers were clearly displayed, and would look into this with Emily.
- 5.4 In relation to staffing, KE stated that a key issue is the static numbers. KE said that they were going to West Midlands where they have an on-going recruitment programme. AM said that West Midlands had been successful on diversity. KE said that the tactics would need to change, and there will be an internal recruitment review. In terms of home safety visits RHy said the map is useful to show where this is taking place, and identifies how much more can be done when fire crews start delivering this.

6 HR Quarterly Report

- 6.1 KE said that there needed to be more wholetime recruitment. JG asked why there was a disparity between the number of on-call applications and why so many did not follow these up. KE said that one reason was that people withdrew when they realised the time commitment, and the lack of flexible contracts. RHy said that on-boarding could also take some months during which people have dropped out. AM asked if people were followed up to determine why they dropped out, and KE said there were themes and he would bring them to a future meeting.

Action: 36/19

KE to bring themes as to why on-all applicants drop out in such large numbers to a future meeting.

- 6.2 KE said that a joint initiative had been entered into with Suffolk FRS to employ Artic Shores to undertake Personal Qualities Assessments as it rules out unconscious bias. In relation to the talent pool it has been working well, but needs a refresh. Also there was very little external interest in the Group Manager posts that were advertised. Sickness absence remains relatively stable. JG said that there is a big proportion of sickness was due to mental health issues – but apart from TRIM what do we do? KE said that TRIM has worked well, but a lot of mental health relates to issues outside of work. AM said that in some other FRSs staff have access to counselling. KE said managers are encouraged to refer mental health cases immediately the same day. PBI asked if there were opportunities for staff to self-refer. KE said that there was previously, and setting this up again needed to be considered. KE said that he is going with Alan Chinn-Shaw to see what is happening in Tyne and Wear where they have low sickness rates. KE said it was also planned to have a look at manual handling and lifting assessments on return to work.
- 6.3 KE said that they had approval to draw down on the apprenticeship levy to training fitness instructors in each watch so that they would be responsible for helping to maintain fitness on each watch. In relation to the various groups that meet, it was noted that they report into the People Strategy. It was noted that it would be useful to have an annual report on Inclusion and Diversity in due course. In relation to emergency drivers there do seem to be enough at the moment.

7 Treasury Management Strategy

GM noted that it was agreed previously that the Treasury Management Strategy should be reviewed, and Arlene Close was engaged, who also advises the police, to draft a report. A fully compliant report has been produced, and GM went through the key features. JG said it was a good report, and with the exception of a query on Table 3 which GM would check, GM should prepare a decision sheet.

Action: 37/19

GM to prepare decision sheet on the Treasury Management Strategy.

8 Local Pension Board Annual Report

GM introduced the Local Pension Board Report and set out the key issues it has considered. RHy said he could not evidence that the Local Pension Board was one of the best in the country. The report was accepted.

9 Forward Plan

All points raised had been captured and will be included. KE said there several business continuity workshops being worked on. It was agreed that these can be reported on in November. With regard to mutual aid arrangements, details were required on who we have these with, and are they up to date – just to offer reassurance. The Real World report would be available in October.

10 Any Other Business

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 4.10pm.