



MINUTES

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

30 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 (RHy)	Deputy Chief Fire Officer, ECFRS
Darren Horsman	Assistant Director for Communications and Public Engagement PFCC's Office
Glenn McGuinness (GM)	Deputy Finance Director, ECFRS
Anthony Maude (AM)	Head of Performance and Scrutiny (Fire), PFCC's office
Claire Putnam (CP)	Board Support Officer

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

- 2.1 4.2 RHy stated it should read *In response to a question on availability on appliances* not *In response to a question on recruitment*.

Further to this amendment, the minutes of the previous meeting of 2 September 2019 were approved.

- 2.2 Matters arising PBI stated Agenda Item 5 Monthly Performance Summary 5.3 RHy said *In terms of health and safety Essex does really well* this is counter to the verbal feedback received from RSM audit committee around the internal audit that hasn't been completed yet. RHy confirmed the FRS has had some issues with the audit report from RSM and it's the first audit where it's been suggested that health and safety isn't where it should be. RHy's observations since he's been in post is that health and safety is strong, however he hasn't had sight of the document yet so needs to have a discussion with the auditors before the report goes any further.. KE has meeting booked in with the auditors.
- Matters arising PBI stated Agenda Item 6 HR Quarterly Report 6.2 KE said *In relation to the talent pool, it has been working well*. PBI and JG has met with the representative bodies and Unison and the Fire Brigade Union both stated that from their point of view the talent pool wasn't working well. KE stated there is a review of recruitment which will include talent pool management and there's definitely room for

improvement but it is working satisfactorily. JG confirmed that this is also being discussed at the People Strategy Board about the broader use of the talent pool.

3 Action Log

- 12/19 Treasury Management Strategy - Close
- 19/19 Fire and Rescue Plan Deep Dive Programme - Now received letter from HMICFRS and as discussed with JG the focus on the deep dive should be on Technical Fire Safety and this should be presented before the next visit from HMICFRS in November. RHy stated there is a summit on Technical Fire Safety on 7th October and he will forward the Action Plan over to JG. RH to chair a meeting after the 7th October and before the next P&R around Technical Fire Safety.
- 22/19 Quarterly Performance Report Environmental Stewardship – Report went to the Commissioner and the Police are going to progress it in the first instance and keep FRS sighted on how they're progressing it in order that once the FRS have more capacity they can continue – Close
- 23/19 HOBs Closure Report – Coming back in November
- 28/19 Draft Annual Accounts – Decision sheet for reserves completed, PBI doesn't have it in her file. GM to chase it up and get it to PBI – Close
- 32/19 Budget Review – Decision sheet for IT business case to be completed. PBI doesn't have it in her file. KE to chase it up and get it to PBI.
- 34/19 HR Quarterly Report – KE to bring back in October

4 Budget Review August 2019

- 4.1 GM took the Board through the paper and explained it had been streamlined with a view that a more detailed report will be presented on a quarterly basis. GM confirmed that if looking at the monthly numbers they see anything that has moved away from trend or any surprises it will be reported at the next meeting. JG asked if going forward this will include any exception reporting on a monthly basis as well as more detailed in the quarterly report, GM confirmed. JG stated for the record she finds the detailed reports extremely helpful
- 4.2 GM explained that the situation for the first five months to August is that an underspend on pay is continuing and of the £1.2million underspend, £793,000 is on pay. However there is a £300,000 overspend on day crews hidden within there otherwise that underspend might have been higher. Reason for overspend on day crews is down to pay protection and other arrangements negotiated with the day crews as part of the transition arrangements to the on-call crewing system.
- 4.3 On-call firefighters are £92,000 underspent and support staff are £140,000 underspent.
- 4.4 The Service are setting up a Review Board to look at vacancies and JG asked if that will help with the current massive underspends. KE responded that it was set up more to address headcount and overall expenditure and the whole concept of the panel was whether to recruit to a budgeted vacancy or bring in an external consultant for a particular piece of work. However the budget setting exercise will address and help with underspend.
- 4.5 Non-pay costs are underspent in certain areas such as Premises and Equipment which includes the ICT Projects which are awaiting commencement, Travel and Subsistence and lease and interest charges. Overall GM is expecting to see a pickup in non-pay expenditure for the latter part of the year and the numbers will come closer to budget.

- 4.6 Forecast hasn't moved this month and originally budgeted to draw £2.4million on reserves and GM expects the Service will now only draw just over £700,000 on reserves.
- 4.7 GM is expecting to see a £1.4million underspend on pay. JG asked if this was a planned underspend or is this part of the MTFP re-setting of the employment budget? GM confirmed that this isn't planned and KE stated that the Service needs to look at recruitment and the Workforce Plan and will be part of the Capital Planning Management Programme, looking at capital expenditure that's budgeted for and on track or not on track. RHy confirmed there is head room in the employment costs and the Service are under budget by about 30 Grey Book posts and are carrying the 35 that sit within day crews.
- 4.8 GM updated on Grey Book and Green Book establishment. Under Grey Book the variances show a -9 on Technical Fire Safety which highlights the fact that the Service budgeted for 25 posts and there's only 16 in post. AM asked if the Service are going to have Grey Book station staff doing Community Fire Safety and RHy suggested there will be a need for some and that's a proposal in the IRMP to develop the prevention strategy which will look at the new model going forward and will need dedicated staff to deliver Community Safety in the team.

5 Performance Report Summary - August

- 5.1 RHy took the Board through the first of the monthly reports with a more detailed report coming quarterly which is more aligned to RH's Fire and Rescue Plan. RHy highlighted that there is better progress in attendance times but know they need to improve. Fires continue to fall and casualty and fatality numbers remain low. Focus areas are on Human Resources which has come through the Continuous Improvement Board, easy to identify trends, identify reasons for missed Fitech appointments etc. New fitness policy being launched in January 2020. Home Safety figures show the huge difference FRS could make if they can get crews rolled out and the FRS have plans to do that by the end of the year.
- 5.2 JG wanted to note the accidental dwelling fires figure was good (42 Aug 10 versus 62 Aug 18 and 66 Jul 19) well done. AM asked if the FRS know the reason they've gone down. RHy confirmed it's probably seasonal.
- 5.3 JG queried the high level of calendar sick days and asked if there's a correlation between culture and the numbers of sick days taken. KE confirmed the top reason for sickness absence is stress related illness which FRS are addressing in regard to putting together a Mental Health Strategy which will focus on mental health in the workplace. RHy stated that the vast majority of sickness is long term so FRS will be looking at the best way to encourage people back to work. The second reason is muscular skeletal injuries.

Action: 38/19

KE to report back on the Mental Health Strategy in the next meeting

- 5.4 There was a short discussion around Unpaid Leave/Special Leave and the Annual Leave Policy which is being looked at.

Action: 39/19

KE and AM to look into a Deep Dive around absenteeism and Unpaid Leave/Special Leave and Annual Leave Policy

- 5.5 DH asked if the Wholetime/On Call Availability charts are correct, it was confirmed figures are correct but the key at the bottom of the charts is contradictory so will be corrected for the next meeting.

- 5.6 There was a discussion around availability of crews and appliances and mixed crewing. RHy stated needs to prioritise training for on-call firefighters and also need to identify key stations and skills needed first and then pick up the other stations with training requirements. DH stated that there's public confusion and lack of understanding around on-call especially at Ongar and Dovercourt and so need a PR piece to address public perception. RHy stated a proper strategy is needed in regard to how FRS is going to deal with providing a service in Essex and agreed they can learn some lessons from Essex Police in changing their dialogue and message which will aid public perception in attendance times.
- 5.7 JG said she is very happy to help and support volunteer events if needed. Community Development and Safeguarding - it was discussed at the last meeting how many cases were referred and how many cases remained with the service. RHy confirmed figures will be included for the next meeting.
- 5.8 AM asked if FRS has mixed crewing yet. RHy confirmed that on Day Crewed stations there's mixed crewing with Wholetime and On-Call together and key part is to ensure wherever a firefighter is put they are competent to ride in that place.

6. Communications Planning

- 6.1 KE took the Board through the report and explained the objectives the FRS will be focusing on, including the strategy going forward and where the Service is now, and looking at internal and external stakeholders, news around the Integrated Risk Management Plan and linking it in with the PFCC and communications and evaluating whether the Communications the Service are doing are effective.
- 6.2 Annual report goes through the different types of hits on social media, website reviews, numbers of posts etc and determining what good looks like. Website analysis is important to see what the public are searching for and is the Service presenting that information in the easiest and most informative way.
- 6.3 RHy stated that the Service's key messages needs to be picked up as part of the refresh and when the IRMP is in place. JG stated that when campaigns are distributed via social media platforms need to ensure that the Fire Service are retweeting Essex Police information and that Essex Police are doing the same for the Fire Service to really get the messages out there and to broaden the audience. KE asked if there is any content or statistics that DH thinks is missing or would be helpful, please send them over to him.
- 6.4 DH stated that Essex Police are re-tendering for their public perception survey so potentially the Fire Service could include a couple of questions in it around engagement as it's a large, statistically valid survey. DH will put KE in touch with Claire Heath in Essex Police to discuss this possibility.
- 6.5 In regard to the NFCC Campaign Calendar AM asked who decides what the Service is going to follow? Is there a Communications group that meets to discuss Fire Safety or Water Safety and what the priorities are? JG stated the SLT would view the Communications calendar and decide if they're happy with it and KE confirmed that Emily in the Communications team takes along the Communication Strategy for that quarter with the campaigns that are rolling out the following months and she will link in with all relevant departments that would support or be involved in that campaign. RHy confirmed that the campaigns are aligned to the Services active priorities.
- 6.6 PBI asked if either the Inclusion and Diversity Steering Group or the Communications Team looking at the EU Accessibility Directive in terms of the website? KE will ask the team and respond back to PBI ASAP.

- 6.8 KE and DH will speak with Emily in regard to forward planning the refresh of the Communications Plan in line with the IRMP.
- 6.9 There was a short discussion around Public Meetings which are ably supported by a Senior Police Officer and a Senior Representative from the Fire Service and at present the questions raised are heavily weighted towards policing, however JG's view is that the public meetings could be directed towards some of the Fire Service's campaigns.

7 Business Continuity Recovery

- 7.1 RHy explained to the Board that the feedback the Service received around their Business Continuity Plan was really good however the challenge is how often have these been tested. So an exercise plan has been put together with two key exercises, Fuel Supply Disruption and Power Outage planned for April and July next year. RHy will send JG a full list of exercises planned.
- 7.2 PBI would like to be included in the planning of the Power Outage Exercise as this will allow the PFCC's office to test their Business Continuity Plan. PBI also suggested speaking to Trevor Mears who is the Essex observer on the ERF Group as he did a Power Outage Exercise that was extremely detailed and it may be useful in planning.

8. Arrangements under sections 13, 16 and 17 FRS Act

- 8.1 RHy confirmed there are no section 13's or 17's in place, just 16's and the section 16's allow for mutual aid across borders.
- 8.2 Agreements with Kent and Cambridgeshire FRS's are on a no charge basis for movements in either direction. Arrangement for London, Hertfordshire and Suffolk are on a cost basis with London being slightly more expensive and Essex FRS charge the same in return.
- 8.3 The agreements in place have no end date and continue to roll over but the Service can terminate within 6 months if needed to. There will be a review to try and align the hourly rates. The Service is currently spending in the region of £100,000 net.
- 8.4 RHy also discussed the sharing of operational information which is around risk information and the Service has this for everybody except Kent and London as they have an unwillingness to share, however RHy has pushed for it and anticipates having this information from them by the end of the year.
- 8.5 PBI asked when mutual aid arrangements are called for, do Essex Fire and Rescue retain the operational control of the incident even though they are requesting those resources. RHy confirmed an Officer is sent with any appliance that is sent over the border. RHy also confirmed that whichever Service's ground it is, is in charge.

9. Forward Plan

- 9.1 Page 2 minutes of last meeting, HR Real World report will be delivered in November then further on it states October. KE confirmed it will be delivered in November.
- 9.2 Minutes of last meeting under the Forward Plan it stated KE said there were several Business Continuity Workshops being worked on and was agreed they would be reported on in November but they don't appear on the Forward Plan. KE confirmed it's the list of Workshops that KE presented earlier.

- 9.3 HR vacancy management and filling is currently sitting with Natalie as part of the HR review and will come back in the November meeting.
- 9.4 RHy confirmed that the Performance report due in November will be the Quarter 2 report.

10. Any Other Business

- 10.1 There will be a minutes silence for the firefighter who tragically lost his life on a training exercise in Wales on 1st October.
- 10.2 JG wanted congratulations to go back to the Service in regard to the Extraction Team winning first place in the UK Champions.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 15.45pm.