



## MINUTES

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

28 October 2019, 14.00 to 16.30pm, GF01, Kelvedon Park

#### **Present:**

Jane Gardner (JG)	DPFCC (Chair)
Rick Hylton (RHy)	Deputy Chief Fire Officer, ECFRS
Moira Bruin (MB)	Director of Operations, ECFRS
Glenn McGuinness (GM)	Deputy Finance Director, ECFRS
Anthony Maude (AM)	Head of Performance and Scrutiny (Fire), PFCC's office
Jo Thornicroft (JT)	Head of Performance and Scrutiny (Fire), PFCC's office
Claire Putnam (CP)	Board Support Officer

#### **Apologies**

Roger Hirst (RH)	PFCC
Pippa Brent-Isherwood (PBI)	CEO, PFCC's Office
Karl Edwards (KE)	Director of Corporate Service, ECFRS
Darren Horsman (DH)	Assistant Director for Communications and Public Engagement PFCC's Office

#### **1 Welcome and apologies**

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

#### **2 Minutes of the last meeting**

2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting of 30 September 2019 were approved.

#### **3 Action Log**

- 19/19 Fire and Rescue Plan – Deep Dive Programme – Merge this action with 39/19 Deep Dive into Absenteeism Unpaid Leave/Special and Annual Leave Policy
- 35/19 Budget Review Reserve Statement – GM explained that there was a decision sheet completed a while back as part of the year end accounts to increase the training reserve from £600,000 to £1million, this was as a result of an underspend of some windfall money they received last year. There hadn't been a decision on how or when the money would be spent, this is detailed in a further decision sheet that Jo Turton had discussed with PBI. This decision sheet advocates for a further increase in the operational reserve by £400,000 (previously discussed and agreed at the ECFRS Strategic Board on the 5<sup>th</sup> June), and will specify how the combined £1.4million will be spent and when.
- 36/19 HR Quarterly Report – to be brought back to the November 2019 meeting.
- 37/19 Treasury Management Strategy – This has been signed by PBI and passed to RH to sign. JG will follow this up.
- 38/19 Mental Health Strategy – Paper being presented in this P&R Board so close action

39/19 Deep Dive into Absenteeism Unpaid Leave/Special and Annual Leave Policy – this will be merged with action19/19 and dealt with as part of that discussion.

#### **4 Budget Review September 2019**

- 4.1 GM took the Board through the paper. For the first half year the Service is shows an overall underspend of £1.1million against budget, made up of £477,000 on pay, just under £500,000 on non-pay costs and operational grant income is higher than budget so there's a gain there also. £300,000 additional cost in relation to settlement figures for day crewed firefighters. Headcount remains below budget. There's more activity around on-call firefighters this year versus the same period last year. So last year there was an underspend of £300,000 on the on-call budget, this year the Service is £20,000 under budget. This will impact the forecast which is predicting an underspend of £485,000 on-call firefighters, GM doesn't think you'll see that this year. Re-iteration of the forecast will be seen in the October report. Non-pay costs on premises and equipment, the major underspend is £140,000 on Information Project Systems and GM expects this underspend to pick up later on in the year as a result of the recent ICT Transformation Programme. £170,000 underspend on Other Costs and Services mainly legal costs.
- 4.2 Forecast same as previous months. GM had expected to draw £2.4million in reserves this year and this forecast stated that £700,000 is needed, so £1.6million better off than originally thought, however, the trend is showing that might need to draw slightly more than the £700,000.
- 4.3 Capital expenditure is at £1.4million. GM thinks the asset protection of £2million won't be reached and GM can't see the asset improvement works for Shoeburyness starting this year. Information Technology Projects will be starting this year and will include hardware rather than software. JG asked GM why he doesn't think the improvement works for Shoeburyness will start this year. RHy stated that work has been started on Shoeburyness and the money set aside is for the completion of works and that won't be this year.
- 4.4 RHy confirmed his challenges around the budget relate to capacity to prepare, implement and drive spend, this being especially true in relation to the delivery of the capital programme which is a very ambitious programme. The same applies to the delivery of the ICT Programme. Training was also highlighted as challenging in respect of delivery of training and associated training facilities. RHy also stated that it looks likely that the Service will receive a favourable funding settlement again, but acknowledges that contributions will still need to be made to Reserves and savings are made. JG confirmed it's about making appropriate efficiencies in order to invest these in public facing ECFR services.
- 4.5 GM took the Board through the Headcount summary. GM highlighted that the Civica system is proving to be time consuming due to the need to manually input; it's a good system for HR but not a good payroll system. The Service are working with Civica to see if anything can be done to cut down on manual inputting. HR over budget by 8 on green book staff. Innovation and Change are 4 over budget on grey book staff and 7 over budget on green book; the structure is being reviewed and GM stated that this along with HR has budget challenges. JG stated that Natalie is very insightful having spent a few sessions with her, however it's more complex. RHy stated that Dave Bill is leading the structure of the Innovation and Change team and invited JG to spend some time with Dave to understand the complexities and challenges of this.

**Action: 40/19**

**JG to spend time with Dave Bill to understand the review of the Innovation and Change Team.**

**Action: 41/19**

**JT to go through the finance report with GM to gain a better understanding.**

AM asked about the grant increase GM mentioned. GM explained that the government gives businesses 'business rate' support and they recompense the Service by way of a Section 31 grant each year. It's impossible to forecast what that figure is likely to be so the budget is based on the previous known grant figure which is what GM will base the budget on again.

**5 Performance Report Summary - September**

- 5.1 RHy took the Board through the new format which includes an Executive Summary and Key Statements but no benchmarking as that's now in the quarterly report. Good news to report, for the first time since RHy has been in situ the Service has hit attendance times. AM asked if there was a reason for this, RHy stated that we're now out of the busy summer months and maybe there have been more incidents closer to wholetime stations. It's only the first month of hitting those attendance times so it's a little too early to see trends. Compared to where the Service was it's moving in the right direction.

**14.30pm Natalie Quickenden (NQ) joined the meeting**

RHY stated it proves the Service can hit those times and the work being done around Process Evolution and the IRMP will start to identify the key stations and enable the Service to crew them in a sustained way to ensure attendance times are met. RHy stated that the narrative needed to be about attendance times rather being achieved as opposed to pump availability.

- 5.2 Wholetime and day crew availability was 94.7% September 2019 versus 98.3% September 2018 and 94.1% for August 2019. On-call availability was 73.2% September 2019 versus 74.9% September 2018 and 74.2% for August 2019. Wholetime pump is sitting in the high 90's, so looking to convert.
- 5.3 RHy noted the increase in Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADF), 77 in September 2019 versus 64 in September 2018 and 42 in August 2019, unfortunately this time of the year normally sees an increase. Even though there were 77 occasions against an Essex population of 1.1million, the fires are relatively small or no firefighter action needed when you get to the incident location, which means the Service's message of get out and stay out and call 999 is working as 3 reported casualties out of the 77 ADF's for September with no fatalities.
- 5.4 RHy informed the Board that Information Governance and request for Fire Reports is particularly difficult at present as issues with the Services data recording system meaning the control system is dumping that data into the IRS system. So it's having to be a manual process with some people spending time manually inputting that data into the system so when crews look for it it's there. These issues won't be resolved until the system is upgraded the early part of 2020.
- 5.5 RHy informed the Board that there weren't any major issues within Health & Safety however the Service are working through the results of the audit and are currently challenging one of the outcomes. JG stated that it's important that the Service is very clear about the scope as that can lead into becoming responsible for driving improvement on something it has limited or no control of. AM stated that looking at other FRA's it seems that ECFRS has more internal audits than they do, so AM is of the opinion that some of the internal audits should be culled and focus needs to be on the critical criteria, and when the auditors talk about H&S, H&S on the fire ground is completely different to H&S for people office based. It was agreed to put time

aside to discuss and decide the way forward before next year's audit programme is finalised.

**Action: 42/19**

**Time needed to discuss and agree the internal audit programme for 20/21.**

- 5.6 In regard to Home Safety the Service is delivering some very good work but could deliver a whole lot more once operational crews are incorporating this. MB stated there is a lot going on around targeting within the performance team to produce reports for the crews to work to, to define hotspots. MB advised that they are looking to launch a refreshed approach in this area at the Managers Briefing on the 18<sup>th</sup> December with a formal launch public after Christmas.
- 5.7 There was a short discussion around the HR Summary and in particular sickness which is increasing. JG asked if sickness will form part of the Mental Health Strategy and NQ agreed it would. NQ also stated that the HR quarterly report has been streamlined but will be in the same format as this report and sickness absence has been looked at in much more detail, as well as the reasons for absences, which do include mental health as one of the top reasons for absence. NQ stated it's important to look at the reasons for absences and appropriately respond and address these as part of developing the ECFRS People Strategy.

**MB left the meeting at 14.55pm**

**6. Mental Health Strategy**

- 6.1 NQ introduced and explained the report. The document is focusing on the direction of travel around what the Service's commitment is, which is essentially to inform and reassure, to educate and enable and to support and treat. This proposed approach will be adopted as part of our People Strategy which is currently being developed for 2020 and beyond. The People Strategy will include a number of Safety, Health and Wellbeing dimensions including physical and mental health, and other aspects which directly and indirectly contribute to health and wellbeing. These are likely to encompass healthy lifestyle, financial wellbeing, good work and personal growth
- 6.2 NQ stated that the Service doesn't signpost the things that they do really well and there needs to be a piece of work around accessing tools, materials and information around mental health in the workplace and finding different ways of delivering that. Need to look at more modern ways of getting the information out there, for example, NQ showed the Board a business card that had a QR code on and when scanned with an iPhone or Android phone would give the employee access to information that they could look at in a private environment. JG agrees that accessible information in a private environment is an extremely important element of the approach proposed.
- 6.3 JG stated that options and choices on how employees access information are very important and NQ stated it's also important to work with Line Managers, HR and Occupational Health and Safeguarding to look at prevention, protection and interventions and that it needs to be more people centred rather than process driven.
- 6.4 NQ explained that they're going to be looking at facilitating and providing toolkits that people can use to keep things simple with bite size interactive events to support Managers rather than necessarily formal training events.
- 6.5 NQ stated that they will also be looking at monitoring outcomes within the next HR quarterly report, which will be a work in progress as the existing report is quite traditional when you look at the matrixes, especially around Health and Wellbeing.

- 6.6 JT asked if there was anything that could be captured from an appraisal point of view. NQ confirmed that yes there is, work was done last year to simplify the appraisal process, and there's now an opportunity to gain more feedback from managers and employees on what they would find beneficial. In this regard, a survey with supporting comms will be sent out in the next week or so.
- 6.7 JG stated that this is an element of a much larger approach the Service is taking towards Mental Health Wellbeing. NQ confirmed that the People Strategy is due in January 2020 as there's still a little more to do around the six constructs and work has already begun around the Health and Wellbeing construct. One of the elements is around good work, am I happy in my role, what is the purpose of my role, am I clear about the boundaries of my role, do I look forward to coming to work etc and the appraisal system will help identify that.
- 6.8 AM stated that at the last meeting KE was talking about access to an independent counselling service and that he was looking into re-instating it. NQ confirmed that this will be part of the strategy and that she is working with colleagues to introduce a consistent, flexible and a responsive approach.

**NQ left the meeting at 15.10pm**

## **7 IRMP Update**

- 7.1 RHy stated that the consultation is continuing with number of responses now at 350.
- 7.2 Two meetings have now taken place with the Police, Fire and Crime Panel Working Group. At the next meeting data and analysis will be shared giving the Working Group greater insight into how the IRMP is developing. JG stated that feedback received from the Working Group was positive and that they felt very engaged in the process

## **8. On-call Development Update**

- 8.1 RHy explained the different Phases of the programme. Phase 3 is competent, Phase 2 is probation so available to use but not fully competent, Phase 1 is currently going through initial training.
- 8.2 Focus has been on recruitment around the on-call conversions and South Woodham Ferrers has had 9 more applicants, Great Baddow has had 11 and Waltham Abbey has had 2. On-call Liaison Officers are working well and are supporting all stations, particularly the stations where an increase in recruitment is needed.
- 8.3 The On-Call Availability Project which MB is sponsoring and The Terms and Conditions Project which KE is sponsoring is looking at possible flexibility within contracts, looking at offering different ways of working, different ways of rostering on-call staff etc...

## **9. ESMCP Update**

- 9.1 RHy explained that this is the governments approach to replacing the Services current Airwave system which is the system that all of the emergency services use for communicating with both their control centres and each other. It currently costs the government £1million per day to maintain and Airwave is now out of contract. ESN is the Emergency Service Network which will allow the Service to move away from Airwave and onto a new platform. Criteria for the new platform is that it must have 98% coverage. The government has secured an extension to the current Airwave until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022. The Service is moving to a position where they can adopt the new Emergency Services Network.

- 9.2 The COSMOS Programme is the method by which the Service will manage the transition to ESN. The programme will identify, define and manage the activity required to enable transition. It will also identify the local benefits associated with adopting the ESN, and therefore identify opportunities for Service Improvement, which once completed, will support the business justification for ESN transition.
- 9.3 The Control Project is fundamental to this and needs to be resolved because the current Control is not ESN compliant. The Service will be going with Option B – ESN Connect and Prime Adoption Q3/2021 (Voice and Data) This option is based on the premise that there are no business or financial advantages of adopting ESN for ECFRS prior to this date, and instead seeks to align our adoption with our new Control Room solution implementation and transition before the Airwave Shutdown Date of 31st December 2022.
- 9.4 JT asked if this will have an impact as the emergency services will implement at different times. RHy confirmed that the plan is to go across as regions to alleviate the transition, there will be a huge programme of work to complete once this rolls out.

## **10. Forward Plan**

- 10.1 HMICFRS – include an agenda item on feedback from HMICFRS re-inspection.
- 10.2 Engagement Planning at Operational Level – remove Engagement Planning and replace with Annual Plan (November 19).

## **11. Any Other Business**

- 11.1 JG noted that it was AM's last P&R Meeting and thanked him for all his hard work, expertise and support over the past year. RHy also thanked AM and said it has been a pleasure working with him. GM also thanked AM for ensuring a supportive and constructive working environment. AM graciously accepted the thanks and said it had been a pleasure working with everyone.
- 11.2 GM raised concerns over the Year End Accounts, the valuation now not ready. GM has been asked to write a draft paper for the Finance Report & Council which will go through the Fire Finance Network and GM's top level contacts, to try and put the Services representations forward to put an end to this accounting process. JG asked GM to share the draft report with RH when available. GM advised that Service are spending £50,000 a year to ensure our properties are valued.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 15.55pm.