



MINUTES

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

25 November 2019, 14.00 to 16.30pm, GF01, Kelvedon Park

Present:

Roger Hirst (RH)	Police, Fire, Crime Commissioner (Chair)
Jane Gardner (JG)	Deputy Police, Fire Crime Commissioner
Pippa Brent-Isherwood	CEO, PFCC's Office
Karl Edwards (KE)	Director of Corporate Services, ECFRS
Leanne Little (LL)	Performance Analyst, ECFRS
Glenn McGuinness (GM)	Deputy Finance Director, ECFRS
Jo Thornicroft (JTh)	Head of Performance and Scrutiny (Fire), PFCC's office
Claire Putnam (CP)	Board Support Officer, PFCC's Office (minutes)

Apologies

Rick Hylton (RHyl) Deputy Chief Fire Officer, ECFRS

1 Welcome and apologies

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

2 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting of 28 October 2019 were approved and there were no matters arising.

3 Action Log

19/19 Fire & Rescue Plan – Deep Dive Programme around absenteeism, special leave etc to be brought back to December P&R
23/19 HOBs Closure Report – Being presented in this meeting so close action
35/19 Decision Sheet to be completed to accompany reserves statement – PBI has not seen this so GM will chase
36/19 KE to bring themes as to why on-call applicants drop out – Close action
37/19 GM to prepare Decision Sheet on the Treasury Management Strategy – Close action
38/19 KE to report back on the Mental Health Strategy – Presented at the last meeting so Close Action
40/19 JG to spend time with Dave Bill to understand Innovation and Change – End of December
41/19 JTh to go through the finance report with GM to gain a better understanding – End of December
42/19 Time needed to discuss and agree the internal audit programme for 20/21 – Before 13th December

4 Budget Review October 2019

- 4.1 RH commented that the paper presented was extremely brief and needed more detail. GM to focus on what's changed, what's new, what difference has it made and what needs to be done next.
- 4.2 GM took the Board through the paper and highlighted the following; the Service is £1.5million underspend against the budget (excluding transfers to and from reserves) for the first 7 months of the year. RH has requested that Operational Income is broken down for the next meeting. In regard to income, GM stated that he is not advised of Section 31 grants until after the budget has been set which makes it difficult to forecast.
- 4.3 In regard to employment costs, whole-time Firefighters is ytd £700,000 under net, however there are costs in there for Day Crews of £500,000 and additional shift work. On-call Firefighters trend has picked up and seeing costs more in line with budget. RH stated that commentary needs to say Underspent because of headcount, Overspent because existing firefighters were asked to do more, so Net is 26 overspend.
- 4.4 Underspend on ICT projects, however this will pick over the remainder of the year. Underspend also on legal costs.
- 4.5 Lease and interest costs underspend as officers have elected to come out of the provided car scheme and are going into the essential user schemes. Emergency vehicles tax change has been confirmed for April 2020, this means you can't deduct for business use, so on average it will cost firefighters an additional £140 a month in tax. The essential users scheme, you get an additional £1,400 a year towards a vehicle.
- 4.6 There was a brief discussion around the forecast and RH asked again that the total of funding before transfers to and from reserves is shown.

Action: 43/19

GM to ensure that the total of funding before transfers to and from reserves is shown on the report going forward

RH further stated that the final column on page three of GM's report fails scrutiny and RH also wanted it noted that the forecast for additional resource from reserves will not be as presented on page three of the attached report and a revised piece of work will come forward to the next P&R meeting.

Action: 44/19

GM to revise the forecast for the additional resource from reserves for the next P&R Meeting in December

- 4.7 RH stated that on the summary of staff, grey book and green book is split out however grey book on-call staff isn't represented and it needs to be on the table.

Action: 45/19

GM to include grey book on-call staff on the Summary of Staff table

GM highlighted from the table the following, firefighters are 16 underspent overall against a budget of 666 and allowances have been made for additional shift working. Technical Fire safety grey book is 9 underspent. Finance and Pay is 3.7 overspent as is Human Resources which is 7.8 overspent which is being reviewed alongside Innovation and Change.

- 4.8 KE stated that the draft budget and Medium Term Financial Plan are being presented at SLT and the intention is to then bring it to RH before the Strategic Board.

GM left the meeting at 14.36pm

5 Performance Report Summary – October 2019

- 5.1 LL presented the Performance Report on RHy's behalf and highlighted the following; there was a decrease in the total number of incidents compared to the previous month and less than the total in October 2018. There was also a decrease in the number of fires and false alarms, but a slight increase in special services.
- 5.2 Attendance and Availability targets weren't met this month, however, for the second month running the average first attendance to potentially life threatening incidents was below last year's average. LL stated that RHy has commissioned the team to look at first and second pump attendance to see if there's any correlation in attendance targets and the findings will be brought to the next P&R Board.
- 5.3 There were five reported personal data breaches in October and the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) was not made aware of any of these as they did not meet the stipulated threshold. RH asked who decides on whether a breach has met a threshold, KE confirmed it's around due diligence and the Chief Information Officer (CIO) checks it with the ICO to discuss whether it meets the threshold. RH stated "was not made aware" needs re-wording.
- 5.4 RH asked how much of this report is used at SLT to manage the Service. KE confirmed that it's used Service wide and is reviewed at SLT as a standing agenda item and it does inform what the key lines of focus are as an organisation. The quarterly report is aligned to the fire rescue performance metrics and the monthly report needs to be the same for consistency. KE also confirmed that these reports will form the basis of some of the deep dives.
- 5.5 KE stated that the Service are also looking to resolve the data management issues they have, which will probably come under the ICT Plan. PBI reminded the group that any data management needs to link to ECDA (Essex Centre for Data Analytics)
- 5.6 On-call availability graph on page 5 of the report will be overhauled as Leaden Roding and Ingatestone are showing incorrect target data.
- 5.7 JTh stated that a Deep Dive into Absenteeism and Leave Policies will be put onto the forward plan for December which KE has welcomed. JTh also stated that the green box under Insights where it says "*33% (441 days) of time lost to long term absence in October was due to Post Op Recovery or Mental Health*", should be separated out as mental health is a significant reason for being off.
- 5.8 Home Safety Visits by station was only 16 in October, RH thought there was a plan in place for getting stations to do this themselves. LL confirmed a pilot has happened and KE thinks the plan is still being evaluated. JG said there needs to be a roll-out timetable put together in regard to what the Service is going to deliver, what stations are coming on and by when and brought back to December's P&R

Action: 46/19

RHy to put timetable together in regard to what the Service are going to deliver, what stations are coming on and by when.

- 5.9 JG stated that page 11 of the report in regard to safeguarding referrals doesn't explain how many cases are open to the Service, it only shows how many referrals have been received. KE will update the table to show a more in-depth picture,

showing cases that are still with the Service as they are being investigated and cases referred to another agency but still awaiting a response and how long individual cases have been open . There followed a short discussion and PBI stated that it would be a good idea to have a safeguarding item on the agenda scrutinising the Service's compliance with working together to safeguard children and the elements of the Care Act around safeguarding rules.

Action: 47/19

Deep Dive around Safeguarding, KE to refer to the SLT and then SLT to confirm with JTh when it needs to be put onto the schedule

6. HR Quarterly Report

- 6.1 KE took the Board through the updated report which will enable the reader to focus in on key points. In regard to establishment there is a work force planning meeting scheduled to look at whole-time recruitment for 2020 as the Service wants to take a different approach as normally is a twice a year recruitment campaign whereas other Services have a consistent recruitment drive all year. RH stated there are good and bad for both approaches however with a consistent all year round recruitment the Service could miss out on BAME applications. KE stated that one of the reasons for a drop in on-call numbers at certain stations is that there are a high number of on-call firefighter applicants that progress through to whole-time firefighter's.
- 6.2 RH stated that on page 4 of the report the table headings are Establishment – Operational, Establishment – On Call, but on-call is part of operational so should read Establishment – Whole Time and Establishment – On Call. KE agreed and will change.
- 6.3 KE explained that ECFRS is supportive of flexible working and this has assisted in attracting the right personnel. ECFRS is a family friendly organisation that is able to accommodate flexible working requests. Each request is considered on an individual basis. Also in regard to agency there is a new collaborative framework for agency workers which will support visibility, including monitoring and reporting of spend.
- 6.4 KE wanted it noted that through Civica there is an applicant tracker which will help in keeping on top of applicants.
- 6.5 This is the first month that the Service has been able to report a 12 month rolling turnover figure as previous reports illustrated monthly figures only. In regard to the Stability Index RH stated that comparing average length of service with turnover might give a truer picture.
- 6.6 KE stated that in regard to Ethnicity there is more work still to do around this area. HMICFRS highlighted the area of poor recording of the equal opportunity data, however, the Service is looking into Page Tiger which will be used to attract new employees and has a web based electronic on-boarding system, so when an applicant fills in their details you won't be able to move on to the next field unless you've filled in all data. RH stated that under Insights it says *we are reviewing the volume of records with a "Non Stated" gender identity and will work to fix this*, is perhaps unfortunately worded, so look to remove the "fix" part. JTh also stated that the statement around disabilities, the Service shouldn't compare it's data with a national average as it's the fire service is a physical role. RH commented that it would be good to have the ethnicity profile breakdown for Essex. KE has taken all comments on board.
- 6.7 KE highlighted to the Board that in regard to On-Call recruitment that it's taking 32 weeks from start to finish which is far too long, hopefully the applicant tracking system will help with this process. PBI asked about the timescales around the review

of the talent pool, KE confirmed that it's taking place at the beginning of January 2020.

- 6.8 KE stated that mandatory e-learning is showing poor levels of compliance, it's thought that this is because the Service utilise Kent's system so there is no data of their own. Solution would be to have an e-learning platform of their own. RH asked about consequences for the employee for non-compliance and at present there aren't any. KE agreed that it needs to be more apparent in objective setting and performance reviews that training is mandatory. JG commented that training records and the ability to track needs to be 100%.
- 6.9 In regard to Attendance Management, KE stated that he will be meeting with the Fire Brigade Union (FBU) around case work management and how the Service can improve the approach to case work management in a more collaboratively way. RH asked if there are trigger point indicators and stated the Service need to know how many are in breach of the process. KE confirmed that Performance Management is going to be looked at.

Action: 48/19

Deep Dive around Case Management and Performance Management and KE will let JTh know when to put it onto the forward plan

7 HOBS Closure Report

- 7.1 KE gave a brief overview and history of the issues around Civica and payroll and drew attention to the last paragraph on page 5 of the report, the Board confirmed they were happy with that statement.
- 7.2 KE highlighted that one of the key lessons from this implementation is that employees should have had a more robust method of deciding whether or not to "go live" with the new system. RH particularly liked "*Future high level projects require a greater need of ownership and accountability*"
- 7.3 In regard to lessons learnt, RH asked what are the Service going to do differently going forward. KE confirmed that essentially whatever the Service do, be it this project or a different one, need to engage people from day one into the programme.
- 7.4 PBI asked if moving to Civica had achieved the savings it hoped it had. KE confirmed it had.
- 7.5 RH confirmed he was happy with this report, however, he needs reassurances that KE will take the people involved and affected through the report so they understand it. KE confirmed he will ensure that happens.

8. IRMP Update

- 8.1 KE confirmed it's on track and will continue to push for responses.

9. HMICFRS

- 9.1 JTh has spoken to RHy and confirmed that the Service are awaiting the formal report back from the latest inspection. Consultation on inspection criteria is happening and the Service has drafted a response.

10. Forward Plan

- 10.1 JTh confirmed there were a few things on the forward plan and the Deep Dives from this meeting will be logged onto the plan.

11. Any Other Business

- 11.1 JTh asked for approval of the Technical Fire Safety Deep Dive minutes that had been sent out. The Board went through the actions and confirmed the minutes as approved.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 16.25pm.