

MINUTES

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

29 June 2020, 1000am to 1300pm, Teleconference

Present:

Jane Gardner (JG)	Deputy Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (Chair)
Rick Hylton (RHy)	Deputy Chief Fire Officer, ECFRS
Moria Bruin (MB)	Director of Operations, ECFRS
Neil Cross (NC)	Finance Director and Section 151 Officer, ECFRS
Natalie Quickenden (NQ)	
Jo Thornicroft (JTh)	Head of Performance & Scrutiny (Fire), PFCC's Office
Claire Putnam (CP)	Board Support Officer, PFCC (Minutes)

Apologies:

Roger Hirst (RH)	Police, Fire Crime Commissioner (Chair)
Pippa Brent-Isherwood (PBI)	Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer PFCC's Office
Karl Edwards (KE)	Director of Corporate Services, ECFRS

1 Welcome and apologies

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

2 Minutes of the last meeting

There being no amendments the minutes of the previous meeting of 29 May 2020 were approved.

There were no matters arising.

3 Action Log

05/20 Performance Report December 2019 - MB and KE to look into a more formal assessment around reporting personal data breaches to the ICO. Paper due back in June 2020 so Action remains open. Update 29 May 2020: JTh also stated that conversations have started with Tracy King around this. Update 29 June 2020: KE has sent JTh an extract of the log received and JTh needs to discuss it with PBI so Action to remain open.

NQ joined the meeting 10.07am
RHy joined the meeting 10.07am

25/20 HMICFRS - MB to look into the HMICFRS re-inspection regime and bring an update to next P&R. Update 29 Jun 2020: No updates as RHy stated the re-inspection is still planned for August.

26/20 Dispute Resolution Agreement Update - MB to speak with DB to ensure any agreements the Service haven't been able to fulfil are tracked. Update 29 June 2020:

MB stated that any actions from the Dispute Resolution Agreement is being formally documented and tracked. One was around Operational Training which is being captured in the work that Colette Black is heading up with additional funding, and the other one is the agreement around how the Service crew the appliances and is raised at every GNCC and is a matter of continual monitoring. JG asked for MB to show for audit purposes where things are being tracked and bring a paper back to P&R so RH, JG & PBI can acknowledge it and then there's an audit trail.

Action: 29/20

MB to show on the Dispute Resolution Agreement where things are tracked and to bring a paper back to P&R

27/20 Protection Improvement Plan - JG to link JP into the Business Against Crime Board to enable him to give a presentation on RBIP. Update 29 June 2020: JG confirmed that there is an upcoming Business Against Crime meeting and it's the intention to raise this then and will ask for a presentation slot for the next meeting. Action to remain open

28/20 Covid-19 Recovery Plan - JTh to add Covid-19 Recovery Plan to the Forward Plan as a standing Agenda item. Update 29 June 2020: This has been added so Action can close.

4 Forward Plan

- 4.1 JTh confirmed Budget Review including Covid-19, Monthly Performance Report, Covid-19 Recovery Plan Update, HMICFRS, Risk Register Changes by exception and Single Tender Actions by exception. Substantive items for July are Health & Safety Annual Report, Business Continuity, On-Call Liaison Project Final Evaluation Report, Learning and Development Strategy which is around the Process Monitoring and Change Management. The Training Cost paper from NC is down for August. The Protection Improvement Plan Quarterly Update was originally scheduled for July however it's being covered in a paper at this meeting so JTh proposes to remove it as it's scheduled again for 3 months' time.
- 4.2 RHy suggested that in regard to the HMICFRS Updates it might be more helpful to bring the Improvement Plan each month which have been through the Continued Improvement Board instead of HMICFRS, this will also show HMICFRS that RH and JG are scrutinising this on a monthly basis. JG agreed and JTh will update the Forward Plan to reflect this.
- 4.3 NC would like to add Procurement KPI's onto the standing agenda and will liaise with JTh.

5 Budget Review (inc Covid-19) May 2020

- 5.1 NC took the Board through the report and highlighted the Income and Expenditure as follows; for the first couple of months the Service have been sitting at just under £400,000 expenditure wise below budget and month 1 was at £250,000 below budget. Employment costs are overspent by £120,000 and the key reasons are the costs have gone through in regard to the firefighters driving the ambulances and these costs weren't budgeted for. Additional shift working costs have been incurred which is just over £60,000 and hasn't been budgeted for either and NC is looking into this.
- 5.2 £500,000 below the budget on non-pay costs and is split between support costs, premises and equipment and other costs. Support costs are £147,000 behind. Premises are £220,000 behind and £180,000 behind in other costs.

5.3 Operational Income is £48,000 behind budget which is split across all categories, but in terms of Business Rates relief the Service is £26,000 ahead of budget and due to the final grant that will be received this is expected to be £150,000 ahead. JG stated that RH's view is that Government Grants aren't operational income so he would like to see them separated out. NC confirmed that the way the Service report at present is in line with CIPFA however he will look into Government Grants being analysed separately.

Action: 30/20

NC to look into reporting Governments Grants separately.

5.4 NC confirmed that two tables have been added to the report in regard to pensions, one table shows length of service for aged 50 and over that has exceeded 25 years' service and 30 years' service and the other table gives the staff aged over 50 as well as minimum length of pensionable service which will include military pensions etc.

5.5 NC updated the Board on Covid-19 and confirmed that grant funding hasn't changed and is still standing at £1.7million received. Summary shows total spend of £841,000 and projected to spend 50% of the Covid-19 grant. NC stated that he's also included in the report information from FFN and summaries from other FRS and the grant allocation monies they have received and costs they've incurred up to May and their cost projections up to the end of September 2020. The report also includes costs allocated for capital spend. Majority of Services are in the same position and ECFRS have around 50% of funding remaining. NC also stated that as yet no costs associated with recovery have been built in.

5.6 Capital budget of just over £8million and key points to note are that in terms of vehicles and in particular appliances there was a budget of just under £1.3million and the Service won't be spending any of that money within this year and so will roll into next year and will be looking at re-profiling the appliances spend. ICT spend the budget is £1.9million and NC is awaiting an update at the next Capital Board in regard to what the project spend looks like. Lexden Workshop relocation is £750,000 and will more than likely be the latter end of the year. Asset protection projects have been listed in the report and the Service has consistently spent £1.4million a year and even though it's been budgeted at £2.5million NC has doubts around the numbers. NC confirmed that John Dougherty has a very specific list of each project which includes timelines for the design phase and any procurement that's needed and the timeframes for doing the work and he's confident that the projects can be delivered subject to Covid-19 restrictions. NC thinks the Service is being optimistic in what can be delivered and it will be monitored through the Capital Board.

5.7 NC confirmed there had been a few staffing changes within the Finance team, Austin Page will be joining on 1 July and will be dealing with Financial Accounting and Compliance and also currently at 2nd stage interview for a Finance Business Partner for Monitoring which will help deliver and gain visibility.

5.8 JG stated that RH is really comfortable with where NC is getting with the Finance Report and also wanted to know if there was any income lost due to Covid-19. NC confirmed there has been nothing of significance.

5.9 RHy stated in regard to the Covid-19 funding the Service has already received, there's a further application that sets the impact the Service may have if don't receive the return of non-domestic rates or council tax deferrals as there's a real risk that local authorities won't be able to pass those on which would leave a large gap in funding and NC surmised that later on in the year and next year is where all the risk will be. NC also stated that they will look to review the reserves policy and potentially adjust reserves to take account of provision but it's now flagged as a major risk and concern. JG agreed that it's the right thing to flag and asked if RH needed to do

anything to help. NC asked that if RH hears any news or updates from ECC could he pass them on? JG confirmed that and also the fact that Liz Helm also works for ECC part time, so between RH and LH the Service will be kept aware of any updates.

- 5.10 JTh asked in regard to the Cost Centre report and the Operational Income column how can a department like HR for example bring in operational income. NC confirmed that it's split out over different categories.
- 5.11 JTh stated that under Staff Establishment, TFS and CFS are understaffed but the work through HMICFRS has said the Service are recruiting in these areas and also, CFS is picked up in the Annual Performance Report around the fact that they are under established and so taking less calls and making less visits. RHy agreed that TFS doesn't look right as they've recruited 11 additional Technical Fire Safety Officers and NC is already looking into the discrepancy. RHy is also not aware of any significant vacancies in CFS and neither is MB.

6. Performance Report May 2020

- 6.1 JG stated that this was a significantly improved report and there were no questions raised.

7 End of Year Performance Report

- 7.1 RHy stated that this comprehensive report of the performance data has been through the Continued Improvement Board and the narrative has been developed by each owner of the data
- 7.2 Call rates remain consistent.
- 7.3 There's work to do around the Home Safety Visits and this will pick up again after shielding ends on the 1 August.
- 7.4 Rural engagement is an area that needs improvement especially around the delivery of Home Safety. The new Prevention Strategy that MB is developing will help towards improvement in this area.
- 7.5 Continuing to see similar trends in Accidental Dwelling Fires and two recent deaths in Epping during the pandemic and the Service has looked at comparisons with other FRS which helps ECFRS to look at what they're doing well and where they need to improve.
- 7.6 RHy stated that in regard to Fire Protection you'll see in the report that ECFRS has served 0 Enforcement Notices and as Jim Parsons has discussed previously it's a cultural piece that needs to shift and the new Protection Strategy and the Risk Based Inspection Programme will help in enabling the Service to take enforcement action. The surge funding will also help with the buildings that the Service know need further triage and link to the Fire Protection Board.
- 7.7 JG stated it was a very informative report and thanked everyone involved & asked for thanks to be passed onto the team.
- 7.8 JTh agreed it was a really good report and having the benchmarking information gives a different context which is very useful. JTh also stated that as discussed at 5.11 the section on understaffing in this report doesn't match up. MB agreed that it doesn't make sense so will take it away and look into it further.

Action: 31/20

MB will look into staffing levels for TFS and CFS and will share the information with JTh

8. Covid-19 Recovery Plan Update

- 8.1 Tracy King has been appointed the Assistant Director for Recovery on a 3 month secondment and SLT has made the decision that staff will continue to work remotely until at least 1 September, however the Service will accept individual requests to return earlier if personal circumstances change.
- 8.2 The Service are experiencing challenges around Track and Trace.
- 8.3 CIT have been stood down and the Service are now looking at the Recovery stages with Prevention, Protection and Training being the first to be reinstated.

RHy left the meeting at 10.55am

9. HMICFRS

- 9.1 MB confirmed that this is an update on the two Action Plans, the Protection Improvement plan and the Cultural Improvement Plan. The Protection Improvement Plan has largely been completed and there are currently two amber areas, the Comms Plan rollout but have had assurances that this will go green, and the other one is the staff delivery against the RBIP which is amber due to the impact of Covid-19 and will remain amber until early to mid August.
- 9.2 CRM replacement is on track and will be replaced with Community Risk Information System (CRIS).
- 9.3 RHy mentioned earlier on in the paper about the Government Surge Funding for Protection and work in progressing around the action plan in drawing down on the funding and MB would like to update on progress at the next P&R.

Action: 32/20

Government Surge Funding paper to be included in the next P&R meeting

- 9.4 MB stated that the biggest challenge around the Cultural Improvement Plan is the lack of diversity data that's been declared by the Services staff so decisive and targeted action. JG asked if the Service thinks the Cultural Improvement Plan includes enough around equality and diversity. MB confirmed it's a work in progress and JG stated that Jo Turton has updated her with some really positive things about working with the BAME grouping including the Asian Fire and Rescue Association.
- 9.5 JG asked if on-call recruitment has stalled. NQ explained that the Service have risk assessed the current fitness test that the candidates have to undergo, and there was a day last week where candidates were taken through that process with all social distancing measures in place and was successful. Also the Service are still seeing candidates coming through the system which is positive.
- 9.6 JTh stated that in the header part of the report it asks if there are any Equality or Diversity implications and JTh feels that there are two items in the Cultural Improvement Plan, one around Equality Review of Progression and Approaches which is currently amber and there's another around re-profiling that need addressing. MB will look into this.

10. Single Tender Actions (by exception)

- 10.1 NC stated there was only one to report which is the End of Year Valuations for audit purposes.

11. Grenfell Phase II High Level Action Plan Update

- 11.1 MB confirmed that the Service is working through the report and will need to re-categorise to make it easier to read. At the moment it's categorised as actions that are directly applicable to ECFRS, actions that are applicable to other agencies but impact on ECFRS, and actions that are aimed at London Fire that ECFRS also need to consider. When re-categorised MB stated that they will also look at timescales against actions.
- 11.2 MB stated that the Update shows lots of red and amber areas which need attention but some of them are out of ECFRS's direct control and are dependant on other agencies, for example building orders need to fit different systems into their buildings and building orders need to supply the Service with complex plans and assurances and the system isn't quite there as yet.
- 11.3 MB confirmed that as a standalone agency ECFRS has managed to progress the purchasing of smoke hoods for appliances for evacuation purposes.
- 11.4 JTh stated that it's good to hear that MB will be re-categorising the actions especially around the things the Service has direct control over as the risks at present have not changed the amber or red status since the last update. So re-categorising will be useful to see whether it's the Service that isn't moving or another agency impacting it. JTh also suggesting quarterly updates and will programme it onto the Forward Plan.

Action: 33/20

JTh to programme Grenfell Phase II High Level Action Plan Quarterly Updates onto the Forward Plan

- 11.5 MB explained that progress will be seen when the Service receives the surge funding as this will enable the Service to better target the high rise residential buildings which are clad over 18 metres and the Home Office funding will be to target other high risk buildings in Essex. It's a very complex area but is progressing.

12. On-Call Conversions Update

- 12.1 Still on track to achieve the conversion of the 4 stations by October 2021 but relies on the ability to recruit and retain on-call colleagues. Emphasis is on targeted campaigns to put additional resources into the stations. This will have a financial impact as NC has previously stated as it's additional personal during transition periods.
- 12.2 However there are planned financial benefits attached to the programme which are around the sale of the housing assets which has impacted on due to delays. NC confirmed that the list of surplus houses has been through the Strategic Board meeting but isn't the complete list as yet, but once received the Service can proactively start marketing the properties.
- 12.3 Detailed Dovercourt updates will be presented to RH and JG through Jo Turton on a monthly basis.
- 12.4 JTh stated she was pleased to hear that recruitment is going ahead and asked about the Business Case for OCLO's. There's a paper coming to the next P&R in regard to

the On-Call Liaison Project Final Evaluation, will that paper have the OCLO information? NC confirmed that a paper is being prepared to extend for an additional 12 months.

13. Attendance at Hubs & CSPs

- 13.1 MB stated that this is an area that the Service have picked up on that they can really improve on and have looked at understanding how the Service can be more effective and raise the profile.
- 13.2 This has been a good example of collaborative working alongside the PFCC's office and other partners to understand how the Service can progress effectively with targeted actions.
- 13.3 MB confirmed that part of the issue is resourcing and the energy that partners have to invest in relationship building and understanding the system. So MB is looking at potentially introducing more resource into this area which can be a temporary or permanent post who can help the Managers to understand how best to support the CSP's.
- 13.4 JG confirmed that the majority of people understand partnership working which isn't always looking at the benefits to your Service but looking at working across the entire system and helping Station Managers, who wouldn't ordinarily think that way to understand that is very important. JG also stated that she thinks Suzanne Harris from the PFCC's office can help identify the areas that FRS colleagues can own within their own priorities.
- 13.5 MB confirmed that it's around the system awareness and leadership and linking around political awareness and partnership building and there's a gap across the organisation. MB has also spoken to Colette Black in regard to the Leadership Development offering and some areas have been added around political awareness and attending CSP's and also this will plug into the Leading Greater Essex Programme. MB stated that whatever is implemented has to be an integral part of the job so the unions stay on board.

14. Quarterly People Report

- 14.1 NQ took the Board through the report and highlighted the following; Establishment January – March an interim Workforce Plan was put together which allowed the Service to dig deep into the profile of the organisations across the 4 staffing groups with focus being on Wholetime and On-Call where there are some potential significant gaps over the next 5 years. The Workforce Plan will fundamentally focus on recruitment for Wholetime and On-call for the next 5 years.
- 14.2 NQ confirmed that there did appear to be an over establishment in the support area due to maternity leave and cover with 1 additional agency staff member in the payroll team due to the ongoing issues with Civica.
- 14.3 MB stated that in the Diversity self-classification section of the report, it states at the bottom in red; Action please continue to encourage employees to complete their Equal Opportunities data in Civica which is a really good idea but maybe Equal Opportunities data isn't the correct terminology. NQ agreed and will pick this up with KE.
- 14.4 NQ confirmed that the Service has a low turnover of staff from an unplanned point of view however the age demographics start to look like a 'cliff edge' within 5 years' time and there's an issue around future retirement age and a potential impact around the pension remedy from last year in terms of decisions to leave earlier than they

would have done. JTh asked if the Service is still awaiting the final pension remedy outcome which NQ confirmed and explained they are hopefully expecting an update in September. MB stated that nationally the FBU has launched a legal challenge around the pension remedy and has launched a further legal challenge in regard to the amount of time the Government are taking to declare how they are going to resolve it and Covid-19 has had an impact on that too.

- 14.5 The Service have been looking at an Applicant Tracking System module within Civica with a view to implementing in the summer which will pick up the ethnicity profile data at the start of the process so it can be tracked. It now doesn't look like the system can do this in a mandatory way so the Service will be using Athena recruitment system that's in place for On-Call and adapt it to capture all new starters profile data at the beginning. JG stated that it's a shame Civica can't support the Applicant Tracking side.
- 14.6 Expert HR have been commissioned in regard to the Gender Pay Gap and will work with the Service to look at the issues around reporting and look at how other FRS's report will align the data to ensure consistency.
- 14.7 Resourcing and Talent Management, work is still ongoing despite Covid-19 restrictions with risk assessments in place. Interviews have taken place virtually and initial signs are showing that Onboarding is working well and Sarah has done a fantastic job around all the ICT. Focus is around Wholetime recruitment over the next few months with a view to bring the first squad in towards the end of December beginning of January which will hopefully be the start of two 18 strong squads each year. Working with Nicki to improve diversity around recruitment and have looked at the conversion rate around gender and ethnicity groups in particular to see what the drop off points were. Colette Black led a review with the Inclusion and Diversity Action Group and some good ideas came out of it in regard to reaching out to new candidates and working with colleges and the fire cadets and partners. NQ confirmed the Service are also reviewing the assessment and selection methodology taking learning from other FRS's where they've had real success in the last year of recruiting ethnic minorities and females. NQ stated that the Talent Management Process is also under review. JG stated that it's a really comprehensive report with lots of work going on and will be interested to hear all the updates over the coming months.
- 14.8 NQ updated the Board in regard to the Incident Control Level 1 Compliance Training and the 6 month extension given to individuals who's training was due to expire during the pandemic, this has now been reviewed and risk assessments completed and there's a plan to get the everyone who's training has expired back on track. NQ confirmed that the Elite system is being reviewed for mandatory training in regard to compliance and E-Learning. There's also a focus from the Information Governance Board around managing personal information and there's an issue with E Prevent training which the Service are aware of and working on. JG stated that this is an area where the Service have responded brilliantly to the Commissioners desire to see training pushed and investment being made.
- 14.9 NQ explained that the Appraisals should have started in April and the Service have updated the form and toolkit which is easier to use and it's been communicated that it's live on the intranet to encourage staff to continue to complete the appraisal where they can and to do them virtually. Also asked staff to upload these onto Civica themselves and a management guide has been put together to help with this. Good news is that in a week 40 appraisals have been uploaded onto the system.
- 14.10 In regard to Health & Wellbeing the Service have been doing CIT meetings from day to day which have now reduced to 3 times a week and as part of Covid-19 reporting sickness reporting has been included and happy to report that sickness has been

quite low. The Deep Dive around Sickness and Absence was held in April and the HR Business Team has been working with Line Managers to look closely at long term sickness absence and hopefully the trends will continue to go down. Adjustments in Civica have been made to report on actual lost days as opposed to calendar lost days. Wellbeing Wednesdays have been introduced which is themed each week with things like financial health, domestic abuse, financial abuse etc, home working, fitness and nutrition. JG stated that this all feels so different to before and very focused on the workforce and wanted to support, so culturally it feels different, MB agreed it is different and the feedback received has been good. JG asked in terms of sickness, was there a calculation in regard to how much sickness costs the Service, NC stated that they haven't done so as yet however it has been discussed as part on the MTFP and strategies will be put in place to target sickness and how it's captured and there could be efficiency savings. There are metrics that can be put in place but generally it's not straight forward however NC stated he could come up with a rate and target similar to how the Police track time lost and cost implications. JTh noted that there's an ability to select the reason for absence as cause unknown or not specified, removal of this has been requested in previous P&R meetings and it's still showing so NQ will speak to KE and get it removed.

Action: 34/20

NQ to speak to KE about the removal of cause unknown or not specified as reason for absence

- 14.11 Occupational Health and HR Business Teams are looking at, in regard to sickness, making a better link between the two teams in making sure there's a health referral up front especially for employees signed off for a month straight off and better contact to feel more supported. NQ noted that the Board may see a spike in OH referrals once this is progressed. NQ also stated that due to Covid-19 Fitech had been paused but the Fitness Manager has now put together some proposals in regard to how this can be turned back on and these will be risk assessed by the Health & Safety team. JTh stated that there are a high number of missed Fitech appointments currently 20% and NQ confirmed that the Fitness Policy will help in this area.
- 14.12 Employee Case Management has seen a real focus as some cases had been open for some time. HR Business Team has looked through all the cases over the past couple of months and the Board will start to see a continuing trend down. NQ stated that the Service use two systems for Case Management, Civica and Cherwell and the two have to be cross-referenced which can cause issues especially when the 'housekeeping' in Cherwell is poor. There were also 1 or 2 disciplinary cases that were ongoing but these have now been concluded. So future reports will now show a reduction in cases and reduction in the duration. JG stated this is excellent news and thanked NQ and team for a clearly massive piece of work and thanks are passed onto the Business Partnering Group as well.

15. Any Other Business

None to report.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 12.51pm