



PFCC
POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME
COMMISSIONER FOR ESSEX

Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority

Decision Report

Report reference number: 022-20

Government security classification: Not protectively marked

Title of report: Government Surge Funding for Protection

Area of county / stakeholders affected: Essex county

Report by: Moira Bruin – Director of Operations / James Palmer – Area Manager

Date of report: 9/9/20

Enquiries to: James Palmer, Area Manager

1. Purpose of the report

To seek sign off of the use of Government surge funding, following the approval in principle given by Performance and Resources Board (on 30 July 2020), to increase resilience in the service and to manage the risk associated with high rise buildings effectively, following the conclusion of the Grenfell Tower Enquiry.

2. Recommendations

That approval is given for the recruitment of four fixed-term contract Green Book inspecting officers for one year. The expectation is that the posts will be filled ahead of quarter four in 2020. There are associated costs with the appointments. Details are provided under section 8 – Financial Implications.

This decision report is linked to a previous report to the Performance and Resources Board (30 July - agenda item 15 – Government Surge Funding for Protection Business Case).

3. Benefits of the proposal

To enable the service to effectively identify, assess and manage any risk associated with the 182 in-scope buildings in Essex identified by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Building Risk Review (BRR).

4. Background and proposal

Central Government has provided multi-faceted support for fire and rescue services following the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017, ranging from a number of interventions and proposed legislation changes, with support and guidance from the National Fire Chiefs Council. The most recent initiative launched by Central Government is the release of £20m of funds to support FRSs. £4m of this will go to the National Fire Chiefs Council; the rest is to be distributed to fire and rescue services.

The amount to be received by Essex County Fire and Rescue Service is £317,604.19. This funding is designed to ensure FRSs have the technical expertise required to fulfil this function and ensure fire protection officers have the skills they need. This funding is from two grants:

- (i) £10 million Fire Protection Board funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government focussed on ensuring fire safety in high-rise residential buildings over 18m in height, and
- (ii) £10 million Protection Uplift funding from the Home Office to bolster work targeting other higher risk buildings

The NFCC Building Risk Review (BRR) carried out has identified 182 properties under the responsibility of ECFRS. Buildings in the scope are high rise residential buildings (HRRBs) over 18m in height. The minimum for a BRR return is confirmation that each building in scope has had a triage from ECFRS and the minimum data set has been returned to the Board.

The triage process will be carried out initially via a review of the current data and comparisons with ECFRS's Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP). The triage process will follow the provided NFCC guidance. The triage process began from 1 July 2020 and is being developed and built into the RBIP and planned work moving forward.

Once triage has been completed, inspections will be programmed as a priority for those premises where they are a HRRB considered High Risk, where no recent audit / inspection has been conducted. Areas with high levels of buildings in these categories will be assisted by local teams from other areas being drafted in to assist where necessary.

The additional members of staff will also be utilised to support communities and local authorities in identifying the emergence of previously unidentified high-risk buildings and mitigating that risk.

The management of the BRR within ECFRS will be carried out by allocating a manager to oversee and run the process. This manager will be in post and carrying out the role from mid-August. Prior to that point the reporting will be picked up by a current member of staff. They will develop a robust reporting process that will be communicated via our governance structure and the NFCC.

5. Alternative options considered and rejected

An alternative option also considered is to outsource the work to a private company if the service is unable to recruit suitable candidates after two rounds of recruitment. The benefits of this option are:-

- The service has a contractual commitment from the third party to deliver against its need
- There is no recruitment and employment burden

The risks associated with this approach are:-

- The service does not have ownership of the risk and therefore is not able to manage it as robustly
- Staffing burden to carry out the quality assurance work

6. Strategic priorities

- Prevention, Protection and Response
- Helping vulnerable people stay safe

The following risk is identified in the Strategic Assessment of Risk (SAOR):

- Failure to understand the changing risks relating to buildings and how buildings can behave in an unexpected way in a fire

7. Operational implications

This decision report is linked to a previous report to the Performance and Resources Board (30 July - agenda item 15 – Government Surge Funding for Protection Business Case).

Implementation of the recommendations is expected to bring about a reduction in risk associated with in-scope buildings to residents as well as operational responders.

Protection staff have been engaged in the proposals. Representative bodies have been informed of the approach planned.

8. Financial implications

4 x fixed term contract Green Book inspecting officers for a period of one year.	£173,000
4 x vehicles for one year	£68,000
Maintenance cost of vehicles	£2,800
1 Year Training of 48 WT Watch Managers for Level 3 certification (16 individuals x £1,810 per person x 3 courses)	£86,880
4 x IT provision for new staff	£8,000
4 x standard issue workwear	£720
Total cost of proposal	(339,400)
Government Funding	317,604.19
Net deficit	21,795.81

The proposals outlined in this paper leave the service with a shortfall of approximately £22,000. This however is offset by the fact the vehicles procured as part of this proposal will remain as service property and be an asset beyond the life of the fixed term contracts.

9. Legal implications

Failure to comply with the central government approach leaves the service open to civil prosecution if, as the enforcing agency under the Regulatory Reform Fire Safety Order, we fail in our duty to enforce that order robustly.

10. Staffing implications

This decision is concerned with the recruitment of four fixed-term contract Green Book inspecting officers for one year. This will be conducted in line with current ECFRS policies and procedures which are designed to ensure compliance with relevant employment legislation.

11. Equality and Diversity implications

The recruitment process will follow standard service procedure as outlined in service policies and procedures.

12. Risks

There is a risk that, without additional posts, there will be insufficient resource to underpin and carry out the Building Risk Review work, or that Protection's business as usual work will be affected.

13. Governance Boards

The proposals set out in this report have previously been discussed and agreed at the Performance and Resources Board on 30 July (agenda item 15). Option A as set out in the report was approved.

14. Background papers


Report to the Performance and Resources Board (30 July 2020) setting out the Business Case for Surge Funding.

Decision Process (022)

Step 1A - Chief Fire Officer Comments

(The Chief Fire Officer is asked in their capacity as the Head of Paid Service to comment on the proposal.)

.....I support this proposal.....


Sign:  Date:.....11/9/2020.....


Step 1B – Consultation with representative bodies

Protection staff have been engaged in the proposals and representative bodies have been informed of the approach planned

Step 2 - Statutory Officer Review

The report will be reviewed by the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority’s (“the Commissioner’s”) Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer prior to review and sign off by the Commissioner or their Deputy.

Monitoring Officer Sign: 
Print: P. Brent-Isherwood
Date: 14 October 2020

Chief Finance Officer: Sign: 
Print:Neil Cross.....
Date: 11/09/2020.....

Step 3 - Publication

Is the report for publication? **YES/NO**

If ‘NO’, please give reasons for non-publication (Where relevant, cite the security classification of the document(s). State ‘none’ if applicable)

N/A

If the report is not for publication, the Monitoring Officer will decide if and how the public can be informed of the decision.

Step 4 - Redaction

If the report is for publication, is redaction required:

1 Of Decision Sheet YES/NO

2 Of Appendix YES/NO

If 'YES', please provide details of required redaction:

N/A

Date redaction carried out:

If redaction is required, the Chief Finance Officer or the Monitoring Officer are to sign off that redaction has been completed.

Sign:

Print:

Date signed:

Step 5 - Decision by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner or Deputy Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

I agree the recommendations to this report:

Sign:  (DPFCC)

Print: Jane Gardner

Date signed: 20 October 2020

I do not agree the recommendations to this report because:

.....
.....

Sign: (PFCC / DPFCC)

Print:

Date signed: