

## MINUTES

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

22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021 10.00 – 12.21 Video Conference

#### **Present:**

Roger Hirst (RH)	Police, Fire Crime Commissioner
Jane Gardner (JG)	Deputy Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (Chair)
Rick Hylton (RHy)	Deputy Chief Fire Officer, ECFRS
Neil Cross (NC)	Finance Director and Section 151 Officer, ECFRS
Karl Edwards (KE)	Director of Corporate Services, ECFRS
Moir Bruin (MB)	Director of Operations, ECFRS
Colette Black (CB)	Asst. Chief Exec – People, Values & Culture, ECFRS
Leanne Little (LL)	Performance Analyst, ECFRS
Janet Perry (JP)	Strategic Head of Performance & Resources, PFCC's Office
Jo Thornicroft (JTh)	Head of Performance & Scrutiny (Fire), PFCC's Office
Christine Butler (CHB)	PA to Roger Hirst (Minutes)

#### **Apologies:**

Pippa Brent-Isherwood (PBI)	Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer PFCC's Office
-----------------------------	--

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

RG welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were noted from Pippa Brent-Isherwood. RHY advised that he would need to leave the meeting at 11.50.

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

Minutes from last Meeting agreed for accuracy there were no matters arising

#### **3 Action Log**

- 93/20 Peer Review by Herts on the Protection improvement Plan. A date is needed for it to come to P&R. MB currently putting together an action plan around what that tells us. It is helpful feedback. MB will bring the Action Plan to P&R in April. JTh to note on the Forward Plan.
- 97/20 NC confirmed that the L&D Strategy costs are a cost split over 4 years. NC has responded by email to both JP and JTh. Propose Close.
- 100/20 Decision sheet for a virement over £250k. The budget sheet has been prepared and is going through the approval process. Propose Close.
- 101/20 This was agreed Propose Closed with a change of wording. MB has provided the change of wording. "A recent advertisement brought many applications to become a Fire Safety Inspecting Officer and whilst the conversion of candidates seems to be high, it is not envisaged that from an initial sift that the vacant Fire Protection Post can be filled. Previously it had been identified that there were "pinch points" within the department around the training and the mentoring between the inspecting officers until they reached the competency level required to enable them to work independently. These internal "pinch points" have now been overcome. ECFRS will be able to train the new Inspecting Officers that we recruit to the relevant standards and within the appropriate timeframes'. Propose Close
- 102/20 An action for KE to bring a paper on the Fire Protection Posts. JTh and KE believe that this does not require a separate paper and he was going to update at this meeting. KE said that

ECFRS are still going through the process. His last update was that the Service had received over 200 applications across the 10 posts. These applications have been shortlisted to 60 application and interviews have been arranged. The panel set up and dates and need to be set up in early March over a 2 weeks period and KE should be able to update P&R with successful appointments. Proposed Close.

- 105/20 MB to amend the Building Risk Review Report to include the building breakdown. This has now been done. Propose Close.
- 1/21 JTh, RHy & JG to meet to update the Forward Plan. This has now been completed. Proposed Close.
- 2/21 This is regarding capital variances in property within the budget. NC said that the capital spend was quite high and in the new finance report this has significantly dropped with a large carry forward. NC and Jon need to still to catch up on this. Remain Open.
- 3/21 JTh & MB having a conversation to add a table into the Building Risk Review. The table has now been added. Propose Close.
- 4/21 JTh to update the Forward Plan and remove the OCLO updates but to replace them with a broader quarterly O/C update which has been done. Propose Close.
- 5/21 A date to be provided to update the board on the procurement review that is being carried out by Barkers. This is on the Forward Plan for April. Propose Close.
- 6/21 A date for the Forward Plan for progress on LEAP. This is on the Forward Plan for April 2021. Propose Close.
- 7/21 MB – Re Dovercourt paper. Paper to come back to the March P&R for an Update for the board. MB said that the EDI implications had also been updated. Propose Close.
- 8/21 Changes are for same paper in 7/21. JP raised consistency of templates and heading seem to have been changed. JTh to send out the template and to adhere to this.
- 9/21 RHy to liaise with Emily Cheyne on how we communicate Dovercourt and it being a key station to the public and how Key Stations Work. RHy has a meeting in the diary with Emily and will carry forward this item and update. RH added that Purdah begins on the 19<sup>th</sup> March and so communication needs to be done before this date. RHy to pick with Roger on how we do that, as there is a question over just communicating about Dovercourt and not the other key stations as well as being clear our reason why we are telling the public about our Key Station Policy. Emily is currently working on this. RH wanted to have a standard response agreed. RH & RHy to pick up offline. Remain Open.

#### **4. Forward Plan**

##### Standing items

- Finance Report
- Performance Report
- HMICFRS Improvement Plans
- Building Risk Review Update

##### Substantive items

- Q3 Performance Report (Inc Qtly HR Report)
- Use of Surge Funding (P&R 94/20)
- Fire Protection and Community Safety Visits by Station, Impact since March 2020 (P&R 104/20)
- NFCC Maturity Models (RH following ERG)

##### Substantive items for update

- Quarterly Change programme Update
- Quarterly O/C Conversion Update
- Quarterly Grenfell Phase 1 High Level Action Plan Update
- Quarterly Risk Review

### **Action 010/21**

RHy said that in the terms of looking ahead for April there are quite a few Quarterly Plan Updates. RHy suggested that a review of last year's plan will be useful as this will be closed off on 31<sup>st</sup> March and the new Plan will go to the Strategy Board in March which will project the quarter forward. JTh noted.

- 4.1 JG said when she had a meeting regarding the Forward Plan with JP & RHy, it was agreed that items would only come to the Agenda if they were on the Forward Plan. Request for Agenda items need to come to P&R for consistency and control on the business and for common agreement from the Chair.
- 4.2 NC asked for a request. Should the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) come through the P&R board. RH replied that if we are signing off on a MTFP then it would need to go to Strategic Board. NC said that a formal update has not been done yet and suggested a 3 or 6 month update through P&R and an Annual Update for signoff to go to Strategic Board. NC & KE to pick this up offline and come back to JTh a proposal for the Forward Plan.

### **Action 011/21**

NC and KE to look at a 3- or 6-month update of the MTFP for addition to the Forward Plan and to liaise with JTh with a proposal for dates.

- 4.3 JP asked if the Annual Accounts Timetable should come to this meeting like EP. RH agreed that this should be included and agreed for it to be brought to the Board for March. NC said that this has been drafted and needed to liaise with JP on a few points.

### **Action 012/21**

NC to liaise with JP regarding an Annual Accounts Timetable to come to P&R in March and to clarify a few points.

- 4.4 RHy said that regarding the self-assessment and the strategic briefing for HMICFRS, would RH be happy to have workshop briefings instead of those being brought to P&R? – they are not currently on the Forward Plan. Timescales are a challenge re meetings when submission is due. If the Self-Assessment is to come to P&R, then RHy will align. RH said that we do need to have a full P&R review to the Service's response to the HMICFRS Inspection, we will program that in once we have had the inspection and received the recommendations and to see where we are going. A full P&R review of preparation is not needed, but RH would like to be sighted as to what the plan is via an informal briefing before a response is made. JP asked if the response will be a joint response from RH & JT. RH said that as the authority RH makes a response to the Inspectorate based on recommendations being put forward and that will need to have been informed by the SMT in particular JT.

## **5. Finance Report**

### **NC updated the Board on the Finance Plan**

- 5.1 A new Deputy Director of Finance Amanda De Margary has been recruited and joined the team.
- 5.2 At January month end, the net expenditure was £1.283m below budget.
- 5.3 The Forecast has been updated. The Service previously looked to produce a balanced budget of £34,000 surplus. In the latest forecast there is a deficit of £130,000. There are some highs and lows to the movement compared to the prior forecast. Going forward a waterfall chart

will be used to prepare the movement in the Forecast, consistent with how the Budget Presentations were prepared.

- 5.4 The key movements from the prior forecast, there have been some increase in staff costs of just over £1m, O/C has increased by £500k, £400k for W/T. Those projections are based on activity at certain period time, i.e. W/T retirements are at a lower level and recruitment of 18 Firefighters in January which will see costs going through for the remaining quarter.
- 5.5 The YTD cost for W/T Firefighters are absorbing the operational training costs which planned to be used against earmarked reserves. This has not been done on the basis that there have been underspends in the budget and it was agreed that a virement would be raised which is being processed. Going forward in the new financial year, the accounting month end process will allocate any spend to attributable Earmarked Reserves, where this has been already approved. NC would like to see the costs being used against earmarked reserves and to transfer them on a monthly basis and allocating them accurately.
- 5.6 In support staff costs there has been a £400k increase since the previous forecast. £300k is due additional Local Government Pension Scheme Contributions, which are being funded from Earmarked Reserves This was included within the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).
- 5.7 Regarding non-pay, there have been some increases in support costs and further underspends against the prime projection. Most of this has been in premises and equipment which is £600k. There are also underspends in a variety of areas i.e. transport, IT and property maintenance.
- 5.8 Support staff costs, there is further £300k variance. Within this amount there have been costs absorbed due to PI claims that have been notified to the Commissioner via Decision Sheet. In that Decision Sheet it was noted that the funds would be covered by the Risk Protection Earmarked Reserve. Currently, they are not allocated to the earmarked reserve. NC intends to transfer these in March 21.
- 5.9 Regarding the funding income, there is a £600k improvement. £300k was for earmarked reserve for the Local Government Pension Scheme and a further £300k which will be received in February, which relates to a surplus on the business rates pooling that has just been notified and will be included in the projection.
- 5.10 Regarding the Covid Costs, there is £1.3m available. There was an opportunity to bid for further funding but to qualify for that funding, the existing Covid grant needed to be spent by the end of the financial year which the Service will not have done. In this report there is a projection of costs going outwards. The main additional costs apart from PPE, is for additional cleaning on Station, additional occupational health support and building in of costs for lateral flow tests.
- 5.11 After speaking to the National finance lead, there is a small number of FRS who may spend their grant money by the end of this financial year but most of them are in the same position as ECFRS. The National lead said that they do expect that a bid for further additional fund will be available next year.
- 5.12 Capital. The Projection of spend has been updated and is at £2.7m which is significantly down from what had been previously reported although not unexpected. The carry forward in the report shows 2.1m. This needs to be further reviewed as the anticipated carry forward is not realistic. There will be some elements, particularly around fleet where there is commitment to buy vehicles which will be delivered in the new year.
- 5.13 The first tranche of housing was put up for sale a couple of months ago. Within the month the first house sold for £305k. There is a second house due to be sold imminently, and the

Decision Sheet is currently being processed in order to complete the sale. There are a total of 4-5 houses that are expected to be sold before the end of the financial year.

- 5.14 The Budget was officially approved on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2021 by the Panel.

### Questions

- 5.15 RH expressed his thanks for all the support in getting the Service into the position it is in and thanked NC for his detailed exposition of where we were to where, we are now. It is very helpful with great transparency. There are some quite large moving parts and it is good to expand on that and is very much appreciated. RH also thanked NC for his proposal around the operational training and the change being made in the way the virements are being handled.
- 5.16 RH asked about the Covid costs, as to why we have not spent it all, and are not claiming any more, is that because we are doing everything right and it is not costing us that much or, if we had known more money was coming would we have wanted to do more in terms of expenditure in order to deliver better for both the public and our staff?
- 5.17 KE said that there was a cost to the lateral flow testing as the Service wanted to get them in place, these are now available through the Department of Health and Social Care and are free. This cost had been forecast and due to the longer term projection of having lateral flow testing in place for at least 2 years. There is more governance around this and the cost for lateral flow testing is not for the test kits themselves but putting the infrastructure in place to allow the Service to embed lateral flow testing into business as usual and post-Covid action health surveillance across the organisation.
- 5.18 KE said that the longer term where we could have a requirement for further Covid funding for the longer term effects of Covid post pandemic. We know that there are mental health and wellbeing effects, but this needs to be reviewed as KE envisages that there will be further ramifications of Covid that cannot be identified yet.
- 5.19 RHy in reply to RH (1.15), there is nothing that the Service should be doing now that it would have been done differently if there was more money, although there are uncertainties as to what will be needed to be spent going forward. Regarding Lateral Flow Tests – there is a need for surge testing to continue to take place across Essex and we have not needed the option due to the use of volunteers, to use operational crews would incur more costs which we have not budgeted for. It would be helpful if the pot were available to be drawn upon when needed. RH unfortunately this is not possible, but it would likely there would another fund next year.
- 5.20 Regarding Capital, RH asked why the figure had moved month to month and would like to understand the process for that was. NC said that the estimate was made by the Capital Budget Holders. Budget Holders have tried to be pushed through the Capital Board. Fleet have placed orders for vehicles and those delivery dates have moved to the next financial year, which is a rollover. Regarding Property, there are works due to completed towards the end of the year and some have been rolled forward, however NC is nervous of rolling over £800k for property work as well as spending the property budget next year. The Capital board was set up this year and budget holders are to provide an update on the spend where are they going to land. The Board is continually informed that the spend levels will be hit as previously been reported to P&R.
- 5.21 RH advised that Estates budgets are never spent early January and February with the biggest spend in the first quarter of the year. It can either be planned to be the rollover from previous years or plan it to be next year's budget, most property works get done then due to the weather improving, it is very seasonable business. NC said that it has been reported at P&R what had been reported on to the Asset Board and NC wanted to report the budget holders'

numbers. RH added that although it has been reported, NC to ask the budget holders what the operational impacts are of not having delivered that £800k. RH would like to understand this at the next P&R.

**Action 013/21**

NC regarding property maintenance – NC to ask the budget holders what the operational impacts are of not having delivered that £800k. RH would like to understand this at the next P&R.

- 5.22 KE said that we are getting better visibility and better opportunity for budget holders to see their budget information and be more accountable. Moving into the new financial year, there will be an earlier heads up of any potential issues which will assist with planning and forecasting more efficiently.
- 5.23 RH said that this is a big improvement of where the Service used to be and recognises the enormous strides that have been made and feels much better informed.
- 5.24 JP asked if Budget Holder training in place is there? as some people are not very confident with numbers, training for non-finance experts would be helpful. NC replied that he does runs some sessions on this, the focus for the Finance Team is monitoring. The monitoring team has increased from 1 to 2.5 concentrating on transparency and getting people to understand their budgets. NC agreed that there should be additional training for budget holders. JP can assist in putting a programme together if required. KE advised that CIPFA offer a 2 day course on Financial training for non-financial managers which has been used before. JP added that the in-house training would be more specific which would be preferred as the CIPFA course would be more generic.

**Action 014/21**

NC to investigate additional training for non-finance experts budget holders. JP to assist with the programme if required.

**6. Monthly Performance Report**

LL gave the key highlights from the latest Performance Report.

- 6.1 ECFRS attended less incidents in January 2021 than in the previous month and in January 2020
- 6.2 There was a slight decrease in the number of attendances to fires but an increase to special service and false alarms. The special services are regarding non-RTC's as in January there was much more flooding and more incidents in January compared to December. The breakdown of RTCs are in the report on page 7. LL will incorporate the trend into to the quarterly report at the request of RH, there is also a breakdown of false alarm sub-types.

**Action 015/21**

LL will incorporate the trend of special service into to the quarterly report at the request of RH.

- 6.3 The average response time to potentially life-threatening incidents in January 2021 was 10 Minutes and 44 seconds. This decrease is based on the previous month.
- 6.4 85% of calls were attended in 15 minutes which is an improvement on last month.
- 6.5 Total O/C, W/T and day crew pumping appliance availability improved this month compared to last month and as well as January 2020. The focus this month is on smoke alarm testing.

- 6.6 On page 14 highlights focus on NFCC Campaigns for the next month. March's Campaign is on Smoke Alarm Testing and April is on Smoking. The Service is providing some high level numbers to support the comms team around any information needed.
- 6.7 Regarding Information governance - There was one training awareness session that was arranged with another departments, but mandatory training is still in place.
- 6.8 Three reported personal data breaches were reported in January, 39 Statutory requests were received with an increase from December 2020.
- 6.9 Concerning Human Resources - there has been ongoing COF support and collaboration with Finance Function on 2021/22 headcount management.
- 6.10 Regarding Learning & Development – Continues to embed the four L&D pillars of learning.
- 6.11 With regard to health & Safety – Health & Safety O/C Advisors flagged 11 locations following positive Covid test results for staff who had been in the workplace 48 hours.
- 6.12 The H&S team met daily with the Daily Testing Management Group to ensure clear guidance and instructions were issued for personal using the Lateral Flow Tests.
- 6.13 There was a slight decrease in accidents, near misses and trail measure failures. There is an equal number of RTCs involving ECFRS vehicles. A slight increase in RIDDOR. and attacks on fire service personnel.
- 6.14 The Protection Team conducted 234 Desk and 53 full audits In January 2021.
- 6.15 99% of planning, building regulations and licensing consultations were responded to within the statutory time limit.
- 6.16 45 Notifications of Deficiencies were issued this month and the next report will feature a breakdown of the themes of those.
- 6.17 Regarding Home Safety – The Home Safety Team completed a reduced number of visits in January 2021, compared with January 2020. It is likely to reflect the continuing impacts of the continuing of the national lockdown, reduced appetite from the public and our partners activity.
- 6.18 The Home Safety Team have been committed to exploring digital home safety visits and commenced a pilot to test the delivery of that this month.
- 6.19 Community Development and Safeguarding – there were 41 safeguarding referrals to ECFRS in January 2021. There was a slight decrease this month.

### **Questions**

- 6.20 RH thanks LL for the report, lots of good report of comprehensive information and informative.
- 6.21 MB highlighted apologies for not providing the breakdown of the notices of deficiencies in this report, however there is a paper in the pack that breaks it down which will be in the next month's report and the next quarterly one.
- 6.22 JTh asked a question regarding Page 6 that there is fire death and the After-Incident Review found that 45 of the households that the Service engaged with in the near vicinity did not have smoke alarms. This is not a target area that would have necessarily flagged up. RH it was Saffron Walden, generally not a key focus area. Do we need to change tactic to focus on on-key areas in not quite the same way, perhaps in public education?

- 6.23 MB said that the Service do target elderly people living alone and they are targeted by demographic. RH added that this is pushed within social media and whilst we have good coverage in general across Essex of smoke alarms, not everyone has them. It is being pushed through the NFCC to take forward the Scottish Legislation that all homes are fitted with a mandatory smoke alarm.
- 6.24 KE commented that he has family and friends living in Saffron Waldon and passed on how impressed they were with the immediacy post-fire in which the Service engaged with the local public and fitted smoke alarms where needed. This gave the public reassurance.
- 6.25 JG asked a question around the Digital Home Safety visits and asked if the Service had set itself a target or there is an aspiration as to how many will be achieved.

**Action. 016/21**

Targets have been set around crews visiting homes but not the digital visits, MB to take away and look at. RH said that this also needed to be part of the Recovery Plan.

- 6.26 MB said that not everyone, especially the elderly, have a good social network and are not being reached by social media. It is important that crews also revert to door knocking in those areas. RH agreed.
- 6.27 JP asked a question on Sickness Levels. Looking at the trend on page 16. In October it was 6.6% of days lost, November 6%, December 9.3%, January 11.8%, do you think that is because we are collecting the data in a better way? KE replied that it is not to do the data collection but absenteeism. There has been a large spike in sickness, and we are starting to see that come down and much of this sickness was Covid related. KE suggested an absenteeism breakdown to be included in the report as from next month.

**7. HMICFRS Improvement Plans Update**

MB talk the board through the plan

- 7.1 Since the last reporting period, the Service are 85% complete and on track with all activities.
- 7.2 The second shift of recruitment for the vacant posts. 20 shortlisted for interviews which will take place from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> March and the Service are confident that the posts will be filled.
- 7.3 The Quality Assurance work is continuing to move forward.
- 7.4 The robust report has been developed within CFMIS in which data can be pulled more easily.
- 7.5 Operational crews are beginning to undertake fire safety checks and to support the Risk Based Inspection Programme. Hopefully as from the end of March the operational crews can commence the physical visits.
- 7.6 The Peer Review from Hertfordshire has now been received and there are some helpful recommendations to be undertaken and most have already been addressed by the action plans. The review also recommends for us to give more evidence around sharing more information and expectation to business which is being picked up in liaison with the Essex Chamber of Commerce. The service needs to evidence that it can provide out of hours fire prevention cover which has now been addressed. The Service needs to be clear around the sufficiency of resources and ensure compliance with the NFCC Competency Framework as the HMI will use this as a benchmark. Setting targets and objectives around our Protection Strategy. The Peer Review suggested that it would be strengthened if there were strong links



to the HR and People Strategy. MB will bring back the Action Plan as agreed in response to those points in April's P&R. RH agreed.

#### **Action 017/21**

MB will bring back the Action Plan as agreed in response to those points raised by the Peer Review in April's P&R.

#### **8. Building Risk Review Update**

MB went through the February monthly update of Building Risk Review with the Board which was submitted on 10<sup>th</sup> February.

- 8.1 16 Inspections were undertaken in January of those buildings that had been identified, they were rated red due to the nature of the external system. [REDACTED]
- 8.2 One building was rated Amber and 12 were rated green. This report shows a running total of enforcement activities. Out of 217 identified, 72 have been completed which is on track to complete within the timescales available.
- 8.3 RH said that this was very useful and very much appreciated. Clearly this is a very difficult area. It is now clear what needs to be done as a Service and taking enforcement action forward. Our counterparts need to know that we are doing our enforcement effectively.
- 8.4 RHy agreed<sup>3</sup> and added that MB's leadership has been instrumental in this and has started to change the culture especially in the Protection Team which the Service need to invest in. RHy asked if it would be helpful if RH was a host a session to show the stance which is being taken. RH agreed, this would give transparency to our local elected members and MPs on how large an issue it is and what we are doing about it. MB/Emily Cheyne and Darren Horsman to take this offline.

#### **Action 018/21**

RHy asked if it would be helpful if RH was a host a session to show the stance which is being taken in respect of the Building Inspections. RH agreed, this would give transparency to our local elected members and MP on how large an issue it is and what we are doing about it. MB/Emily Cheyne and Darren Horsman to take this offline.

8.5 [REDACTED]

#### **9. Annual Staff Engagement Survey**

CB Joined the meeting at (11.20am).

CB joined the meeting and took the Board through a presentation on the screen to go through the Survey, which was given to the people strategy board.

9.1 Headlines: -

- Participation Rates are up.
- Engagement rates have raised significantly.
- All indicators saw an improvement
- Colleagues able to share "free texts and the suggested areas for improvement especially for culture, gives a clearer indication for more focus.

- Variances – are by department and location but less by protected characteristics.
  - Next Steps – manager lead discussions within people’s teams to further understand feedback.
  - Areas of biggest improvements are around SLT providing clear vision, there have been significant improvements.
  - Promoting Transparency and openness has improved significantly as well people being treated fairly.
  - Feedback by theme. There has been an increase in people replying in a positive way.
- 9.2 Comparisons on slides show a comparison with 2018 the other is for information with other FRS so that we can see if the feedback Essex specific or is it a national trend.
- 9.3 Communications - The most positive feedback on the scorecard was on clear vision. There is less movement in terms of people suggesting improvements and action being taken which is consistent with other FRS but there is more work to be done.
- 9.4 Culture and values – This shows the biggest improvement around people being treated fairly, followed by the culture of openness and transparency. There is demographic variance here, this is the only area where women feel less positive than men.
- 9.5 Training and Development - Overall positive but there is a variance within working Groups.
- 9.6 Recognition and Engagement outcomes – Generally very positive and people feeling proud to work in the Service. There has been an improvement in the minority groups in regard as recommending ECFRS as somewhere to work.
- 9.7 CB continued to go through the Comparison of Themes by Primary Role with highlights from each slide.
- 9.8 Working relationships – Support is more positive in all areas.
- 9.9 Training and Development – positive responses but still work to develop with O/C at some of the focus groups.
- 9.10 Recognition - Positive in all areas.
- 9.11 Communication – Significantly more positive in all areas.
- 9.12 Culture and values – This has improvement across all areas but with less culture and openness with O/C and same for trust in Leadership Team.
- 9.13 Comparison by demographic highlights: -
- Younger colleagues more positive, least positive 45-54
  - Ethnicity – Those who identify as “white” are significantly more positive than those who identify as black or minority ethnic.
  - Gender – Women are more positive than men.
  - “Prefer not to say” responses round bullying and harassment were significantly higher – this area need to be explored further.
  - Engagement is most positive in early career
- 9.14 Deeper Dive – Next steps are around some of the very specific variances. In locations there are some specific outliers to providing additional support to those groups for their action planning sessions. With managers there are also some significant variances and additional support will be given.

- 9.15 The next steps will be managers talking to their teams and understanding their data, identifying priorities for action, feeding into the focus groups and feedback further.
- 9.16 There has been significant improvement in a two-year period and CB is able to look at the quantitative data, engagement rates and participation rates are a celebration of the work everyone has done in the key areas and programmes in place.
- 9.17 RH there has been enormous improvement moving in the direction. It equally shows that we still have a way to go in several areas especially regarding women and BAME. There needs to be an investment in management and leadership development feed into the organisation to prospective leaders and managers. The survey confirms what we are doing right, and what we need to work more on. A concern on the 84 “prefer not to say” which is not a small cohort to have such a differentiated view. CB replied and said that the “prefer not know” category triangulates with diversity data. There has been a challenge for declaring diversity data for general purposes outside the survey. A large amount of work is being done in this area to make evidence-based decisions etc. There is a group of 125 colleagues who are not sharing diversity data which is a smaller group than what it was. Email contact, focus groups, Inclusion and Diversity action group and the staff networks will be used to push the conversations.
- 9.18 JG said that how did people not see that previous engagement had not informed the direction we were taking? Some of those responses around culture are significantly improved. Within the last two years there has been a lot of transformation within the service and JG feels the significant improvement should be applauded even though there is still a long way to go. A suggestion of using their terminology inform what the action plan says i.e. “You Said, We Did” seeing what is reported.

## **10. Quarterly Operation Assurance Report**

MB talked the Board through the highlights.

- 10.1 Both the Quarterly Ops Report and the H&S Report have started to refer to how they fit into the Fire & Rescue Plan priorities and their reports.
- 10.2 The station audit process was suspended since April 2020 due to Covid Restrictions. The team have been using this time to develop some new debrief processes and will be putting a new station audit in place at the beginning of April 2021 and Station Managers will be more active in this.
- 10.3 Annual Station Performance Reviews for Station Managers will be undertaken, which will provide useful feedback and benchmarking.
- 10.4 There has been a 45% reduction in Failure to responds. 5 Failure to Responds were due to a shortage of firefighters at three locations.
- 10.5 Operation Monitoring Reports allowed the identification of operational learning opportunities.
- 10.6 Some Feedback obtained following a water rescue incident on PPE.
- 10.7 Feedback from Multiple incidents have resulted in the guidance being revised on Stowage of Covid related decontamination PPE on appliances.
- 10.8 Debrief return rates have increased for the lower level debriefs. The Strategic De Brief for the Tilbury Grain Terminal which resulted in key learning coming out of that regarding temperature checks only being able to be taken up to 400 degrees and the Tilbury Grain Tower reach temperatures higher than that.

- 10.9 Two high rise exercises undertaken with LFB to support learning objectives.
- 10.10 A fire investigation review has been conducted and a decision is pending for SLT, for the use of Fire Investigation dogs at operational incidents.

### **Questions**

- 10.11 This was a very useful update and asked if the Failure to Responds were due to Covid related absence of the firefighters? MB replied that it would be very likely as it is not usual.
- 10.12 JP asked RHY clarify his comment in the chat bar. RHY replied that this was to say that if we mobilise a fire engine, and if it fails to respond another will be sent from another station in its place. It may slow down mobilisation, but it does not mean that the incident was not attended.
- 10.13 JG said to MB that it was good to see some joint activity in terms of exercise with LFB, were there any concerns? MB is concerned about the whole High-Rise issue; it can be difficult to obtain real and meaningful training and securing facilities. MB is looking at what our training centres needs to look like going forward, this is being factored into the collaborative work that is being done with EP. This will need to be something to look at going forward.

### **11. Quarterly Health & Safety Report**

MB took the board through the report

- 11.1 The first part of report shows that the Service are still very active regarding Covid and still under some pressure due to risk assessments for different activities and consultations with rep bodies and staff groups.
- 11.2 24/7 fogging capability with 11 deep cleans of stations, it is hard and difficult work.
- 11.3 The second part of the report is work which is “business as usual” items. The RSM external audit on H&S is still showing as having “outstanding parts” but this is not to do with the H&S team but is the inability of L&D to evidence how many people have had H&S training. The team are working with L&D to resolve this issue.
- 11.4 OCEANS is being phased up as the company is being taken over and product is not being supported. The service is looking at replacements.
- 11.5 There has been an increase in accidents in Q3 to 43 accidents compared with 33 in Q2. This was due to several positive Covid results and 5 RIDDOR reportable events 3 of those have been injuries for hamstrings, fingers and back and 2 BA malfunctions at training centres to do with valve assembly which is being resolved.
- 11.6 One less RTC than the previous quarter. The majority are a minor RTC and around low speed manoeuvring at operational incidents
- 11.7 Four incidents of attacks on firefighters. Two were verbal and missiles thrown during the course of duty.
- 11.8 Hazards were down and near misses up. Near misses is an opportunity to learn and ensure that an accident does not happen in the future.
- 11.9 RH asked regarding the attacks, there will be a clause in the Courts Sentencing Bill next month governing the sentence for assault on emergency services.

### **12. Toxic Fire Effluents and Risk to the Health of Firefighters**

- 12.1 Exposure to carcinogens and contaminants is part of what Firefighters do and the paper sets out how ECFRS are committed to how this happens, how it can be stopped and mitigating against it.
- 12.2 ECFRS have signed by to the “No Time to Lose” Campaign in 2017 and the commitment to that is outlined in some details in Appendix 1. In 2018 the Service took part in an NFCC study with Brighton University and was a National Carcinogenic project commissioned by the FBU. ECFRS have worked very hard to limit the exposure the firefighters get both in training and live environments and this area has been heavily invested in.
- 12.3 The paper shows that the Service has heavily invested in this area, been nationally visible and have worked closely with the rep bodies to reassure people that the Service are doing everything they can.
- 12.4 A lot of guidance, control measures and raised awareness put the health, safety and welfare of firefighters who could be exposed at the heart of everything the Service does. Parts have been progressed by different departments as part of their BAU and it is difficult to pull out costs.
- 12.5 One place where costs can be pulled out is property which is a rolling impact but there are some indicative costs which are there and the current cost is £51k on items specifically attributable to “No Time to Loose” which includes gear racks, additional lockers, shelving, construction works, washing machines and tumble dryers.
- 12.6 JP asked regarding asbestos, what is the situation in a fire with asbestos. MB replied that firefighters are very good at dealing with asbestos with tried and tested ways of working. If JP would like a further discussion to understand she can pick up offline with MB.

**No minutes were taken at this point due to CHB laptop closing down. Which was picked up again at the end of the Dovercourt conversation.**

### **13. Quarterly Operational Training Strategy**

CB took the board through the paper.

- 13.1 There are a couple of areas of concern in the project plan which are the Train the Trainer training and the Assessor Course. They are key enablers for the Service in delivering the objectives so that training is delivered locally to point of contact to inform our assurance of competency. They have been casualties of Covid but would have caught up by the end of June. The two policy areas will be resolved by the end of this week and will be green shortly.
- 13.2 The significant decisions since the last meeting have been the recruitment of 2 watch managers and a station manager to deliver 10 new O/C recruit’s courses.
- 13.3 On training facilities, the Service have been working extensively regarding a collaborative training facility. This will be an economic way forward and will progress with some speed.

### **14. Learning and Development Strategy**

CB took the board through the papers

- 14.1 Pillar 1 Leadership development – The leadership programme is funded to reach more people within the organisation in this calendar there are 125 places on the Leadership Development Course which is aimed at positive behaviours. There are approx. 90 places filled which is significant development since the last report. More promotion on coaching partnerships which is a key enabler for change.

- 14.2 CB said that the other key items for February is also the core learning pathway including political awareness which is popular.

## **15. Quarterly People Strategy Update**

CB talked through the People Strategy Paper.

- 15.1 Not a large amount of change from last month. The Maturity Models will be presented to the March Strategic Board and how they link with the action Plan to turbo charge the next two years.
- 15.2 Feedback has now been received from Staffordshire and Oxfordshire on the Peer Review light touch processes for some feedback as they had both scored as outstanding from HMICFRS. This will be presented at the Strategic board.
- 15.3 RH asked where changes had been proposed? CB replied that we have learnt a significant amount in year 1 and year 2 from the last year in the pandemic about how fast we can move with these changes. We can be bolder in aspirations and development of staff. The Employment Engagement Survey will alter the course of year 3. The key enabler is the use of Maturity Models being recommended by NFCC. CB proposes that the Service are trailblazers for the adoption of those maturity models. As Chair of the NFCC People Policy Panel the Maturity Models have been based on D&T research and given a robust self-assessment of where FRS are regarding key enablers in each of the core elements of organisational development, and together with the peer review that we have received from Staffordshire and Oxfordshire will underpin what we want to achieve for year 3 and give us the right level of challenge.
- 15.4 RH asked about "Buy In" from the organisation? CB with the Employee Engagement Survey we are not anticipating creating any separate action plan and will expect local action plans. We are not expecting to have a separate service wide actions but to channel that feedback into our People Strategy Action Plan. RH we need to flag that, this is what you said, this is how we are changing our strategy, it is an organisational strategy and not an add on. CB agreed and all the objectives to tie in with the strategy, the Fire & Rescue plan and the IRMP. RH said that it is also important to feed into the Staff, employees and officers. RH changing it is hard work and a threat to its validity. No that it should not be changed but just to be cautious. Changing it is as hard as putting it together. CB will look at this.

### **Action 019/21**

CB to state that we channelling the feedback and all objectives from the Employee Engagement Survey to tie into the People Strategy, the Fire & Rescue plan and the IRMP. RH said that it is also important to feed into the staff, employees and officers.

### **AOB**

- 16.1 Dovercourt Action Plan – MB said that this is a short monthly update.
- 16.2 A Firefighter has resigned from Dovercourt due to personal circumstances, we now have 18 O/C colleagues which is the equivalent of 14 W/T. Those people are currently being trained with specialist skills. There is a second O/C colleague who is qualified to be an OIC.
- 16.3 In December the first appliance was available 100% of the time but several temporary absences impacted on the flexibility of the 2<sup>nd</sup> appliance in December which are outlined in the paper around Covid.

- 16.4 The recruitment is going well and is being pushed hard and the Service are running a dedicated training course.
- 16.5 RH commented that 29% was not very good response. We know we need to be around 75%. MB the manager is confident that it will improve, it was unfortunate with the amount of availability of people we lost in December. We do have a Mixed Crewing Policy and a Jump Crewing Policing which the Unions have signed up to. How can it happen when we have these Policies in place, we should be in a situation that the Station Manager comes back to say that he has deployed 3 people from other stations to make this work and it has been expensive. RH why are we not using the programmes in place and how do we put it right MB will take offline and have further discussions with people at Dovercourt.

**Action 020/21**

The attendance time in December for the 2<sup>nd</sup> appliance was 29% RH asked why we are not using the policies and programmes in place to increase this figure and how do we put it right MB will take offline and have further discussions with people at Dovercourt

- 16.6 The Dovercourt update will be a regular item JTh will put this on the Forward Plan going forward.

**Action 021/20**

The Dovercourt update from MB will be a regular item JTh will put this on the Forward Plan going forward.

**Questions**

- 16.7 JP asked how the business case with Essex Police, the Front of Dovercourt and the attendance of the 2<sup>nd</sup> appliance, how will the Service ensure that these two items do not converge in some way. RH work with EP is a clear sign of our investment in Harwich and Dovercourt and we are doing it on the same site as ECFRS is a commitment to them that we are doing it on their terms and in their space.
- 16.8 MB feels that the EP and ECFRS collaboration is a good local news story. MB does not feel that there is an issue. KE agreed.

Meeting ended 12.21 PM