

## MINUTES

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

24 May 2021 10.00 – 12.08pm Video Conference

#### **Present:**

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

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

RHy informed the Board that MB and KE were doing a presentation to the workplace at the Managers Briefing this morning re ECFRS return to work, hence their absence from this meeting. There are two strands involved: 1. Firefighters who have been at work during lockdown and getting back involved in activities such as returning to 6 riders with O/C staff. 2. For office based staff who have been working away from home, ECFRS are looking to move forward a hybrid model, working being "something you do, not somewhere you go" and are aiming for June 21<sup>st</sup>. Social distancing is likely to maintain and there will be limited numbers in the office. Those numbers will continue once social distancing is removed because staff will be embracing a new way of working.

Neil Fenwick thanked the Board for the opportunity to attend this meeting, to understand P&R functions and how some of the workflow functions work.

#### **The minutes of the last meeting.**

RHy had not received the amended version of the Minutes from the previous meeting and there were some highlights and questions. JTh informed RHy that there was an updated version. RHy was happy with this explanation and RHy to come back with a review of the updated version of the Minutes from the last meeting. Contingent on that review the Minutes are approved for Accuracy.

#### **Action 35/21**

RHy to come back with a review of the updated version of the Minutes from the last meeting as he had not received the latest version. Contingent on that review, the Minutes are approved for Accuracy.

### **3. Action Log**

- 82/20 PFCC office to meet those undertaking the Building Risk Review Process. A visit has now been arranged for the 11<sup>th</sup> June. Propose Close
- 23/21 PowerBi and how finance would be reported going forward. As there have been some issues which have not been resolved, JP has asked that this item remain open. NC added that he can begin to schedule the PowerBi reports with JP soon. Open.
- 27/21 KE to look at the ERD issue of lack of records of emergency response driver training. KE confirmed that it is only a record of those trained where there is only a small percentage, but there is a target for 60% and there are plans in place to increase the driving courses. Propose Close. RHy agreed and confirmed that a report would be brought back to a subsequent P&R board to show progress that has been made.
- 28/21 NC to add narrative to month 12 finance report. This has been completed and will be uploaded onto the website. Propose Close.
- 30/21 MB to check why availability at Ingatestone was poor in March. No reply from MB as yet. NF said that a report was requested from the Station Manager in Ingatestone. There has been a quick turnaround of people at the Station. Two people have moved on due to job relocations. Since March an additional 4 people have been recruited for Ingatestone which will see an improvement in availability in the next 3-4 months. There has also been an uplift in availability between March and April due to finding different ways of working. One of the people at Ingatestone also works full time for ECFRS Community Safety Prevention Team and different ways of working have been incorporated so they can work out of the Station during the day to provide additional day cover. Ingatestone is a transitional Station in that, people go to work in the mornings and so availability is poorer during the day rather than the weekend. With the introduction of the Mixed Crewing Policy later this month, when the Service can place full time Firefighters into O/C stations i.e. Ingatestone and Ongar, the service will be able to supplement the crew until further O/C staff are in place. The O/C Liaison Team are going to Ingatestone in June and July to do a targeted approach to recruitment in farms/small industries etc. Additional recruitment and additional measures put in place to improve availability. LL added that availability had increased to 53% for last month. RH commented that although this is an increase there is still a way to go. Remain Open,
- 31/21 Jim Palmer to update on the Building Risk Review Report as it had the previous months information on it. This month's report is up to date with information. Propose Close.
- 32/21 JTh there was a question on building safety which will be picked up when she meets the team. A date for this meeting has been arranged. Propose Close.
- 33/21 Regarding refresh of the Deep Dive Program. JTh to meet with RHy to talk through. RHy and JTh met on the 18<sup>th</sup> and some meetings are planned with JTh and Lucy Clayton to progress. There will be a proposal at the next P&R Board with a schedule of planned Deep Dives. Propose Close.
- 34/21 Regarding Dovercourt Action Plan. In last month's report there was not a summary page included in the report. This has been rectified this month. Propose Close.

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

##### **Standing items**

- Finance Report
- Performance Report
- Protection Report
- Peer Review Update
- Building Risk Review Programme Update

##### **Substantive items**

- Q4 Performance Report
- ECFRS Equality Framework Update
- Deep Dive programme

##### **Additional items**

- Public Sector Equalities Act Objectives update (JTh has discussed with CB)
- Action from Strategic Board regarding a paper on the Change Control Process for the Annual Plan
- Property Capital Expenditure Update was deferred from this meeting to June meeting.

##### **Update papers**

- Quarterly Annual Plan update
- Quarterly Grenfell Phase 2 High Level Action Plan Update
- Quarterly Change Programme Update
- Quarterly O/C Conversion Plan Update
- Quarterly Risk Review
- Dovercourt Action Plan

4.1 JP said that there had been a discussion as to whether to move the Engagement Survey as there is busy agenda for the June P&R. JTh spoke to CB after the pre-meet and the move would still meet her timelines and it has been moved to the July meeting.

4.2 LL said that regarding Q4 Performance Report in Substantive items, there will be an end of year report rather than a Q4 Quarterly report.

#### **5. Finance Pack**

5.1 NC thanked the Board for their patience as there was a slight delay in forwarding the pack due to issues with the reporting systems at month end in which all the reports had to be recreated.

5.2 The presentation is slightly different for the outturn for the year end. The business as usual Covid spend and anything funded from earmarked reserves have been split out which gives further transparency as there are significant movements between the two that do have an overall impact.

5.3 Regarding general reserves there is a £882,000 surplus which was covered in the previous month and is consistent with the numbers that were presented last month.

5.4 One of the adjustments to the Covid Costs were that any additional funding received in the year which has not been spent on Covid need to be recognised through the Statement of Income and Expense in line with CIPFA guidelines. The surplus amount of £542,000 has been transferred to Covid earmarked reserves. There is an option to put this amount into General Fund, however it needs to be a consistent approach with the guidance the Auditors stipulated last year when some of funding was in the Covid Earmarked Reserves.

## Questions

- 5.5 JP said that this would need to be a Decision Sheet. As you can put in either reserve, this virement should go through as a Decision Sheet to the PFCC to make that decision. NC asked if this could be included in the Decision Sheet to publish the draft accounts and make a reference to these points. RH confirmed that this needed to be separate decision.
- 5.6 NC said that the layout for the Summary Income & Expense for April has changed slightly. On the left hand side there are prior year's numbers. For the current year the Business As Usual, Covid and earmarked reserve activity is split for transparency. For example, regarding employment costs, there is an overspend for April of £200,000, but there are some specific one-off costs which relate to the LGPS pension deficit which was not budgeted for in the Reserves Strategy that have gone through. Therefore, the BUA has £140,000 underspend.
- 5.7 In terms of the April Results, ECFRS are under budget for the first month at £485,000. It is important to note that that regarding the discussion on Period 13, there is a large accounting entry for the Capital Finance Charge and overtime. The £5m Capital Finance Charge will be booked through monthly and this will be shown in the Financing item line. As this will be updated throughout the year in the forecast for the Capital Finance Charge, the calculation will be amended. We will not just be accruing the budget amount for the year but that what has been done in Period 1.
- 5.8 There is a funding surplus in the first period of £485,000 consisting of a £140,000 variance in payroll costs and £189,000 variance in pay. Period 1 historically comes in under budget and a projection will be done over the next couple of months.
- 5.9 In the funding line there is an amount for council tax collection impact, this is a result of a shortfall that was expected in the business rates collection of approximately £2.6m which will be funded by a S.31 Grant in March 2022, and there should not be any financial impact overall from the Service. The Districts have begun to deduct the deficit payment from them which potentially has a cash flow impact. The Service is liaising with the Districts as it is not a requirement for this to be deducted now, it can be deducted in March once the Grant has been received. This should be resolved in the coming weeks.
- 5.10 Regarding the Budget of our Annual Accounts, good progress is being made with re-evaluations etc now into the books. There are a couple of items still outstanding, one is collection account information from the districts and the second is the pension valuations. Hopefully by the end of this week the first draft of the accounts will be ready for review with NC and JP, but timelines will still be tight in June.

## Questions

- 5.11 JG thanked NC and JP for the monthly meetings which assists the Board with much needed clarity.
- 5.12 JG was pleased to see the Month 1 Report and notwithstanding the restrictions placed around the Month 1 Reporting it is very encouraging to see.
- 5.13 JG questioned the underspend on firefighters which is concerning. NC apologised as the Headcount Report is not in this Report. In the analysis on W/T staff on station the Service are above budget with new recruits. Some of the Grey Book roles show as under budget i.e. in prevention/protection. NC said that SLT had a slightly different headcount report which will be in this pack going forward which will provide more clarity on those numbers.
- 5.14 RH said that it is useful to have the ongoing reporting this early stage in the year.

- 5.15 JP referred to JG's comments on prevention and asked NC if the 10 roles are still open or in the process of being recruited. NC confirmed that the roles are in the process of being recruited although some offers have been made. RHy will confirm to JP but believes that there are 8 new recruits joining 1<sup>st</sup> June 2021.
- 5.16 RH highlighted page 3 of 13, the outturn for last year, which is a net variance of £2.5m to the original budget which is very much in the right direction and it has been a complicated year in terms of one off income and expenditure, business as usual and not so usual. There is not a need to be too introspective regarding the variance, but it needs additional wording on how to refine it so that it shows that we have a budget closer to what the Service thinks will be spent.

**Action 36/21**

NC to include additional wording on page 3 regarding the outturn for last year to show on how to refine it so that it shows that we have a budget closer to what the Service thinks will be spent.

- 5.17 NC agreed and said that it has been complex, which is why the items have been split out to provide that clarity. NC said that key for him was going through the non-pay variances and looking what the Service can continue to save for example mileage. Historically the Service have not recruited to establishment, although the Service are getting there with Watch Based Staff. The figures should be quite tight once the prevention/protection roles are in place. NC can see the payroll business as usual costs for W/T being slightly overbudget this year.
- 5.18 RH asked a supplementary question that the top line of that table where £1.8m more has been spent on W/T firefighters in the last year than we had in the previous year and £3.4m more on employment in the last year than the previous year which is quite a large variance and RH was not expecting for it to be that large. Even with the expected costs such as Covid and the increases that were expected, it is probably £1m more than we thought. NC did not have a full answer to that question but will take aware and confirm in more details. RH asked if the figure was also a surprise to NC and SLT. It is £1.4 over budget and £3.4 over the previous year but approx. £500,000 is down to Covid and specific projects.

**Action 37/21**

There is a question over the large increase cost on the top line of the table on pay as this was not as expected. NC did not have a full answer to that question but will take away and confirm in more detail with supplementary information. NC to pick this up with JP and have it an additional explanatory item at the next P&R.

- 5.19 RHy commented that the succession planning had been built on people going and not that many people have left the Service as was anticipated. This should increase with the Pension Remedy and the decision that the Authority has taken on this will see more people leave. The Service already has people behind them to ensure that the Service do not run under.
- 5.20 RHy referred to JP's point (36/21) and confirmed that the Service has recruited 7.6 who will join on the 1<sup>st</sup> June and active recruitment for remain posts.
- 5.21 NC informed the Board that the presentation of the pack has changed. if anyone has any comments to feedback. Going forward there will be a monthly statement and year to date.
- 5.22 The Balance Sheet and Cashflow are currently being worked on and will be put forward to the July P&R Board but NC will circulate the thinking on those schedules over the next few weeks

and outside of this forum. NC asked JP if some feedback could be obtained on if everyone feels comfortable on what is coming to P&R over the next coming months. JP agreed.

#### **Action 38/21**

NC asked JP if some feedback could be obtained if everyone feels comfortable on what is coming to P&R over the next coming months

#### **6. Monthly Performance Report - April**

LL went through the highlights of the report.

- 6.1 LL explained that there had been technical issues with Excel this month which caused delays in producing the report and the late release. If there are any comments please feedback to LL who will supply a revised version if needed.

#### **Incidents Attendance & Availability**

- 6.2 ECFRS attended 1,321 incidents this month, which is 230 more than the previous month and 165 more than the previous April. 45 awaiting QA.
- 6.3 There was an increase of all incident types across the board and an increase in RTC's especially as there is an increase in people travelling around more than last April.
- 6.4 Although there was an increase in false alarms compared to the previous month it is less attendance at alarms for the previous two Aprils.
- 6.5 There were both more Primary and Secondary fires in both classifications and more than April 2020.
- 6.6 As a subset of primary fires, there were 5 more this month than compared to last month but less than April 2020 where were 74, more people were at home at this time.
- 6.7 There were two fire related fatalities this month in two separate incidents which were both accidental. They were both in Canvey Island, one aged 60-65 and the other 80-85. The individual aged 60-65 caused the incident was careless handling of ignition source and no alarm was present at the property. In the case of the individual age 80-85 this was related to cooking.
- 6.8 There were 9 casualties in the month, 6 were involved in accidental dwelling fires. There was a fire involving a casualty in a fire in a hotel, a fire with multiple vehicles, and one deliberate fire which caused a casualty. All these victims went to hospital.
- 6.9 The average response time for this month was 9 minutes and 53 seconds, which is an improvement compared to the previous month.
- 6.10 There was 87% of all calls were attended withing 15 minutes.
- 6.11 The total pumping appliance availability was 83% which is down 2% over the previous month.
- 6.12 W/T and Day Crew pump appliance availability was 86%, which was a 1% decrease on the previous month.
- 6.13 O/C availability was 77% a 2% decrease from the previous month. The availability in April last year was a vast improvement compared to this year mainly due to lockdown.
- 6.14 The focus this month was in relation to the NFCC's main campaign on outdoor fire safety. Fires can be classified as primary, secondary and chimney. All our secondary fires are small outdoor

fires and other primary outdoor fires. Figures on the fires were provided to our comms team to provide key messages to help prevent those fires in particularly in certain areas of Essex.

- 6.15 ECFRS attended 4,395 calls last year 55% were from secondary fires and 5% were primary other outdoor fires. The tree map in the document pack shows the property levels and hierarchy the total number of fires that were other outdoor.

### **Information Governance**

- 6.16 There were two reported Data breaches in April 2021
- 6.17 There was an increase number of Statutory requests received and there was an increase of 17 EIA's then were previously received most of which were fire reports.

### **Human Resources**

- 6.18 Ongoing support for appraisals and preparation and updates to the Workplace Plan continues.

### **Learning and Development**

- 6.19 There is a continuing focus on performance appraisals which should soon be completed with a target of 100%.

### **Health & Safety**

- 6.20 There was a fall in hazard reporting of several types over the last few months. This information helps prevent further accidents.
- 6.21 In April compared to previous months there was an increase in accidents, hazards and near misses compared to the previous month there was a decrease of the control measure failures.
- 6.22 An equal number of attacks on firefighter personnel and RTC's involving ECFRS Vehicles.
- 6.23 There was an increase in 1 RIDDOR compared to previous month's

### **Protection**

- 6.24 46 Audits were completed, 39 were high or very high on the Risk Based Inspection Programme.
- 6.25 38 Desktop Audits have been completed which were also high or very high on the Risk Base Inspection Programme.
- 6.26 96% of the Planning, Business Consultations and Licence Consultations were responded to in the statutory time limit.

### **Home Safety**

- 6.27 April remained steady with 422 visits. There has not been a significant increase in request visits. There are several reasons listed on page 22 of the pack. More visits are anticipated going forward as lockdown restrictions ease.
- 6.28 On page 23, LL has been working with Jim Palmer and Will Newman on the Urban Table and are looking to incorporate more detail into the table which will enable the Service to provide more support to Rural communities. CFRMIS provides the Service with a breakdown of the data and as from next month the report should be able to show the people that have been visited against the estimated number in a certain area against the urban classification that the Service currently has.

### **Community Development and Safeguarding**

- 6.29 There were 64 safeguarding referrals to ECFRS in March 2021, the same number as the previous month and 23 more than April 2021.

### Questions

- 6.30 JTh asked that as the response time was under 10 minutes, had the Service done anything different to facilitate the change? LL said that there has been some analysis as part of the end of year report that investigated why improved last year, the reasons are probably very similar to this time, but LL would go back and come back to JTh.

### Action 39/21

LL to go back to JTh to confirm if there were any changes that facilitated the improvement in response time in the Monthly Performance Report.

- 6.32 JTh asked what the position was regarding Ongar availability which was at 20% last month. NF replied that that 5 new people were recruited over the last 3 months which going from phase 1 to phase 2 will result in those being detached for training which has had an impact on the appliance availability at Ongar. The next squad which has been at Waltham Abbey had two members of Ongar on that squad. There has also been a change of Station Management which has seen a different uplift and a different style of approach training. Steve Wintrip who has been for many years O/C at Braintree has brought in some new ways of working. When new people are brought in, the time it takes to go from Phase 1 to Phase 3 can be up to three years. The Service are looking at a way to speed up the process of driving which is a big issue which is currently 3 years, as the driving adds a different level of responsibility. There are not enough driving during the day at Ongar to maintain an appliance but with Mixed Crewing coming online at the end of this month, W/T firefighters will be able to be placed at Ongar at times of peak availability where we can supplement the O/C Crew with the needs as drivers and officers to ride on the front of the appliance which we do not currently have at Ongar. Four of the crew at Ongar have become W/T firefighters living in Essex, Hertfordshire, and Surrey which reduces their availability to be O/C in their downtime. NF is confident that changes will be seen at both Ingatestone and Ongar with the Mixed Crewing Policy changes.
- 6.33 RHy added that the underlying reason as to why we have achieved the average attendance times is that there have been good resources at the right place at the right time and will be more proactive going forward in this regard.
- 6.34 JG asked regarding the two fatalities that have been reported. What is the process of learning the lessons learned from that, is that a multi-agency review through the Safeguarding Adults Board? RHy replied that the Service undertakes a strategic review following those with partners. The two fatalities at Canvey have been concluded and RHy will ask Jim Palmer to forward the Lessons Learnt Report which will be helpful with JG's Safeguarding role. Sadly, with both of those they were not known to the Service, despite the strong referral service in place. It shows that there is more to do to strengthen that. It is not known if any intervention would have made a difference, but they were two vulnerable people in the Service's Risk Classification.

### Action 40/21

RHy to circulate the Lessons Learned Report to JG in respect of the two fatalities in Canvey.

- 6.35 RH said that the response side is good, but it is the level of vulnerability that has made the difference in the Canvey cases. The fact that they did not have alarms and may not have been as fire aware as they should have been, implicates on the shape of what the Service needs to do and where to commit resource to prevent people from dying. The response times are one



element of that but in these instances, it was not the response time, it was not the availability, it was not the equipment, but the vulnerability of the person involved. If they had not been in the situation there were in, our structure would have reached them in time, or it may not have happened in the first place.

- 6.36 NF the other point worth making regarding the two events was that the Service probably would not have been called as the first responders were Essex Police and it was after they attended it was established that the fires had occurred that the Fire Service was called. The neighbours called the police in the first instance. The issue that is more tragic is that these could have gone under the radar. NF has been working with Jim Palmer on initiatives to educate the public and how to work with Essex Police on how to fulfil that area when there are concerns of welfare.
- 6.37 Now that the incident dashboard is finished, LL will be working with ECTA on information re accidental dwelling fire project and this will assist in understanding that that where an individual previously has had an attendance through fire or have been previously visited, are they on the same dataset or radar and seeing what risk factors they have identified and see what similarities there are to assist in understanding their level of vulnerability. RH said that data down to household level, in the past elections there has been knocking on doors and asking people what they think, this time around we ran the numbers on the basis of the demographic predictors, which was much more accurate than knocking on doors and asking people and is a phenomenal dataset which may help with identifying those we need to assist. LL confirmed that the Service do use Experian Mosaic Dataset which was used in the higher risk mode. This has been used in incidents we have previously attended were victims were involved, what profiles were associated with those individuals and could be used far wider than that and in the ADF Project as well. It is very good dataset and a CACI is more focused on health and wellbeing. There are a lot of different datasets and we are using the breadth of what is available to us without compromise. RH said that the more people we can help with our prevention and protection activities the better.
- 6.38 JP regarding the response times, whilst the average was 10 minutes JP would be interested to know what the percentage was 10 and below, the average can be a little deceiving. LL has included some histograms which shows the proportionality, and this would normally be included in the quarterly reports and hoping to squeeze that into the end of year too. LL is to look at the information to see if it is appropriate to put into the report or to send circulate it separately.

#### **Action 41/21**

The breakdown of the average attendance time was usually in the quarterly report but will look at the information to see if it is appropriate to put into the year-end report or to send circulate it separately.

### **7. Fire Protection Board Building Risk Review**

RHy talked through the report in the absence of MB.

- 7.1 As this is a standard report, RHy did not go into too much detail.
- 7.2 Out of 180 buildings that MHCLG wanted us to check, the Service have identified more buildings. There are now 245 that pose a risk in Essex that need to be checked. A target was set to match the MHCLG numbers by the end of December, which was 15 audits a month. The Service are slightly behind this target. There are some pressures in the team caused mainly by recruitment, new people are being brought into the team who need to be trained. It takes

approximately 3 years for a Fire Protection Officer to come in and be trained and be able to go out on their own. There is some training and support around this, and it has had a slight impact on the numbers. Jim Palmer who is responsible for this area is not overly concerned; he believes the Service will catch up with the audits which RHy agrees.

- 7.3 RHy said that the biggest challenge are the “Red” enforcement actions which are going ahead and need to have cladding removed and do not have plans in place to do so. That takes time and resource to do this and it will be that part and the inherent risk which will challenge our resources.
- 7.4 There has been some funding from Government which is lined up to upskill staff and so that the focus can continue the Fire Protection Officers on the Building Risk Review and allow the operation crews to start to pick up the other inherent risk in the Risk Based Inspection Programme, but this will be an increasing challenge as the Service start to understand more.
- 7.5 The Service are currently on target to do the triage work which has been asked of the Service instead of being about understanding the risk that is being carried and build into the Risk Mitigation Plan going forward as well as the IRMP in future years.

### Questions

- 7.6 JG is encouraged to hear that RHy feels quietly confident that the Service will get back on track as JG does share the concern of meeting the target in December 2021. RHy to keep RH and JG informed and if there is anything they can do to assist. RHy said that the triage was not easy but relatively straight forward. It is what we have inherited is where the triage challenge lies and there is still no support for some of those buildings. Government funding does not apply to many of the buildings as they are not high rise residential buildings.

### MB joined the meeting at 11.03am

- 7.8 MB added to JG’s point, that some issues were anticipated when the planning was in the initial stages and slack was built in towards the end of the programme. MB is confident that if the targets are slightly behind then there is some slack at the end to mop up any outstanding inspections as a contingency.
- 7.9 RH said that this was an issue at the Fire Services Management Committee meeting. Andy Rowe gave a good presentation around New Providence Wharf and what happened there. In London, waking watch is not working as well as it could. There are plenty of owners that are lying and went to some depth about the inspection that had been done at New Providence Wharf in the weeks and days ahead of that fire and various alarms that had been working were turned off after the inspectors had been there as people did not want them on. It is a complex area, it is not about the right programme or inspection, its what’s our role when we have inspected. RH detected from Commissioner Rowe a continued concern [reluctance] for the FRS to take ownership of the issue and very much a desire to have the local authorities and central government own it. When RH talks to Central Government they see a role for FRS in resolving this problem.
- 7.10 RH understands the level of training involve for Fire Protection Officers but believes an additional role for someone in the organisation as an in-house Legal Enforcement Officer with more of a legal background and can field all these questions which we tend to go to external lawyers for. Too many landlords are slipping through the net. FRS cannot be expected to pay and local authorities, landlords and indeed tenants cannot be expected to pay. The general consensus was that it should be Central Government. There is too much time being spent talking about it and there is a need to be cleverer at understanding where the problems are

and how we can escalate those to someone to understand enforcement. Four years on from Grenfell and the issues are still not being resolved. RH feels that there is the scope here for development of “best practice”, in particular what can be done better rather than wait for a national solution.

- 7.11 RHy agreed whilst he is aware that this is a massive issue and feels that Government does not have the funding available to address the problems. RHy said that Essex are beginning to get the balance right and are prepared to take enforcement action. The new Fire Safety Bill will help with enforcement issues and it will clear up a lot of loopholes that certain developers are using to escape the net. Also, the HSE as the new regulator will become very important with ensuring that national consistency and directing FRS to play their part.
- 7.12 RHy would welcome a further conversation with RH and JG about what the Service might be able to do locally and possible investment in legal support.
- 7.13 MB & RHy have had discussions around incorporating into the structure a dedicated officer who does nothing else but enforcement at a senior level to try and build in some capacity in the system. This is an area they are looking at where this sits from not only a protection perspective but an operational risk perspective and what that might mean to the Service in future integrated management plans.

#### **Action 42/21**

RHy to have an off-line conversation with RH and JG regarding what the Service might be able to do locally and possible investment in legal support.

7.14 [REDACTED]

**Note: The Building Names to be redacted for the published minutes.**

#### **8. Leadership, Resourcing and Succession**

CB took the board through the paper

- 8.1. This action is regarding leadership Resourcing and Succession planning activity and the launch of new approach to the leadership Resourcing and Succession in February 2021. It is designed to ensure that the Service have the colleagues needed in place over the next couple of years. A peak in retirements is expected and this is intended to ensure that there is a development pool of colleagues who are being developed ready for promotion and then a resourcing pool where people move from development into resourcing and are ready for role.
- 8.2 This is relatively early days as it was launched in February and the paper sets out the alternative developed approach, moving away from the PQA based assessments in previous years to something which is more akin to the apprenticeship approach which is being used for new firefighters recruits. Colleagues are asked to provide evidence through a portfolio which is then assessed by assessors and is therefore less reliant than one the day performance and more about how people are currently performing in their role.
- 8.3 There is a link on the pack to a video for the Board to view to see what people see when they apply, and it takes colleagues through the process.

- 8.4 There have been a total of 45 portfolios requested so far and there is a breakdown of male, female, green book, grey book and there is more work to break that down further by intersectionality i.e. female operational to bring more analysis to the figures.
- 8.5 The numbers are promising at this early start but are too low to fulfil of all of CB's needs but are talking to SLT on how to increase those numbers and running alongside this development and succession approach, there are immediate requirements for Group Manager and Station Managers. The Service are currently recruiting for those requirements. This is area that continues to need focus and pace to continue to get ahead of the curve rather than to reacting to the vacancies as they arrive.
- 8.6 CB anticipates coming back within a couple of months to say that the numbers are significantly higher than they are now. CB anticipates that there will be 3 Group Manager vacancies this year, within the next 12 months 14 Station Managers, 23 Watch Managers and 19 Crew Managers.
- 8.7 CB said that KE, MB and NF may like to add to this from an operational perspective, as although this approach is across all duty systems our greatest need is for operational colleagues.
- 8.8 KE said that the approach was for aspiring Managers and development, if people were not quite ready for fulfil a particular role but in the future could be recognised and invested in the development now so that when those roles are available there are people who are ready and feel confident to make their applications. This approach is focusing on being able to give people opportunities to act up in a "try before you buy" operational experience and testing out if they want to do the job that they aspire to.
- 8.9 KE said that in the future direct entry is being looked at and different ways of working. The NFCC are looking at those opportunities going forward.
- 8.10 MB added that her main concern is that the Service are in a place to evoke some succession planning to ensure that some good people are coming through to meet the gap that we know is impending not only for ourselves but nationally which we want to meet by developing our own people internally. Essex is becoming the place to be, so we can also bring people in as they are attracted to the development that they get here.
- 8.11 MB said that she really welcomed the breakdown of those taking those opportunities by CB so that we can see that we are targeting the right people and see if there are any groups being inadvertently not taking up the opportunities.
- 8.12 NF said that the Service is just over establishment for the W/T members of staff. This is in anticipation of the movements later in the year due to retirements and also where there is currently a Promotion Board meeting every quarter, There is a quicker turnround of people being promoted and moved into new roles where previously 3 years ago it was done once a year. There have been bigger bills in temporary promotion payments, moving payments were people have been put into different stations and additional out duties. Costs have been driven down but when a vacancy occurs very quickly, previously someone could have been selected from the talent pool and place them in that role. The Service want to get onto the new framework going forward so that movement can take place a lot quicker. The number of Firefighters will start to drop as promotions and those eligible for promotion will be quicker. NF feels that the number will drop below establishment by September, in that timeline it is crucial that savings are made on the temporary promotions and not moving people around the organisation to cover temporary gaps and stop gaps.

- 8.13 JG said that it is very exciting to be in a different place to where we have been previously. JG thanked team. JG picked up on MB's point of the pipeline of talent and getting ready for the next step not only locally but nationally. If you look at EP who are trying to manage their talent as well, quite often there are only a couple of people available for those key posts, what the FRS are doing is very encouraging both locally and nationally. JG is deeply encouraged on the work being done and thanked everyone involved.
- 8.14 RH said to MB that she mentioned a national impending gap, RH would be interested in seeing any information that quantifies that gap. MB replied that this has been identified nationally and locally. CB will investigate obtaining more stats and information which should be with the NFCC People Program Board which CB is involved in as well as the direct entry workstream that is ongoing and will deliver results in 2022. ECFRS are part of the national workstream and it is a question of judging when to go with the national proposals.

**Action 44/21**

RH would like to understand the scale of the national impending staffing gap. CB would investigate obtaining stats and information via the NFCC People Program Board and inform RH.

- 8.15 JG said that we have seen that Essex is becoming the place to come to so that the ability to trailblaze and set the standard at a national level and feels that it would be an excellent move for ECFRS.
- 8.16 NF added that the other issue that is being faced both nationally and locally is that there was a recruitment freeze of 7-8 years in the mid 1990's, this has caused a vacuum in the knowledge base and that experience that is not only felt locally but that was also felt but other FRS around the Country at that time. This vacuum will be where less numbers will be seen going forward going for promotion due to lack of experience and that gap that we are finding beginning to end as going forward the time that the Service would have been looking at middle and senior managers coming through have caused a gap as we can see now.
- 8.17 RH said that since April 2017, 52% of Chief Officers have changed and that figure is set to rise to 69% by the end of this year, a lot of this change has been driven by the pension. RH by way of comparison, one third of Chief Constables will change in this year along.

**9. Annual Workforce Plan Update**

CB talked the Board through the Update

- 9.1 This is the Annual Workforce Report which looks back over the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. CB went through the highlights of the report which was attached to the pack.
- 9.2 Regarding the workforce demographic and in particularly the diversity which has been an area of considerable focus, there is some movement in the target groups. For example, in the W/T Campaign has resulted in a small increase in female operational employees with a larger increase for O/C roles. There is a change for the 2021 squad in where 25% of the intake are female, over 25% are from a black ethnic minority background and over 50% are under the age of 25. The Service are seeing the benefit of their approach, you would need to see this over several squads to properly gauge the results. These are small numbers compared to the whole work force and the squad's results need to be monitored going forward.
- 9.3 The Diversity Declaration is another area of focus which HMI are interested in. The diversity declarations have improved and have now plateaued. A technological solution is now being looked at i.e. when colleagues log in to CIVICA they will be asked to update all their

information on an annual basis. This assists the Service to make evidence based decisions and to assess disproportionate impact.

- 9.4 There has been a decrease on the turnover figure reported last year. O/C turnover is slightly higher than the average for the rest of the organisation. The whole of the organisation is 7.5% and O/C is 11.6%. The O/C Development Program is continuing to address those retention concerns for O/C.
- 9.5 Covid Related Absence featured heavily for ECFRS in 20-21 and the Service are continuing to work on a case by case basis to support employees in this regard.

### Questions

- 9.6 JTh asked if the O/C turnover included those O/C colleagues that have become wholetime or that is only leaving the service. CB this would depend if they held dual contracts or not, providing that they remain employed by the service. If they are riding both duty systems, then they will be in those figures.
- 9.7 RH nice to see that 30% of our recruits being female but this is still only 12% of the W/T figure. It is improving but still quite a long way to go. CB stated that since 2020 it has gone up 6.4% to 6.8%, with the recent squads 12%. It feels positive that we are moving forward.
- 9.8 RH said that the out of the Home Office Preliminary Review of Equality and Diversity Recruitment this year was Nottinghamshire Police doing extraordinarily well with their recruitment of 54%. Might be worth having a look and seeing how they achieved this. It may not be very relatable but there may be a couple of things there that we can look into. CB will investigate this.

### Action 45/21

CB to contact Nottinghamshire Police to look into the success they have had with their recruitment tactics.

- 9.9 DH asked that on the exit interviews, when people are asked to complete them, do they know who will see them i.e. HRT or line Manager as this may be a confidence issue? CB said that they go straight to HR as it is an electronic form.
- 9.10 JTh asked regarding the Disciplinary Policy on page 4. When this was discussed at the pre-meet, PBI checked this and it is a reserved matter for the Commissioner. This will need a Decision Sheet to come to a P&R Board. JG asked if this could be brought to the next Board meeting and the recommendation be made to RH as we seem to be behind on the decision governance process. CB agreed

### Action 46/21

- 9.11 A Decision Sheet to come to the next P&R Board on the Disciplinary Policy. CB to action this.
- 9.12 JG asked CB regarding the wellbeing hubs, that she would like to visit to understand a bit more. CB said that this was a virtual concept rather than a physical hub. JG really interested to see trends and what is coming up, and what help people need and the level of details. CB to pick this up with JG to organise offline.

### Action 47/21

CB to arrange a visit/meeting for JG to find out more detail and information on the wellbeing hub that has been set up.

**CB then left the meeting as there were no further agenda items for her at 11.35am**

## **10. Highlight Report - Operational Assurance**

- 10.1 RHy this is an important report in terms of assurance for RHy, MB and the team. It enables the Service to ensure that they are reviewing what it does operationally and learning the lessons. The report is written from an Officer perspective. RHy is happy to take any feedback from RH & JG as to how it could be laid out to be more helpful for use in the office and for the Service to report against it.
- 10.2 Station Audits have now begun again and ensuring that the Stations are compliant with a Policy.
- 10.3 Failure to respond are an area whereby crews are mobilised, but they do not necessarily turn out for a particular reason, this is mainly around O/C. The main issue is the alerters with RAMSDAQ and the 4i system. KE would be able to expand on the feedback if RH would like more detail.
- 10.4 Monitoring Officers are sent to incidents in order that the command systems and the policies are being followed on the incident ground and in particular a breakdown in terms of what we have sent Monitoring Officers to and what feedback that has been received.
- 10.5 One of the areas of feedback from HMI which the Service has been very keen to push forward. It is the debriefs' that enable the Service to learn the lessons and have seen a big upturn in those being carried out despite the extra work involved around the smaller incidents so that we are taking the learning from every incident, especially as incidents are less now and our crews are more experienced and every opportunity is taken to learn the lessons.
- 10.6 A big debrief that has been conducted on the Tilbury Grain Fire. This was a large incident, unprecedented in this Country and we faced it first and responded very effectively and very efficiently. It took some innovation to deal with it safely but the debrief has concluded now. RHy suggested scheduling some time for RH and JG together with NF to share that debrief on that incident to share what the Service have learned from that.

### **Action 48/21**

RHy to set up a meeting with RH, JG and NF to discuss the debrief and lessons learned from the Tilbury Grain Fire.

- 10.7 There is a similar depot in Merseyside and MB has been in discussions with her counterpart to share the learning from Essex to Merseyside in case they experience a similar problem.

### **Questions**

- 10.8 JG would be interested to know more about the 4i Contract as it is feels that there have been a lot of problems with 4i and the contact renewal is due.

**CHB Powercut at 11.40am**

**Minutes were not taken at this time**

**CHB back into meeting at 11.46**

## **11. Health & Safety**

- 11.1 RHy said that the report is predominantly populated with the extraordinary work that the Health & Safety team have done to keep staff safe through Covid 19. They have been heavily involved in developing the risk assessments and working with various staff in various departments and making sure that we remain safe and well.

- 11.2 There have been 2 HSE desktop extensions and they have both come back to say that the Service are in a good shape and there have not been any recommendations coming from those which is very reassuring.
- 11.3 The Service also commissioned Veritas to come and do an independent assurance on everything that we have done and KE is expecting that report imminently from them in terms of our overall approach on how we protected the workforce through Covid 19. RHy would like to minute his huge thanks to the Health & Safety team who has worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to ensure that the risk assessments are in place for those in the workplace, working remotely and all of the additional activities undertaken with partners.
- 11.4 There is a table on page 2 of the report (section 11). This looks as though the Service has done particularly well but RHy has asked for that table to be changed as it not quite the same. Essex is per 100,000 and the Service version is actual numbers. Which is not a fair comparison.
- 11.5 A significant item in terms of the report has been the accident in the Gym at USAR where the firefighter lost their life. The report has now been completed with no further action, but this has been reviewed with the lessons learned and there are three recommendations that will be taken forward.
- 11.6 There have been a couple of issues with broken seatbelt stalks in the back of appliances when they have come in to be checked. It is believed this is due to the way BA sets are stored in the back of the appliance and the fact that crews are moving them out of the way to enable them to get into their BA sets but over time this has weakened the seatbelt stalks. The Service are awaiting a report back with Veritas to conclude that investigation but there has been work carried out to manage that going forward.
- 11.7 here was a significant event where a ceiling hook to bring down ceiling fell off an appliance whilst travelling on the M11. This could have catastrophic implications and assumed it was not correctly stowed but are awaiting the results from the investigation.
- 11.8 Regarding OSHENS reporting, this is where we record all of the Health and Safety issues. The system needs replacing and is part of the Data and Digital program to ensure that it is done.
- 11.9 You can see in the monthly report that LL brings to the Board around accidents, RIDDOR, near misses etc and RHy did not repeat these items.

## **Questions**

- 11.10 RH questioned the death in service of the firefighter in gym and asked if the findings imply that the Service could have prevented this happening? RHy there is nothing that the Service could have done to prevent with this. The learning from this is that the individual was in the gym on his own and they were found very quickly. There is always an increased risk if you are in the gym on your own and there are no automated alerting systems to show that someone is in the gym and something has happened to them.
- 11.10 JG asked to reiterate in the minutes her thanks to the Health & Safety teams they have done an incredible in very difficult times and her conversations with RH are that they would really want to acknowledge that. JG asked RHy to please pass on thanks to the team.

## **12. Dovercourt Action Plan**

NF gave the highlights of the Action Plan

- 12.1 NF said that there have been a slight drop in the availability of appliances at Dovercourt and am very pleased to say that there has been continued availability of the first appliance during



the month of March and the second appliance had dropped slightly to 70% availability but there has been 8 firefighters on one day phase 1 training and are trying to get the firefighters as competent as quickly as possible, so that we can have more drivers and officers as many other stations. Due to effectiveness of recruitment last year there are several phases 1 and 2 firefighters at Dovercourt which are being received through the training very quickly.

- 12.2 There has been a driver on long term sick due to breaking their wrist. Hopefully the firefighter will return to work in May, which will show an improvement on the availability. One crew manager took a week's leave during this period which also effected the availability as well as personnel taking carried over leave before the end of March.
- 12.3 Two expressions of interest and two more that have been through the basic course in April and so there will be two more people at Dovercourt making the full establishment of 14.25m the headcount is around 22 and they are going to begin a waiting list at Dovercourt and looking to progress further forward to more drivers through phase two to three will assist in getting more drivers by the end of this year and so some of the transitional arrangements that there are in Dovercourt will start to be released later this year.
- 12.4 The culture is changing at the station. When the dray crewing and O/C were sharing the premises, this was causing and some cultural issues which the Service have learnt from and have applied the Waltham Abbey experience. Waltham Abbey are converting on the 31<sup>st</sup> July this year.
- 12.5 Mixed crewing will certainly see an improvement in availability of the second appliance and with the recruitment and the station manager who is doing a really a good job in working with the town.

### Questions

- 12.6 RH asked that as looking forward, we were lower than 70% for the 2<sup>nd</sup> appliance which is now where we want to go again, go back a couple of years and we were consistently in the 80s and 90s, what is your expectation of the time frame going forward? NF replied that when the day crewing appliance the 1<sup>st</sup> appliance was crewed entirely by day crewing staff and the second appliance was the only appliance staffed by O/C. We are anticipating within the next 6 months two more drivers and one more additional Commander. The Service has been very fortunate to attract an O/C firefighter who lived in Manningtree and relocated to Dovercourt, he has started in the last couple of months and he is due on a course at Kelvedon Park and will become a Crew Manager. Although there has been a dip in the training and one of the drivers have fractures their wrist, but the availability will begin to increase In April and going forward and would anticipate the 2<sup>nd</sup> appliance being in the 80s.
- 12.7 JG thanked NF for his helpful insight into The Dovercourt Update Plan notwithstanding the geographical challenges that Dovercourt presents, one of those things that RH & JG wants around Dovercourt was to improve the situation in Dovercourt and it is good to see a shift in culture. The other item that was really important was to ensure that those lessons are learnt and to transpose them to other stations that are going to be going through this too.
- 12.8 NF reiterated the point in that it was PO/C that owned that station not the Day Crewing. It is theirs to run and manage on behalf of the FRS and the Fire Authority. It was interesting that through a visit, that this station will be theirs 100% as from 1<sup>st</sup> August and that they will be supported.
- 12.9 RH has just been through an extension public engagement consultation exercise and picking out Waltham Abbey does not feel like a problem with the public but there is a lot of support

there around what is being done, where we have an issue is South Woodham Ferrers. There is a lot of noise there still. NF said that once the station gets the conversion underway there may be a little resistance, but it should not take long to turn around and should be short lived.

- 12.10 DH said that it was painful in Dovercourt for some time but some progress has been made and there is a bit around rebuilding and maximising the hard work with the benefit of the communities visibility of the hard work that the team have done to get that availability up and make the changes that it has not been the problem that some people thought it would be, what is your view on those O/C firefighters but also on the Service generally about making the positive noise in the community.
- 12.11 NF the ownership and feeling of belonging has really taken over in Dovercourt. They have produced videos to be put on social media. One of our firefighters is 70 years old and is an ex London Firefighter and produced a video and ran a campaign and training course out of Dovercourt which the Commissioner went to. Training courses have previously been located around the County at training facilities but it was such a success as they were able to publicize the event and saying that they were investing in their town with O/C firefighters as well as improve recruitment and do the training locally which avoided travelling to Witham which reassured the public.
- 12.12 JG said that SWF has a different culture and it appears that once the Day Crewing staff have moved on it helps, but it is also about the pace and momentum of keeping it going. NF agreed, one of the representative bodies is now very receptive to changes happening at Dovercourt, acting up staying on late, providing cover etc.
- 12.13 RH feels that there is a bigger problem in SWF that predates us. The Fire Service, Ambulance and Police are all in once space and they were not that old when we started to use them less. Policing is probably a bigger problem there. When RH was first elected, he went for a visit and the Policing area had empty cells and the building underutilised – the complex looks disappointing. NF believes that it was in the early 80s when the new town was built, there used to be an O/C station at Cold Norton which was closed. The idea was that SWF would be a Day Crewing station and hence the housing was also built, as they thought the station would expand much larger than it has done. This is a similar situation to Great Baddow. RH this will require some thought at some stage.

## **AOB**

NF thanked the board for allowing him to attend the meeting today. RH thanked NF for his positive contribution.

No further items in AOB.

Meeting ended at 12.10