

MINUTES

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

31 August 2021 14:00 – 16:00 via Microsoft Teams

Present:

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

Apologies:

Roger Hirst (RH)	Police, Fire Crime Commissioner
Pippa Brent-Isherwood (PBI)	Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer, PFCC

1 Welcome and Apologies

JG welcomed all to the meeting and said that the papers have been read and the PFCC's Office have been fully briefed. Salient points only are needed for this meeting.

Chris Parker was at the meeting as an observer and came from Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service on 1st July. Chris is new the Prevention and Protection Manager.

2 Minutes of last meeting

No amendments or matters arising.

3 Action log

22/21 This has been circulated and the report template is being used. Propose Close.

24/21 NC has some further information for JTh re PowerBi. Remain Open.

- 29/21 LL has a proposal out for internal comment. RHy to have a discussion with MB to bring back to the next P&R.
- 45/21 CB now has the contact name for Nottinghamshire Police. CB to verbally feedback and update to the board and is continuing to pursue. Remain Open
- 48/21 Meeting booked for 1st October. Remain Open.
- 51/21 Information has been shared with the board. Employees should be aware of tax implications if they hold two jobs and that it is their responsibility to pay tax. CB said that this has all been covered in existing processes. This will also be covered in a meeting on 2nd September with JP. Propose Close
- 56/21 Protected Characteristics should not be identified as people. Individuals with protected characteristics will not be disadvantaged by any actions. There is a meeting to discuss on 2nd September but this can be removed. JP to send an email to CB to confirm change. Propose Close
- 55/21 CB meeting with Darren Horsman moved from 27th August to 6th September due to annual leave. Remain Open.
- 59/21 JTh checked the Action Log dates and Quarterly Report deadline dates aligned with the Panel. Propose Close.
- 60/21 JTh added the informal feedback from the HMICFRS Inspection to October. Propose Close
- 61/21 NC has provided the balance sheet and cash flow for future months in the reports. Propose Close.
- 62/21 JTh has included the Fire Standards Tracker in the Forward Plan against the Annual Plan. JTh to email Tracy King to inform her. Propose Close.
- 63/21 The Fire Facilities paper to be added to the Strategic Forward Plan. This will be included in September's Estates Strategy. Propose Close.
- 64/21 The notice period and feedback has been shared on 23rd August. Propose Close.
- 65/21 There is a meeting scheduled for 9th September to discuss O/C link with RH Manifesto. Remain Open
- 66/21 MB does not believe there is a conflict and is happy to close this action. Propose Close.

4 Forward Plan

- 4.1 Standing items are unchanged
- 4.2 One substantive item being the Q1 Performance Report
- 4.3 For Update:
- Quarterly Annual Plan
 - Quarterly Grenfell Phase 1 High Level Action Plan
 - Quarterly Risk Review
 - Quarterly Change Programme
 - Quarterly O/C Conversion Update
 - Dovercourt Action Plan
- 4.4 KE requested the following additional items:
- Property Performance Report
 - Digital & Data Strategy Update

Action 67/21

JG, RHy and JTh to have a meeting to discuss the 2022 Forward Plan.

5 Finance Report

- 5.1 NC talked through the finance report for the period until end July 2021. The pack also includes the first annual financial forecast for the year.
- 5.2 Page three shows the year to date summary income and expenditure position as at the end of July.
- 5.3 The year actuals are £991,000 surplus against a budget of £103,000. In the month this has been increased by £150,000 which is due to the Council Tax Precept with a favourable variance with money received relating to the prior year Council Tax collections.
- 5.4 The total employment costs are £19.8m against the total budget of £19.4m. The Actuals column shows £400,000 of funding used for earmarked reserves. This has been driven by funding in support costs for the LGPS Pension of £300,000.
- 5.5 The overspend during the course of the year is related to the use of earmarked reserved that were not included in the budget.
- 5.6 Regarding O/C budget this shows £11,000 under budget. There are a couple of variances to note; within the headcount report it shows 40 O/C firefighters below budget. This number is incorrect, as in the full-time recruitment schedule, O/C headcounts have been included but they were not phased in the budget until later in the year on the conversion dates. O/C team members have been taken on ahead of those conversion dates.
- 5.7 Regarding the Annual Forecast for the year, this has been simplified in terms of a waterfall which can also be seen in the some of the future budget and Strategic papers. A general fund deficit was budgeted for £1.1m in year and the latest projection shows a small surplus of £92,000 and each of the components in the middle shows the key movements from the budget position to the latest projection.
- 5.8 The report shows additional employment costs of £1.1m; £700,000 is the Grey Book pay award of 1.5% which was unbudgeted which is in the process of being paid.
- 5.9 There are day crew protection payments on a conversion that occurred that have not been budgeted for of approx. £100,000.
- 5.10 Consultations are currently taking place for a Green Book pay award of 1.7%, approx. £270,000. This has not been but will be in the next projection approx. mid to late September.
- 5.11 The Unions have already rejected an offer of 1.5. NC feels that a lower offer of 1.75% will be unlikely to be rejected and it would be prudent to include in the forecast.
- 5.12 Regarding the finance items of £700,000 is the Capital Finance Charge which has been rephased and recalculated and will be better than our budget. This is driven by Capital Spend and some items not going ahead this year.
- 5.13 There has been a £900,000 improvement in the specific government grants largely driven by a grant received of £750,000 from the local council tax support for not having tax based growth within the budget process. This is a one-off grant.
- 5.14 The Balance Sheet is showing assets, liabilities and is showing differences between July and the due month. The Authorities Cash Balance has grown by £13m in the month and is due to the pension grant funding for the year. Some of the money due was classified in Short Term Debtors which has changed from £10m in June to £7m but this due to receiving the government cash payment.
- 5.15 On Assets Held for Sale, another day crew property has been sold and this has reduced. Under Capital Receipts Reserve, there is a growth of £305,000 from the sale of the property.
- 5.16 Regarding the Cash Flow Projection, the top line on the graphs shows where the cash balance is going to go on a month to month basis and a couple of bar charts that show income/expenditure. A lump sum payment is usually received in July in relation to the pension which shows as further funding.
- 5.17 There is an additional "Investments" box on the report which shows where ECFRS are investing and the rates that are being obtained. This shows the investment by millions i.e.

with Lloyds there is a 0.2% investment which is £2m. This is in the report for clarity and the Treasury Management Strategy has been approved. In that Strategy there will be a change to the make-up of investments regarding the change to policies.

5.18 JG thanked NC for the work on the report.

Action 68/21

JP noted that there is a difference of £5m movement between the short-term debtors and the tax. NC to come back to JP outside the meeting. This is regarding grants received in advance as there is pension income on there to take account that the pension income received will be released in the later months.

Questions

5.19 JTh noted an O/C pay overspend but the headcount is under. NC replied that the Budget for O/C is slightly under, the numbers are still under on the employment template overall and there has not been full recruitment but there has been recruitment at some of the day crew stations and the budget and costs for those are not until the latter part of the year but the headcount has been put in now. This will be rephrased but there is £100,000 of costs at those stations where recruitment has been in advance of conversions. This varies from station to station and NC will compile a report in this regard.

6 Performance Report

6.1 MB talked through the Monthly report for July.

6.2 More incidents were attended in June than in May 2021 but less than May 2020. This is due to special services, false alarms, and an increase in fires.

6.3 There was a slight decrease in response times and O/C and W/T availability decreased across the last month but that is to be expected due to the time of year and leave etc.

6.4 There was one fatal fire which makes a total of eight this year. Chris Parker (CP) has commissioned a piece of work to look at the fatalities and identify any trends and commonality, to highlight anything that ECFRS could be doing better. For all of the fatalities there are strategic incident responses and CP is working on making sure this information is shared in a meaningful way with all partners and to ensure that our way of working is more joined up.

6.5 CP highlighted the main parts of the report that had been commissioned. 100% of those fatalities were in privately owned properties and there is no single cause of fire that can be considered as common, they are all slightly different. Five out of six of the individuals lived alone, the other 2 have yet to be added to the report. Almost all of the incidents including the last two, related to core risk areas such as physical mental health, condition of the home environment i.e. hoarding or mental wellbeing links. This confirms that the direction ECFRS are heading is the correct one, but it does highlight that a lot more work is needed to be done to link on to key partners such as adult social care. ECFRS need to have the engagement of Partners to move forward and what the Service can do to support them.

6.6 CP said that another Strategic after incident response will be held to try and get as many of the partners involved as possible to go through all of the cases with them and look at ways in which everyone can work closer together and share data going forward. ECFRS are looking to target the right people but need to work harder to become more engaged with Partners. JG felt that this was very helpful to hear and acknowledged the work that CP has done in the short time that he has been with ECFRS.

- 6.7 Regarding Information Governance there were 52 Statutory Requests and 5 personal data breaches.
- 6.8 Regarding Protection, there are still some resourcing issues, 81 full audits were completed, 3 desktops and 98% of statutory consultations were completed within the time limit.
- 6.9 Regarding Prevention, the number of visits by crews has gone up by 91% due to the increased productivity of our crews.
- 6.10 There have been 81 pieces of information added to the mobilising system where residents would not be able to self-evacuate. This highlights people and the risks that they have.
- 6.11 JG said that it was good to hear that home safety visits have increased by 91%, brilliant news and thank you to all those involved.

Questions

- 6.12 JP noted that the KSI's on RTCs were moving in the opposite direction as those reported by Essex Police. These should be in alignment. Mark Johnson's (Head of Analysis in Essex Police's Strategic Change and Performance Command) view is that the numbers should be the same as his counterparts in Essex Fire. JG added that some work was undertaken last year to reconcile the fire data on this particular issue and Mark Johnson would make contact. RHy suggested that LL be the person to link in with. JP feels that SERP is giving out different data at different times and all the information needs to be put in to shape.

Action 69/21

JP to link to LL with to discuss the KSI data co-ordination and SERPS input for the same data.

- 6.13 JTh said that the rates of O/C turnover have increased. How much of that is conversion to W/T. MB does not have the figures at this meeting but ECFRS do suffer from what is a very positive effect when O/C colleagues get themselves successfully into W/T positions which has an impact on the turnover.
- 6.14 JG noted that the report mentioned control measure failures having increased by 50% from the previous month. MB said that there had been a big increase which is due to Alerter failures whereas before it was regarding availability of the crew. There have been some actions in place to understand and rectify this which will be in the Quarterly Assurance Report. RHy added that the numbers look high, but it is 11 out of 1376 incidents and so it is small in context and this is the 4i system. This will be rectified with the new system.
- 6.15 JG asked where there was a reduction in response times due to availability, is the way the Service manage leave impacting on this. MB said that there is a system in place that allows people to take leave which results in appliances coming off the run. The issue is with local management which is currently being worked on.
- 6.16 KE said that ECFRS are close to implementing the new Workforce Management System and that will help operational colleagues identify areas of shortages by skill set. This will help put people into those categories so that the Service will be in a better position to forecast an up and coming problem and take early action.

7 Protection Peer Review Update

- 7.1 CP talked the board through the update.
- 7.2 The Peer Review Report was undertaken by Herts FRS. The report has not changed much since the last update apart from ECFRS are behind in one of the actions relating to the Business Engagement post which has not been recruited to as yet. That recruitment is ongoing, hopefully the post will be filled by next month.

- 7.3 All other areas in the Peer Review Report are on track and two outstanding items will be picked up when Strategies are reviewed and when working through the succession planning piece.
- 7.4 JG said that regarding the Business Engagement Manager post, is this something that Denise Rossiter from Essex Chamber of Commerce can be involved in. MB is in conversation with Denise and funding has been supplied previously to improve her mechanisms to improve engagement.

8 Fire Protection Board Building Risk Review Update

- 8.1 The last report focused on how ECFRS were behind schedule. This is a national piece of work which is required to be completed by December 2021.
- 8.2 There is a very limited resource. There is currently 30% of the department trained to undertake this work at the Level 4 qualification although there are a number currently going through the qualification.
- 8.3 Resourcing has been realigned and much of the work has been reprioritised. CP is confident that the Building Risk Review will be completed by December.
- 8.4 ECFRS were tasked with 197 buildings by the Home Office initially. 125 have been completed. ECFRS identified a further 99 which were not on the original list and the decision has been made to include these as it is a matter of public safety. Currently there are 72 from the original list and 12 from the additional list to be prioritised by the end of October to give a little breathing space.
- 8.5 This does impact on the Service's ability to deliver the Risk Based Inspection Program as there is limited resource which will need to be shifted to where the priority lies. ECFRS are currently recruiting for additional Fire Protection Staff both full time and part time which may attract in the short term. Looking at offsetting some abatement, attracting some retired members back etc. The Service's energy is being pushed into recruiting new staff.

Questions

- 8.6 JG asked if there was anything that could be done regarding the potential budget this year in regard of attracting people and how we keep them. MB feels that funding for more posts at this time is not the issue, the issue is attracting people and training them up. Better salaries and bringing back retired people which may assist with a short-term solution.
- 8.7 RHy suggested what would help the Service would be some sustainability of the funding that has been received so far. If there was sustainability of funding, then ECFRS would be able to recruit on a long-term basis. At the moment ECFRS receive grant funding and it makes the longer-term recruitment strategy difficult. RH was interested in becoming a centre for the training of Fire Protection Officers which we may be able to look at in the future. ECFRS are currently prioritising the Risk Based Inspection and the Building Risk Review.
- 8.8 JG confirmed that there is some good narrative and experts which are going to make a huge difference especially with CP on board. The challenge is intended to be a helpful one. JG like the idea of the Fire Protection training to home grow our own people.

Action 70/21

JG to pick up with RH the sustainability of Funding question from RHy.

9 Quarterly Operations Highlight Assurance Report

- 9.1 MB talked through the report.
- 9.2 The Quarterly Operations Highlight Assurance Report references the Fire and Rescue Plan. There have been resourcing capacity issues to complete the report this month.
- 9.3 There have been 12 station audits this quarter focusing on Covid safe measures and getting some good results back from those audits.
- 9.4 There has been a significant increase in terms of comparison and failure to respond compared to the last two quarters. Over the last two quarters this was due to shortage of riders but in Quarter 1 the increase is due to an Alerter failure. This is currently being investigated and will be reported back next quarter.
- 9.5 The Immobiliser Policy has been realigned to National Operation Guidance and this will be completed shortly.
- 9.6 There has been a significant debrief on a roof fire in the village of Bures on Suffolk/Essex borders. The fire re-ignited due to the construction between the flu and the roof.
- 9.7 There have been 21 tactical debriefs which are outlined briefly in the report.
- 9.8 The thematic reviews which have been carried out are still around control compliance and Covid measures being provided at stations.
- 9.9 A regional structured debrief training course was held with JESIP. The method of this debrief will be looked at during the next 6 months and that will be coming back in the form of a report in two quarters time.
- 9.10 KE said that ECFRS are still operating many of the control measures that were in place prior, such as adopting PPE, social distancing etc. There has been an exercise over the last 3 weeks for employees to provide their vaccination status data. This will allow the Service to identify what level of risk it is carrying and in which areas. Once the Service is satisfied that enough staff are sufficiently vaccinated then it will give a better indication on how those control measures can be released and start to step down in some of the areas, for example crews wearing PPE on the back of appliances. The Service would have liked this in place for the August relaxation of restrictions, however sufficient information was not available at that time and the timing was extended by two weeks. There is a meeting in a week to look at the return data to look at the next steps.
- 9.11 JG thanks KE and asked that the Board be kept in the loop as this information is useful for the PFCC integrating back into KP too.

10 Quarterly H&S Report

- 10.1 MB talked through the report and went through the highlights.
- 10.2 A Workplace Assurance Assessment was commissioned by Bureau Veritas. This Report has a strong focus on Covid safe measures, which has identified areas where the Service can improve. The areas highlighted were mainly due to non-compliance, human behaviour etc and which are easily rectified. ECFRS gained a full service certification
- 10.3 A large investigation was undertaken together with the FBU at their request where there was a cluster of employees that tested positive for Covid and wanted assurance that the employees had not contracted this from the workplace, and that Covid safe measures were suitable and sufficient. The measures were found to be sufficient and the employees had contracted Covid outside the workplace. This issue came up through the FBU safety reps.

- 10.4 The H&S team are currently under pressure as they are still reviewing Covid Risk Assessments under Government Guidelines and some of the safeguards and measures in the workplace may start to be relaxed once vaccination data is received.
- 10.5 There may be a delay in the vaccination data information due to the holiday season. There is another option to look at the wider vaccination status over Essex and get a reading from that which would tell us that due to the age range, ECFRS probably have 77% of its workforce vaccinated so far.
- 10.6 The H&S report for 202/21 was brought to the Board in June, which was well received.
- 10.7 Two significant investigations have taken place, one of which was the tragic death of a USAR Firefighter an accident where a contractor fell through some blockboards during repairs to the training tower which resulted in some broken ribs. This appears to be due to a failure of the risk assessment in this instance.
- 10.8 The Risk Assurance Services Board still has some actions outstanding regarding manual processes regarding the Workplace Risk Assessment and this will be rectified with the OSHENS system replacement.
- 10.9 The second item outstanding is regarding inductions which is currently being worked through.
- 10.10 There has been an increase in accidents and RIDDORS, most of which have been minor. The RIDDORS have been categorised due to the incidents being over 7 days and not being in the workplace as a result of the accident.
- 10.11 There has been an increase in hazards and near misses which increases the ability to learn to help the accidents reoccurring.

Questions

- 10.12 JG noted that there had been 6 attacks on personnel which are unacceptable. KE from a technology perspective, the Service are currently looking at Body Worn Video equipment. Initially this was looked at for the purpose of debriefs but this is something that many emergency services are introducing very rapidly and obtaining successful prosecutions. JG suggested that there should be a strong form of messaging sent out to the public reinforcing that this is unacceptable for our frontline workers. This is already done with policing.
- 10.13 MB agreed that this may well be good timing due to the time of year with Bonfire Night coming up and the increase in attacks at this time. MB will speak to Emily Cheyne to see what is being done around this. RHy also agreed that Firefighters should not be under any form of attack and feels that it would be well received by the crews if the Service were more vocal on this.

Action 71/21

MB to liaise with Emily Cheyne and Darren Horsman regarding putting out a strong message regarding attacks on crews especially coming up to Bonfire Night.

11 Dovercourt Action Plan

- 11.1 MB talked the Board through the update
- 11.2 There has been a reduction in availability for Dovercourt due to annual leave. In June the 1st appliance was available 100% of the time, the 2nd appliance was available 46% of the time.
- 11.3 There is currently a full time equivalent of 16.25 and the table shows who exactly and what skills the Firefighters have. One Firefighter is off long-term sick and one driver is not able to drive due to illness. There are 16 Firefighters at various stages of development and the

process of getting Firefighters trained is a long process, although good foundations are being built and in the future the Station will be in a solid place with building up the capacity and ability in specialisms and to continue to work on the culture to bring Dovercourt into a thriving station.

Questions

- 11.4 JG questioned the availability matrix and asked what it was. MB said that if you worked as O/C the Service are quite flexible as long as the number of the agreed hours are completed. The answer is not more people but getting those that can be flexible and cover during the times that are needed and understanding their availability.
- 11.5 KE also highlighted the benefit that the Workforce Management System will bring into this. At the moment there are 5 or 6 different ways in which an O/C station can log their availability i.e. the station WhatsApp group or a third party App etc. The new system will provide a one stop shop for this and the system will be uploaded in one place. The system will also highlight if someone is unavailable and the pump is taken off the run, it will update the system which will highlight the impact of them being unavailable and also which may prompt someone to book on to assist at that time.
- 11.6 JTh asked regarding the caravan initiatives that local stations are running their own projects in their local areas is this how it is working. MB confirmed that this is happening.

12 Publishing of papers for the Building Risk Review

- 12.1 JTh had previously shared some guidance on the publishing of papers for the Building Risk Review. LL has quite a lot of experience in this area around classifications and whether there is something that RHy would like to put in place as a policy, but JTh is not currently publishing this information.
- 12.2 RHy asked if there had been a steer from PBI as Government Classification Guidelines would be followed as to whether this would be a Part 1 or Part 2 paper. RHy understand that it would be Part 1 unless special dispensations were made to the Monitoring Officer to say that this should be a Part 2. JP has confirmed with PBI and it will be called Part A and B which are the same thing. A decision needs to be made in the meeting if something is Part B.

Action 72/21

JP is to ask PBI to take a specific view as monitoring officer for the FRA as to whether special dispensations needed to be made to confirm whether a paper should be Part 2 and ask if names and addresses needed to be left out of the report to avoid public harm.

- 12.3 MB said that PBI may have been involved in some of the initial conversations around this paper being published regarding the buildings which was around the commercial sensitivity regarding buildings being called out and the public fall out that people feel they live in a dangerous building.
- 12.4 JP confirmed if anything is said that should not be published it should be in Part B or PART 2. RHy also confirmed that the decision needs to be made before the meeting and not after. MB suggested that the Report could be sanitised without names and addresses. JP will speak to PBI in the first instance as per the action above.
- 12.5 JG thanked all participants for the focus and preparation for the pre-meet which makes this meeting easier and smoother.

End of meeting 12.03