



MINUTES

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

31 March 2022, 10.00 - 11.54 via Microsoft Teams

Present:

Pippa Brent-Isherwood (PBI) Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer PFCC's Office Jane Gardner (JG) Deputy Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (Chair)

Moira Bruin (MB) Director of Operations, ECFRS

Chris Parker (CP) Director of Operations
Colette Black (CB) Director of People Services

Jo Thornicroft (JTh) Head of Performance & Scrutiny (Fire), PFCC's Office Janet Perry (JP) Strategic Head of Performance & Resources, PFCC's

Office

Amanda De Margary Deputy Finance Director

Ian Adams Assistant Director Prevention and Protection

Christine Butler Minutes, PFCC's office

Apologies:

Roger Hirst (RH) Police, Fire Crime Commissioner

Neil Cross (NC) Finance Director and Section 151 Officer, ECFRS

Karl Edwards (KE) Director of Corporate Services, ECFRS

1 Welcome and apologies

JG welcomed all to the meeting and noted apologies from RH and NC with Amanda De Margary representing NC at this meeting

2 Minutes of the last meeting

- 2.1 MB noted that in the apologies RHy was listed as attending but he was not a member of the last meeting.
- 2.2 MB noted that on page 2 (11.22) line 4 should read "investment in training"
- 2.3 MB noted a typo on page 4, (6.67) "should read safeguarding referrals have significantly increased".
- 2.4 Page 9 (9.1) should read "MB has implemented".

The minutes were agreed subject to the above amendments. There were no matters arising that are not on the Agenda.

3 Action Log

- 99/21 2019 Comparative data to be included in the Performance Report. This has been completed. Propose Close
- 105/21 JTh & MB to discuss Deep dive session for home safety checks by operational crews. This has been discussed and a plan is in place and a date is to be confirmed. Open

- 2/22 Mean, medium and mode information to be in the performance report. This has been completed. Close
- 4/22 Cascade of cumulative movements to be part of the finance pack. This has been completed. Close.
- 14/22 Lessons learned and key performance data to be included in conversion project update. This has been completed. Close
- 15/22 Broadening the Role, this was originally be placed on the Strategic Board Forward Plan but KE would like to run a workshop. KE said this would be run as a workshop to include the PFCC and then bring a paper to the September Strategic Board. JTh to add to the September Strategic Board Forward Plan. Close.
- 16/22 JTh & MB to look at the forward plan. This has been completed. Close
- 17/22 Finance report and new style accounts. The meeting has not been set up, although the format has been shared of the latest financials. Open
- 18/22 Extension of procurement of auditors which was part of a Decision Sheet 79/21 which provided authority to extend the contract with Grant Thornton for one year which aligns it with EP and 7F can look to procure a joint audit contract. Close.
- 19/22 KE to distribute information/photos of the new uniform. This has been completed. Close KE gave an update on delays. A new order was put in for workwear back in September last year. This has been procured within a procurement framework and unfortunately not delivered within their contractual obligations. There have been indications that the uniform will not be delivered until October/November 2022. There are some garments which will available before this time but KE has expressed that all the unform is wanted to roll out at the same time. Previous stocks of the current uniform have now run down as there is very little spare uniform available although the current suppliers may be able to assist. KE has also been in contact with the national procurement lead, and she feels that there should be a legal challenge as ECFRS are not the only ones in this position. Some communications have been sent out to staff and if any uniform is desperately needed then some will try to be obtained. JG said that if the PFCC can do anything to assist with the position to let her know.
- 20/22 Strategic Assessment of Risk and what had been distributed to CSPs and how that had been created. LC said that the request had been received and coordinated with the Home Safety Team and a large amount of information was provided. The work on the new performance framework has really helped with this task especially concerning geographic information. PowerBi dashboards are currently being worked on and all this information will be updated daily with dropdowns on the dashboard via District. PFCC will have access to PowerBi and CSP dashboards in due course. PBI added that there has already been a lot of improvement in the reporting through from ECFRS to Safer Essex who now get a Performance Report which they were not receiving before. This will also help with the CSPs pulling together their Strategic Assessments for next year. LC added a link to the chat bar to the ECFRS website where these are published. CSP's have been accessing this straight into their meetings and is only updated once a month, due to two different networks. PBI suggested that this may be a good item to showcase at the PFCC conference in May as it may sit well alongside Project Minerva. LC feels that this may already be in the pipeline but if not, she is happy to come along to do some showcasing of the work. Close

Action 25/22

JTh to speak with Darren Horsman to check to see if LC will be involved in the PFCC Conference to showcase PowerBi and the CSP Dashboard which may sit well with Project Minerva.

- 21/22 Schools Vulnerability and booking system, this work is to be completed by the end of June. JTh to put a further update on the Forward Plan for July. Open
- 23/22 Update on Dovercourt paper. This has been provided. Close
- 24/22 Exit Interviews for Dovercourt. CB has reported back that there are several reasons for leave but currently not any themes. Close.

4 Forward Plan

- 4.1 An updated plan has been circulated. For April:
 - o The financial and Performance Report Standing items
 - Update on enforcement and remediation on clad buildings
 - Update on the response strategy
 - The Quarterly O/C Development Program Update
 - o Converting Stations Action Plans
 - The Procurement update has moved to May

5 Finance Report

ADM covered the finance report.

- 5.1 The report is an update on the financial pack up to 28 February 2022
- 5.2 The YTD numbers show a surplus of £1.5m against a budgeted deficit of £340k.
- 5.3 At present there is a favourable element of 1.8m.
- 5.4 The results on the month reported on page 3 use a balanced position against a small deficit budget and so this month it has come in almost equal expenditure to income which is unusual.
- 5.5 The key movements are that the employment costs are £58k in deficit to budget, primarily due to the unbudgeted Grey Book pay award. Non-pay continues to show an underspend and funding shows government grant income with a favourable variance of £48k.
- 5.6 The updated projected outturn for the year shows a small surplus of £156k which is up £40k on the prior period projections. On page 7 the full outturn is presented which shows the original budget, deficit for the year and all the movement which takes the Service up to having a small surplus.
- 5.7 As there is quite a high surplus at present, a lot of costs and reductions occur in period 12, which will show the impact of the Green Book pay award of £280k and approx. £1m drop in council tax and non-domestic rate receipts which will pull the surplus down.
- 5.8 The Balance Sheet shows a summary of the Service's assets and liabilities and there are a number of items marked with an asterisk which only move at year end. There were limited movements in the month, the main element being a reduction in short term deficit of approx. £1m. This is the net impact of receiving the Section 31 Grant of £3m and off offset against the increase of pension deficit of £1.5m
- 5.9 The property and assets sale for the month was £300k with the relevant corresponding movement on the Capital Receipts Reserve.
- 5.10 The Cash Flow Forecast shows the cash position of £24.5m. In March, the latest Treasury Management Strategy for the year 22/23 was presented to the March Strategy Board and a Decision Sheet has been submitted to the PFCC.
- 5.11 The Capital Expenditure Summary shows spend to date of £2.5m.
- 5.12 JP said that this report has been gone through with ADM and any questions have been dealt with in the pre-meet and everything is as expected. For the Capital underspend, is this expected to get any bigger? ADM has not been able to look at this due to technical difficulties, it is not unusual to get additional spend in the last few months of the financial year.
- 5.13 KE confirmed that some of the substantial capital spend program is around the property arena but they have had to be rolled over i.e., Shoebury of £1.3m and the BA chambers of £1.9m and the activity will not commence until the new financial year. In the next financial year those projects would have already started. There is an ongoing piece of work to map out a five-year capital program with a view that the capital implementation will be started off earlier and this will be covered later in the meeting. PBI confirmed in the chat bar that the Decision Sheet should be with RH later today.
- 5.14 JP commented regarding Capital that she would like to see realistic figures on what can be achieved.

5.15 ADM informed the chair that today is the last day of the annual stock take and the finance team is involved in this and asked if item 10 on the Annual Accounts Timetable could be brought forward in order that ADM could then leave the meeting. JG agreed.

10 Annual Accounts timetable

- 10.1 The Annual Accounts Timetable has been circulated. Not all the numbers have been confirmed. They have been completed on the first three items. The instructions are being sent to the valuers today. The interim audit testing was done on the 14-25th March and the procurement of the asset valuation is done through a framework.
- 10.2 This timetable will get circulated each month with the finance pack and will be updated when there is further knowledge of the numbers.
- 10.3 There is one small error, the preparation for publication of the Decision sheet will not happen in mid-November on the basis that they need to be signed off by end of September. The updates will appear in the next pack.
- 10.4 JP noted that it says that the accounts will go to P&R mid-August, although we are looking to publish the unaudited accounts but cannot see that there has been a review with the Commissioner. ADM replied that this is under the heading Final Accounts and Audit Finding Review Commissioner S151 at P&R mid-August and it does mention the Commissioner although there should be a clearer element of the draft ones being included in a meeting with Commissioner and ADM will pick this up.

Action 26/22

ADM to set up a meeting for the Commissioner to view the Draft Annual Accounts before they are published.

ADM left the meeting at 10.40

6 Monthly Performance Report

LC went through the Performance Report and the key highlights.

- 6.1 LC talked through items in the report, Incidents, Attendance & Availability, Information Governance, HR, L&D, H&S, Protection, Home safety and Community Development and Safeguarding.
- 6.2 LC added a caveat to this report that at the time of this report there were 144 incident that were awaiting quality assurance. This was due to the Storm Eunice weekend and the resultant spike in special services and volume of calls. These get completed on paper and fed into the IRS and it creates a QA backlog. The team have taken the opportunity to complete the incidents when they come in.
- 6.3 LC added a further caveat to "potential life-threatening incidents" due to the spate conditions and the way the Service mobilised over the weekend; the decision was made to remove some incident types from this metric as it was unnaturally skewing the figures as it is an average. Anything with a protracted call handling time, (1000 seconds which is not a life-threatening target) has been removed from this report.
- 6.4 JTh regarding the average learning engagement percentage, is this usual to drop at this time of year? CB replied that that she would explore this further.

Action 27/22

Regarding the Average Learning engagement percentage, CB to explore further why this figure has dropped and it is usual for this time of year and report back to JTh

PBI said that when the last quarterly report went to the Panel, there used to be so little Performance information and now there is so much information in such detail, it has become a significant report. PBI has been told that further work is to be done regarding what is reported where, with what frequency, what length and breadth in different places.

- 6.6 LC confirmed that a new dashboard is to be launched internally for the Leadership Team, Extended Leadership Team and for the wider service for the April Performance Report as a PowerBi dashboard which will be updated twice a day for the teams and so the performance can be seen within the month, not just at month end. The Future monthly reports will align with the Performance Framework and it will be supported in the quarter with additional analysis. As from April P&R the Board will be able to see a "live" dashboard with a paper copy which will be sent with the papers before P&R and another copy after P&R showing the latest most up to date data.
- 5.7 JP looked at the rolling turnover and it looks like the W/T is rising and wondered how the percentage has been arrived at and is it an average, an average pro rata or a 9.7% average of all four? LC replied that she believes it is the whole staff turnover at the top and broken down underneath but would clarify this as these pages are provided.
- 6.8 JP would like to know how the 9.7% is reached and also seeing the W/T rising. CB said that the 9.7% is the average across the whole Service, CB would anticipate W/T increasing as this is in line with the Strategic Workforce Plan and the Retirement Profile and also incorporates the involuntary turnover. CB will check that average.

Action 28/22

CB to check the rolling turnover average of 9.7% across the service and respond to JP

- 6.9 JP asked regarding the OCLO this is a positive dip? CB replied that it is too early to be sure regarding the correlation but have been working through the O/C Development Program to make a number of changes, the most significant of those is the On Call Liaison Officer role which MB has been leading. There is very positive feedback from crews regarding Management and OCLO roles. MB added that it is too soon to make that correlation but there have previously been some updates regarding the OCLO Development Program to this Board. The aim is to increase the experience of the O/C staff so that they are more listened to and are more inclined to stay.
- 6.10 CB said that having done deep dives into exit interviews of Dovercourt leavers, whilst there are not any themes, there are personal circumstances and a physical injury unlikely to improve.
- 6.11 JG expressed that she would not be surprised if there was a lot of interest in ECFRS with our reporting mechanisms such as Dashboards, the updates etc. It is innovation in operation and exciting and to be proud of the work that has been done to get the Service to this place.
- 6.12 MB said that LC has played an instrumental part and it will give a shift in culture looking at retrospective detail and real time data which will make the biggest difference in the performance management.
- 6.13 CB said that it was good to see LC and team being celebrated at the Awards Night and was well earned.

7 Q3 Performance Report

- 7.1 LC thanked JTh who helped this month with proofreading and provided feedback presubmission. Going Forward this scrutiny will be done earlier in the process.
- 7.2 LC talked through key items in the report; Incidents, Response Times, Accidental Deaths, Fire Related Casualties, Accidental Dwelling Fires, Home Safety Interventions, Safeguarding Team Referrals, RTCs, False alarms, Diversity Data, Working Time, Employee Relation Cases, FOI Requests and Complaints.
- 7.3 JTh asked regarding the increase in incidents. The table in the report shows an increase in false alarms. Although there is work going on in the area, as it is in a paper later in this meeting, JTh suggested some of the information from that is added to the commentary on this as some of the Panel members will pick this up and their questions can be pre-empted. LC said that a PowerBi dashboard has been created to drill down into this data and some work has been done on the target.

Action 29/22

IA to add a commentary on false alarms to the Q3 Performance report

- 7.4 All the incident types that have been categorised as 'potentially life threatening' have been reviewed. Going forward, the closest appliance will be mobilised first. The impact of this will be seen in the report as from April.
- 7.5 JTh asked about the removal of targets for prevention activity and that targets have been developed at Command Area Level linked to the national average. What impact that would have on the ability to provide assurance on the overall picture. LC replied that in the Target Setting Paper due next month, the Prevention and Protection targets have been included and there is a planned projection to get ECFRS to the national average over the next couple of years. MB added that the targets are there to provide the assurance required.
- 7.6 JG said that the Board liked the Community Builder Case Studies that have been included which have a significant impact. There is a concern on RTC's, there has been a similar conversation with Essex Police and the importance of a conversation with SERP as there is a large preventative piece there and the roles served in that need to be homed in on.

8 Fire Standards Progress Update Report

- 8.1 MB said that the paper outlines the progress on the consultation and implementation of the Fire Standards in ECFRS. It also sets out the approach to governance and monitoring of progress going forward.
- 8.2 The standards are at one of three statuses; in development, for consultation or published. Tracy King is the lead. There have been some joint responses on Prevention, Protection, Safeguarding, Fire Investigation and Emergency Planning & Resilience Fire Standards which have contributed on a National Level.
- 8.3 Nine Standards have now been published and each of those have SLT and ELT leads assigned to take them forward. Monitoring and progress will be through the Continual Improvement Board.
- 8.4 The Governance of this is captured in the Annual Plan 22/23 which supports the Fire and Rescue Plan.
- 8.5 A Dashboard for real time updates and transparency of the progress of the implementation of the Fire Standards in in progress.
- 8.6 JG feels that we are not only contributing nationally but also leading the way.

9 Impact of Reduced Capital Spend

- 9.1 KE said that this report arose from an action identified by RH when going through a previous P&R regarding the impact of not spending capital, and a concern by members wanting to see some assurance of the impact of a reduced capital spend.
- 9.2 KE asked if the Board have already read the paper if they would like to go straight to questions. JG agreed.
- 9.3 JTh said that this was interesting to see why the program gets delayed, although it was not clear what the impact was. KE replied on page 3 of the report shows the 5 key areas in terms of impact. If ECFRS continually underspend there may be a question to be asked if all this capital is needed as it is not being spent. JTh asked if we are currently not at serious risk of those 5 key areas as there is another underspend this year.
- 9.4 KE feels that there is a recognition that the allocated Capital Spend has not been spent and that comes back to the key underlying factors outlined in the report i.e. over optimistic timelines. There is an impact in current supply chains and a global impact. ECFRS have an awareness and are getting ahead of the supply chain issues.
- 9.5 KE is working with the Property Team so the capital expenditure cannot be signed off for the next year when projects will not be implemented until the following September. This is a new way of working for them, KE is bringing in some external assistance.

- 9.6 Capital planning and spending is often underspent in the public sector. ECFRS have tied with ECC who have a dedicated Capital Spend Officer who oversees this area, KE is looking at other resources to get some assistance.
- 9.7 KE confirmed that there is not currently a risk but if we carried on and did nothing for the next 3 years then there would be an issue.
- 9.8 JG thanked KE for the work being done with being clear and managing expectations, we are in a better position and next year will be even better.
- 9.9 JP said in the public sector previously, they put a plan in place with a budget and then planned to overspend although not achieving the overspend but achieving the budget.
- 9.10 JP said in terms of impact, a suggestion to add "can create lack of credibility in the MTFS" as although those numbers are part of the MTFS and that issue on capital can create lack of credibility in the plan. KE agreed.

Action 30/22

KE to add "can create lack of credibility in the MTFS" to the report to reflect the MTFS in the plan.

9.11 JG thanked KE and said that this is indicative of a developing area as the Service are further down the line on performance. The questions are more focused on how we get to where we want to be. An incredible amount of work being done by KE and the team.

11 Protection Strategy Update

- 11.1 CP picked out some highlights of the report.
- 11.2 The paper has been updated against the Strategy set up in 2020 and the landscape in protection has massively changed. Some of the items talked about today were not originally in the Strategy but the Service are looking at a refresh of that Strategy.
- 11.3 The Building Risk Review was delivered last year and taken learning from that. There will be an introduction of a Towers Team which will be a specialist team in Protection who will monitor and look after the high-rise buildings. There will also be an enforcement co-ordinator for a specialist role in the department.
- 11.4 Regarding the Risk Based Inspection Program, it is currently going through a refresh. The first part is re-assuring that the data is correct and accurate and transitioned to CFMIS correctly. There have been some gaps and some of the uplift funding has been used to bring in an additional resource to undertake this. The second part is how the visits are scheduled moving forward. This now needs to be more realistic to the resources the Service has available. There is a plan going through SLT on how to catch up on those audits.
- 11.5 Regarding the Fire Investigation, the Service are currently exploring the ISO accreditation which is a national requirement of all FRSs. ECFRS see a lot of opportunity in Essex and would look to lead on this for the Eastern Region and have dedicated resources working on this at present. There has been interest from other partners supporting the Service in this work. The Service are looking at a standalone Fire Investigation Team which will have the ability to deploy regionally which may be a more cost-effective model moving forward and may be a cost-effective opportunity depending on affordability.
- 11.6 £450k was received in uplift funding and the majority of this funding has been allocated. The biggest spend is to be upskilling operational crew watch commanders to have formal fire safety qualifications. There was an issue with procurement of the training last year, but this has now been resolved. Some of the funds have also been used to upskill Fire Protection staff in new areas i.e., virtual reality training with new equipment being available for operational staff too.
- 11.7 There has been a lot of work on the reduction of unwanted fire signals (UWFS). There is a new role in the Business Safety Team which is dedicated to improving the interaction with businesses.
- 11.8 The roles in Fire Protection are now accessible to both Green and Grey Book which is a positive move to provide equal opportunities for development in the department.

- 11.9 There has been the introduction of a Training Officer and National Training Team who will look all the issues that will be impacting on ECFRS over the next few years i.e. National Fire Standards and the new Building Safety Bill, where there will be significant impact on how the Service work. Following the last precept, four additional Station Commanders have been taken on who can help the Service with this work.
- 11.10 JG thanked CP and said that this is a priority for the PFCC and ECFRS and welcome the work being done in this space. The work with the Business Team is very exciting, and JG is sure that a lot of support will come from the Essex Chambers of Commerce on how businesses can support you.
- 11.11 JTh thanked CP for putting in the information regarding additional funding which was raised at the Fire Conference and RH was concerned about this issue.
- 11.12 JTh offered assistance regarding UWFS Strategy to CP, to contact her if there is anything that the PFCC can assist with regarding contacts etc.
- 11.13 IA confirmed that there will be a new analyst in the team of Prevention and Protection to assist with the granular detail. JTh has been invited to the Directorate meetings to get this information ahead of P&R which may clarify a lot of the questions before they get to the Board. More information can get into the dashboards so that everyone is more aligned to our reporting mechanisms. LC confirmed that there have been some good impacts of the hierarchical approach to the response side through all elements of the organisation. JG thanked IA and appreciated the involvement that he has with JTh.

12 PR Quarterly Risk Review

- 12.1 There are two red risks on this update. There is a red risk due to the lack of carbonaceous (hot) fire training facilities. There is a feasibility study which is due to be completed. There is also a red risk that the Service are unable to effectively mobilise or communicate with its resource responses or partner agencies. There has been a software upgrade this year, and issues are being resolved through KE.
- 12.3 KE said a feasibility study will be going through the Board in the next 12 months with a Strategic Outline Case and an Outline Business Case with the Full Business Case by the March 2023 Strategic Board, with a view to approval to progress with the appointment of constructors. If approved, there will be a 12–18-month build, this would align with the timeline to vacate Wethersfield. This risk will then be mitigated and more will be known from the feasibility study.
- 12.4 KE confirmed that the Control Room Upgrade has now taken place and the risk has significantly reduced because there is now a tertiary and secondary full back-up system which was not in place before. There is still work to be done on the system and the focus is on this.
- 12.5 MB said that the Risk on Wethersfield ties in with item 9 on the capital spend and the risk associated on that.
- 12.6 There have been reductions in risk: a data breach that has changed from red to amber and the failure to migrate from day crewing to O/C which three out of the four already completed and the fourth on target for completion on the due date.
- JG asked regarding the DPO item and asked for clarification if there was a time when the Service were without a DPO. KE replied that there was a short period where Anna Tuckwell was DPO on an interim basis but quickly commissioned the services from Information Governance Services for a new DPO who has extensive background and knowledge She has recently completed an information governance audit on the Service. RSM are not able to do a Governance Audit as they are not able to offer an opinion, whereas the DPO can. KE will bring a paper to a future P&R to inform the Board of the outcomes of that audit. The risk has been reduced to amber as there is infrastructure in place to ensure that be complied with.

13 On Call Converting Stations Action Plan Update

- 13.1 The paper includes information from the new dashboard
- 13.2 Dovercourt The issue is a lack of specialisms and that will take time. The remedy is to put more whole-time resources into the station which of course costs money. A new Station Manager has been recruited and a new O/C Watch manager as well as 6 new recruits. There will be another training course in August and Dovercourt will be prioritised for driver courses. ONCLOs are based there 1-2 days a week for support.
- 13.3 Waltham Abbey This station successfully converted in July 2021
- 13.4 Great Baddow This station is giving better availability now than when it was day crewed. The morale is exceptionally high at this station.
- 13.5 South Woodham Ferrers is due to complete conversion in July 2022. There are currently only 5 O/C firefighters at that station and there is a current focus on recruitment. We are hoping ASDA may be able to assist. There are current applications for Watch Manager and drivers. Bolstered with W/T positions the availability should be able to be maintained.
- 13.6 As requested a high-level view of the lessons learned has been incorporated into the report. There was a workshop on the 8th March to go through these lessons learned with regard to the forthcoming conversation of South Woodham Ferrers.
- 13.6 The Service need to be mindful of the terminology and promises being made at the times of conversion. MB is meeting with the comms team on how to approach this and would like to follow this up with PFCC comms to ensure that everyone is sighted.
- 13.7 JG thanked MB and the team for the work done. JG felt that South Woodham Ferrers would be a harder conversion and thanked her for bringing forward the lessons learned and making sure that the Service are on the front foot. RHy has invited JG to Southend Fire Station to Green Watch and both JG and RH would be happy to visit other stations as it is important to be visible. MB suggested some joint visits. JG agreed.
- 13.8 PBI said that there are some requests in from the Panel for Fire Station visits too and was unsure who was tasked with this.

Action 31/22

MB to look into joint station visits with the PFCC and also the request from the Panel for Fire Station visits.

13.9 PBI reminded the meeting that if any of Panel are up for election they would have to wait until after the election to organise the visits.

AOB and Publishing of Papers

JTh said that there was a paper regarding safeguarding following last month's meeting and a request for a discussion to align MP's on the DBS checking. JG said she would like RH to be sighted on CP's work on this and have a separate briefing with RH. One of the MP briefing sessions could then be used. CP agreed. Donna would benefit from support from Ministers, especially as the Business Case is now going through.

Action 32/22

JG to speak to CBr to set up a meeting with RH, JG, PBI, JTh and CP on Safeguarding, preferably before the Minister's briefing so that Roger is sighted in an informed way.

End of meeting 11.54