

MINUTES
POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR ESSEX AND
ESSEX COUNTY FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE
STRATEGIC BOARD

9 March 2022 10:00 – 12.56

Via Microsoft Teams

Present:

Roger Hirst (RH)	Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (Chair)
Darren Horsman	PFCC Monitoring Officer
Rick Hylton	Chief Fire Officer
Moira Bruin (MB)	Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Karl Edwards (KE)	Director of Corporate Services, ECFRS
Colette Black (CB)	Director of People Services, ECFRS
Chris Parker	Assistant Chief Fire Officer and Director of Operations
Neil Cross (NC)	Chief Finance Officer, ECFRS
Janet Perry (JP)	Strategic Head of Performance and Resources, PFCC's office
Jo Thornicroft (JT)	Head of Performance and Scrutiny (Fire), PFCC's office
Lucy Clayton	Data Analyst, ECFRS
Christine Butler	Minutes, PFCC's office

Apologies:

Pippa Brent-Isherwood (PBI) and Jane Gardner (JG) Deputy Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

1 Welcome and apologies

RH welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted apologies from Pippa Brent-Isherwood and Jane Gardner. Darren Horsman attended the meeting in his capacity as Monitoring Officer in the absence of Pippa Brent-Isherwood.

2 Minutes of the previous meeting and any matters arising

RH asked if there were any issues of accuracy on Part A Minutes.

- 2.1. RHy has been missed off the list of attendees.
- 2.2 RHy asked that Chris Parker be added to the attendees list, the distribution list and the agenda as Director of Operations and will be attending this Board.

RH asked if there were any issues of accuracy on the Part B Minutes.

- 2.3 RHy has been missed of the list of attendees.
- 2.4 13.9 Regarding ongoing issues with Remsdaq "we do not find ourselves content with the position we find ourselves in" to replace "we do not find the system fit for purpose".
- 2..5 3.12 "The Relationship is very fragile at this time" to be deleted.

RH asked if there were any matters arising from either set of minutes that have not been captured either in this Agenda on the Action Log or the Forward Plan.

The minutes were agreed subject to the above amendments

3 Action Log

- 1/22 The Decision Sheet regarding the Disciplinary Policy was received 18.01.22. Close.
- 2/22 CB to send some Strategic risk information to JP re Weathersfield. This was sent on 13.12.21. Close.
- 3/22 NC to provide copy of the reworked MTFs before the next panel meeting. This was submitted to the Panel on 03.02.22. Close.
- 4/22 JT to place on the Forward Plan provision for an Update to the Safety Bill which is on the Forward Plan for September. Close.
- 5/22 The Estates Decision sheet was signed on 25.02.22. Close.
- 6/22 Karl to highlight the costs of the different options on the Fleet Workshops Paper. This paper has been updated and circulated. Close.
- 7/22 The Decision Sheet for Fleet Workshops. KE said that the decision sheet was signed off but the action states to check alignment with EP. KE has not had sight of the EP equivalent of their Strategic Board Decision Sheet on Fleet Workshops. RH added that this should be forwarded to KE. Open.

Action 14/22

JT to forward to KE a copy of the EP equivalent of their Strategic Board Decision Sheet for Fleet Workshops to enable KE to align

- 8/22 The Fleet Workshop Decision Sheet to be presented at the Strategic Collaboration Board. This was presented by Jon Wilson. RHy said for clarity, that might have been the intention but that is not what was presented to the Strategic Collaboration Board. Jon Wilson presented an update paper in terms of timelines; it introduced the issue of the Section 22 Agreement that EP have with Kent. Regarding the Section 22 Agreement it is agreed with RH & RHy that a fully transparent and fair process is put in place to arrive at that operating model. RH has spoken regarding this to the Kent PCC too and he sees the point. RH asked for this to be left open as the action still needs to be resolved. Open.
- 9/22 NC to amend the Immediate Detriment narrative to reflect that the decision will not be made until the payments could be made in good faith. The paper was amended and circulated. NC said that the letters have been sent out but there has not been any formal feedback at this moment in time and they await further costs on the category 2 individuals which will be shared outside of this forum. RH feels that this cannot be resolved until the information is available next month. Close

Action 15/22

NC to share with RH further information on category 2 once received.

- 10/22 For CB to amend the wording of recommendation 1 in the Code of Ethics. This was amended in the Code of Ethics Decision Sheet on the 25.01.22. Close.
- 11/22 JT to add a P&R update to the Forward Plan for June and this has been done. Close
- 12/22 An amendment to the BA Chambers Decision Sheet. The amended document was signed on 23.02.22. Close.
- 13/22 A redacted version of the BA Chambers Decision Sheet to be submitted and PBI has confirmed that this has been received. Close

4 Forward Plan

JT has some requested additions for the Forward Plan.

- 4.1 The PFCC office has requested the PFCCFRA Constitution and the ECFRS Communication Strategy, which is still undergoing some work with the Service. JT asked when a good time would be to bring to the Board and the Forward Plan can then

be updated. RHy will speak to Emily Cheyne to find the right timing for this to be added to the Forward Plan and come back to JT.

- 4.2 RHy & KE said that there were additional items to go onto the Forward Plan for the coming year. JT will liaise with the Service to add to the Forward Plan

Action 16/22

JT to liaise with the Service to go through the new items to fix dates for the Forward Plan for 2022.

Action 17/22

RHy to liaise with Emily Cheyne re when to find the right timing for the Communication Strategy to be added to the Forward Plan

- 4.3 JP said that the accounts are missing from the Forward Plan and was something different done last year as they were also missing from EP Forward Plan. NC said that the Annual Accounts have not gone through Strategic Board as they have gone through Audit Committee forums and it was only the budget that went through the Strategic Board. JP said that the Governance should be the same for Fire and Police. RH said that once it has finished at the Audit Committee then it should come back. NC suggested that there be an Extraordinary Strategic Board meeting for final sign off the accounts. RH agreed and the draft accounts can go to the Audit Committee.

Action 18/22

JT to note that there be an Extraordinary Strategic Board added to the Forward Plan in September to give a final sign off the Annual Accounts. NC to confirm the date.

- 4.4 RH noted that there was the Outline Case for Training Facilities and a Full Business Case for Fleet Workshop both coming in September. KE Agreed.
- 4.5 JT said that the length of time for future Strategic Board Meetings had been shortened to two hours and she is conscious that the Agendas are becoming fuller. JT asked that Strategic Board is used where a decision is required and not for updates. Updates are for the P&R Board.
- 4.6 JT reminded the Board that papers are due 14 days before the meeting and to ensure that they are complete and have been quality controlled. The rep bodies should also have sight of the papers in good time.

5. Governance, Annual Plan and Portfolio of Change

- 5.1 The paper is looking for approval from the Board for the draft Annual Plan, to note the proposed Portfolio of Change and to approve the improved governance that has been developed in the Service to cover both change and business as usual.
- 5.2 The internal governance has been improved in the Service and the paper has been sent to two new boards, one of which being the Continual Improvement Board which is chaired by MB. This board is mainly concerned with performance assurance and audit, and the running part of the business which is outlined in Appendix 2.
- 5.3 The paper is also sent to the Portfolio Management Board which is concerned with change activity and change to the business and is chaired by RHy. There is a paper outlining that Board in Appendix 1.
- 5.4 Through the Continual Improvement Board the Service have brought the proposed Draft Annual Plan and are looking for sign off. The plan is designed to show the resources required and the finances that will be identified and monitored.
- 5.5 The Plan supports the Fire & Rescue Plan and covers 25 activities, 6 of which have been rolled over from 2021/22. They have narrative on why they were rolled over and an estimate of completion. Each activity also has a definition of what "done" means, which was not included before.

- 5.6 The draft Annual Plan does not include any rollover activities which will fit into the governance of the Programme Management Board which is considered to be a change.
- 5.6 MB asked if it would be useful to have a list of roles in the Annual Plan as this is currently missing. RH agreed.

Action 19/22

MB to add a list of roles to the Draft Annual Plan

- 5.7 RH noted that the two new boards do not have members of the PFCC on them in an information and discussion capacity. MB said that JT is invited to the Continual Improvement Board and MB will include JT on both Boards.

Action 20/22

MB to include JT on the attendee list for the Continual Improvement Board and RHy agreed that JT should attend the Programme Management Board. Greg Myddleton from the PFCC office already attends this Board and this will be reflected in the Tor's for both Boards.

- 5.8 RH highlighted productivity increase and the fact that the Service needs to be looking at ways to improve the productivity of the organisation and asked MB which one of the actions in the plan were about improving the productivity of ECFRS. MB said that all the activities will be looked at and that a Board will be set up to examine this item to incorporate into business as usual.
- 5.9 NC has agreed to sit on the NFCC Productivity and Efficiency Group with an initial kick off with Tracy King to set up a forum and to discuss what will be tracked and how we baseline some of the productivity. Some of the tasks in the Annual Plan need a baseline before some of the true productivity gains can be understood. RH is on the Efficiency and Productivity Forum which is the governance body for the one that NC is on and can work together on aims.
- 5.10 KE said that there is a workshop proposed regarding Broadening of the Role, which is linked to productivity and was raised at the Audit committee. Once the workshop has taken place it will be brought back to the Audit Committee. JTh said that Broadening the role was an item on the June Strategic Board and asked if the intention was to workshop it at the Strategic Board meeting or to bring it back. KE confirmed that there would be a separate workshop. RH asked MB if the annual plan could be tweaked in this regard as this is a golden thread that runs through all activities. MB asked for clarification the Board wanted to see this again or it could be signed off with those amendments. RH delegated authority for MB to make the amendment and bring forward the decision sheet. MB confirmed that the Decision sheet was already in the pack, but she would make the necessary amendment.

Action 21/22

MB to amend the Annual Plan with regard to Broadening of the Role, and productivity as this runs through all activities.

- 5.11 DH asked that MB amend the "Alternative Options" section so that there is an alternative even if that is not to accept it, as it needs to be demonstrated that more than one option has been considered.

Action 22/22

MB to amend the decision sheet in the "Alternative Options" even if it is not to accept it, as this needs to be demonstrated that more than option has been considered.

- 5.12 RHy would like the Board to note the hard work undertaken by Tracy King and the restructure in the Change Innovation Team. This has streamlined the team to become more focused, which has driven out more than £400,000 of savings and contributed towards the budget gap in the last financial year. RH asked RHy to pass on gratitude and appreciation to Tracy.

- 5.13 JP on the EDI section it does state that there is an impact on all of the following protected groups. What this should say is that “on each of the following individuals there are protected characteristics” as they are not groups of people but characteristics that anyone can have in a different way and should not be protected groups.

Action 23/22

JP to liaise with MB offline re the EDI section of the Annual plan and the wording of the Protected Characteristics.

6. Finance MTFS Report

MTFS

- 6.1 NC said that the documents being discussed today are connected and went through each document and paused for questions in between.
- 6.2 NC said that ECFRS have worked hard in the recent year to ensure that it has key financial strategies prepared and in place, and furthermore that these are all synced to the timing of this meeting and the budget process. These include the MTFS, the Reserve Strategy, the new Capital Strategy, and the Treasury Management Strategy.
- 6.3 The MTFS covers the period to 24/25 and is the same as the strategy that was presented and approved by the PFCP on 3rd February 2022.
- 6.4 The timing of the December 2021 meeting was just before the draft Local Government Finance Settlement on 16th December. The key items from that were the creation of a £1.1m Services Grant of which £500k was already included in our Budget. This related to the funding of the Employers National Insurance effective from April 2022.
- 6.5 There was £300k additional income from an inflation increase in the Revenue Support Grant. This additional income is reflected in the year 22/23 and it has been used in the investment of four fire protection posts, the OCLOS for the year for which a business case will be produced later in the financial year, and some consultancy work for the fleet business case and the fire training facilities.
- 6.5 On 7th February the final government settlement was confirmed and there were no changes to that draft settlement which is in alignment.
- 6.6 In the MTFS in years 23/24 and 24/25 there are unidentified savings and those relate to some additional investments that have been included in the MTFS in Fire Protection and O/C training. Those pieces of work will look to be progressed in the new financial year.
- 6.7 RH clarified that the Panel does not approve the MTFS. The Panel approves the Council Tax increase. This is why it comes to the Strategic Board so that there is a formal process as to what is being recommended by the Service and approved by the Authority. Although it has been noted by the Panel the Strategic Board is where it is signed off. The sign off requires a Decision Sheet.
- 6.8 RH thanked NC for his work on providing what is seen at the meeting. Great piece of work. It was well set up for the Panel, and that items can be signed off immediately at the following Strategic Board. RH confirmed approval of the MTFS and for it to be signed off.

7. Reserves Strategy

- 7.1 The first published Reserves Strategy was in June 2021. This was the first time the Service had published a Reserves Strategy, and this year we have aligned the Strategy to the budget process.
- 7.2 The format of the Reserves Strategy is kept consistent with the prior year. In October 2021 the Service were advised that the Home Office had reviewed all the Reserve Strategies for different FRAs. Essex received low feedback as they were only able to review the very brief summary of reserve movements that was included in the Medium-Term Financial Plan published in January 2020. The Home Office had not reviewed

the Reserve Strategy that was published in June 2021. This has been forwarded onto the Home Office Review Team and the feedback was excellent with a recommendation of improved signposting on the website to it which will be addressed as part of the new website project.

- 7.3 The General Reserves are based upon the modelling in the MTFS. A 4% general reserve is aimed for and is within CIPFA Guidelines. The Service are recommending a transfer of £800k to earmarked reserves this financial year, a Decision sheet will be forthcoming. £300k goes into O/C support for the next phase of the program and £500k into the Information and Transformation program.
- 7.4 There has been improvement in the General Reserves when compared to the previous Strategy and this is due to the outturn being improved since last year regarding fire appliance rephasing and also the deficit budget position last year which has improved this year.
- 7.5 The Capital Receipts Reserve is where assets are sold and reinvested in capital programs. This has been increasing due to the sale of Day Crewed Housing. The reserve is expected to be utilised by 5 projects, Shoeburyness, Fleet Workshops, Control Systems, ICT Network and Training Centre Relocation.
- 7.6 These all form part of the Capital Strategy that will be discussed shortly.
- 7.7 There have not been any estimated funds of the sale of Lexden included.
- 7.8 RH said that compared with previous Reserve Strategies there is a substantial increase in the total earmarked reserves. As of 31 March 2021, it rose up to £3.7m, did this arise in YE Adjustments at the end of June? NC confirmed that this was a last minute adjustment that related to the business rate grant that has to be included in the year end accounts. The grant has to be recognised, earmarked from Reserves, and fund the business rate deficit in the new financial year. The money has now been received and NC is working through those adjustments.
- 7.9 RH cannot locate the corresponding breakdown of funds in the table and asked NC if less is being utilised. NC needs to go back and provide more narrative, so the table is more easily understood. £3m increase is mainly attributed to the businesses rates. There was a transformation reserve of £4m in March 2021 but during the year 21/22 under the prior strategy, there showed a drawdown on the reserve of £1.2m relating to productivity improvement which has not come to fruition. There has been an unbudgeted pay award, and this has been absorbed in the year and offset by various savings and underspends. No Earmarked Reserves have been utilised as a result of the pay award.
- 7.10 RH acknowledged that the Transformation Reserve has not been drawn down as a result of the Pay Award. NC agreed that this is correct and will add a few comments to the narrative in the strategy for clarity.

Action 24/22

NC to add additional comments to confirm that the reserve has not been drawn down as it did not need to be transferred from Innovation and Transformation into Productivity

- 7.11 RH noted that there was a large amount of Earmarked Reserves as of 31st March of £9.4m, £8.7m higher than it was before. NC added that initially reserves were going to be used for the budget process, however the one-off nature of the Services Grant has enabled funding of some of the consultancy work, with the Reserves available for other investment if needed.
- 7.12 RH added that the Contingent Reserves are where they need to be and is content that they are a buffer and £1.28m is correct. The Earmarked Reserves specific purpose will not be spent in the timeframe of this MTFS and how much further would the projections need to be rolled to spend the additional £2m. NC feels that the COVID money will probably be spent by next year and is not in the Strategy at the moment. RH said it

shows that there is a piece of work that SLT needs to do about how to obtain traction with these specific Reserves. RHy said that everything ends in 2024 but there is a role for SLT to project beyond 2024. There are a lot of activities that are wanting to be done but the funds are in the wrong pot. The Service needs to project forward some of the funds to Wethersfield new training site and fleet workshops. There is a task for the Service to extend this out and understand the ambition over a longer period time.

- 7.13 RH said there is not a table in this that pulls all the information together to say what the level of reserves is. RH would like to see both Usable and Unusable Reserves to give a good overview of the position.

Action 25/22

NC to update the Useable Reserves Section to summarise both the Usable and Unusable Reserves.

- 7.14 RHY suggested doing some scenario planning on the pressures over the next 2-3 years together with SLT, as the next CSR settlement is unknown and are balanced on a 2% pay award which could see a pressure on the budget and NI costs. Some of these Reserves would be needed to provide the headroom to enable fundamental changes to the Service. RH agreed

Action 26/22

NC to carry out scenario planning on the pressures on the Reserves over the next 2-3 years.

- 7.15 RH as this is a Reserve Strategy that needs to be published a Decision Sheet is needed. This Strategy is approved subject to the Actions 23/22 and 24/22 being incorporated.

8. Capital Strategy

- 8.1 NC said that this is the first time that a Capital and MRP Strategy have been put together. This gives an overview of the Capital Plans and how they are to be financed and is prepared in accordance with the CIPFA Prudential Code. The asset base of property held by ECFRS is around £123m with the net book value of other assets approximately £11m. This Strategy will be renewed on an annual basis.
- 8.2 The Capital program is in line with that in the budget and is underpinned by Data and Digital, Fleet and Property Strategies that have previously been approved by this board. These are outlined on Page 5-7 to give the context to the reader.
- 8.3 There is a table in the pack that shows the projects that the Services are looking to spend the Capital Receipts on. A proportion will be spent on workshops and Wethersfield from 2023/24 onwards.
- 8.4 The Minimum Revenue Provision which is the charge to the Revenue account for financing the assets is laid out in the Policy.
- 8.5 The Capital Finance Requirement shows the Capital Expenditure has not been financed by the Capital Receipt Reserve or contribution to Revenue i.e., the amount of capital the Service has purchased and what the taxpayer still needs to fund which is approx. £32m at present and will stay consistent until 2022/23 when there will be an increase in 2023/24 to £35m due to the function of the Capital Program.
- 8.6 There is a Projection for the Minimum Revenue Provision. This was reduced to £4.5m in the budget and there is not an expected increase in the MRP until 2024/25.
- 8.7 RH said that although the Service have some external borrowing, it cannot be seen on the table where it talks about total level of funding for the projects. What is internal borrowing and what is debt? NC replied that the shorter term view is shown in the Capital Program on what is expected to be funded by Capital Receipts and internal borrowing. The Capital Financing Requirement shows what is left to finance which is £35m. The Treasury Strategy (physical loans not debt) is covered in the next document. RH suggested that the Capital Strategy needs to say where the funding

for the Capital Financing Requirement comes from in total. As of today's date, of £32m there is £24.5m of external debt and the remainder is funded from internal resources. RH has suggested a table to demonstrate this and link the two documents in both Strategies and to see how the projected debt figure moves which is the part that is relevant for the taxpayer.

Action 27/22

NC to provide a link in both the Capital Strategy and the Treasury Strategy to a table which demonstrates where the funding for the Capital Financing Requirement comes from

- 8.8 KE said regarding Fleet workshops and facilities, that will give a better projection of what the total costs look like and therefore we would know more about if we could fund from internal funding or the Service would need to look at an increase of external basis. These papers will inform the decision making process.
- 8.9 DH asked for confirmation that with the alterations requested that this paper was to be approved and needed a Decision Sheet.
- 8.10 JP noted there was confusion over Wethersfield replacement and why it was called an improvement work rather than a new premise. NC remarked that it has been left under asset improvement works as it is in the initial intention to look at relocating this to Kelvedon. This is still at the very early stage and more work needs to be done to see if this is viable.

9. Treasury Management Strategy

- 9.1 NC said that this document looks at the funding aspects of all the different documents that have been put together. This document is largely consistent with last year. There has been engagement with both Essex Police and the PFCC as well as Arling Close, to ensure that there is consistency which the Service did not have last year.
- 9.2 This shows that within 2024/25, there is potentially the need for additional borrowing as existing investments would have run down. Ultimately the Reserves are not necessarily cash backed and therefore the cash is being used for the delivery of the Capital Program for the spending profile on the Reserves and the £25m debt needs to be repaid which is shown in this document. These items will deplete the cash balances. The Service should not react to this yet. In addition, historically there is underspend in the capital program and there is a lot more certainty on the timing of future key capital items.
- 9.3 On the Counter Party Limits, these have been reviewed and are aligned with Essex Police for consistency.
- 9.4 There was an average rating of A on the Minimum Credit Rating. Additional wording has been in line with Essex Police to state that "it will be minimum credit rating of A"
- 9.5 RH said that consideration should be given to future borrowing requirements, £1.6m potential need for borrowing but £4m rollover as well. There is a need to think about where inflation is and what it might mean for interest rates.
- 9.6 RH agrees that borrowing in 2022 for a potential £1.6m exposure in 2024 is precipitate as the deficit may not arise depending on what we do with our capital spending and incurring debt where the Service do not need to, there would be a large interest rate exposure. RH suggested that it may be worth incurring new debt early so that the Service are locked into low rates. If interest rates this summer are correct of 8% then the Service will not be able to borrow 1.8% by then. NC feels this may be a good option, but it is whether we have confidence to do this.
- 9.7 JP asked that any reference in the Strategy documents to internal borrowing is changed to internally financed. This aligns with Essex Police.

Action 28/22

NC to go through the Strategy documents and ensure that any reference to internal borrowing is changed to internally financed.

- 9.8 RH confirmed that this Strategy has been approved, with consideration to the question of early borrowing.
- 9.9 JP thanked NC for the engagement with Essex Police and Arling Close. RH thanked NC for a good suite of documents. All the Strategies can be approved and published over the next week.

10. Pay Policy Statement

- 10.1 CB asked the Board to approve the Pay Policy Statement for 2021/22 which fulfils the Service's obligations with the Localism Act 2011. It sets out the utilising £62m of annual costs.
- 10.2 There has been one changed since the paper was written which is the approval of the Green Book pay award. This has now been approved nationally at 1.75%.
- 10.3 RH said that the document was self-explanatory, reads well and makes sense.
- 10.4 The lowest paid employee is paid at £10.21 per hour which is for direct employees. Is the cost for the supply chain known. CB replied that in the Procurement Regulations, the Service asked for assurance from the supply chain that their employees are paid in line with the National Minimum wage but would need to do more exploration to find out more detail if required.
- 10.5 CB advised that as a next step if the Pay Policy Statement was approved that the Service add the structure chart, which is currently being finalised this week, and publish by 31st March as per the requirement.
- 10.6 DH commented on the Decision Report in the alternative options section, recognising that it may not be viable for RH to not approve i.e., not having a Pay Policy Statement, to phrase this in a way that alternatives have been investigated.

Action 29/22

CB to amend the decision sheet in the alternative options section to include "alternatively whilst this is a Statutory Requirement one could make a choice not to publish but this would not be recommended".

- 10.7 RH asked regarding the Living Wage Foundation. Citizens UK are writing to all public sector employees demanding that we sign up to their pledge. CB said that this was something that was done some 5 years ago.
- 10.8 RH said that when the Government increased its National Living Wage to Essex Citizens recommendation last year of £9.50, they immediately increased their real Living Wage to £9.90. The National items will of course be adhered to but there is a difference between the Real Living Wage from the Living Wage Foundation and the Government's Living Wage. The Service should take the LWF wage into account particularly with inflation rising, but the Service should have its own discretion to make its own decisions rather than have signed that power away. CB will take no further action on this other than to say that we are not committed to anything in that sense. RH agreed.
- 10.9 CB to take the document forward and ensure it is published in line with the requirement and the Decision Sheet is attached for this to be enabled.

11. Equality Report

- 11.1 This is the first time that all the Equality Compliance Reporting comes into one space for cogence purposes. This covers three requirements; the Public Sector Equality Duty Objectives update, the Gender Pay Gap Report, and the Fire Service Equality Framework.

11a Public Sector Equality Duty Objectives Update

- 11.2 The format has changed slightly in that that it is reported once and then used multiple times and the report has been written in a narrative style. Once agreed by this Board it can be used on the internet and as part of the Join Essex Fire traction work and ongoing narrative regarding how the Service works well with its partners.
- 11.3 Going through the document, each of the six current Public Sector Equality Duty Objectives has an update and case studies and information working with partners i.e Dementia Friends Partners.
- 11.4 Updates are given regularly at P&R and this narrative report reflects 2021, and if the Board are comfortable with this approach the same format will be used to reflect 2022 next year.
- 11.5 Looking forward, the Public Sector Equality Duty Objectives are to be refreshed this year and the intention is in the short term to add one objective around refreshing the internet form to ensure that it is inclusive with a view to coming back in September with a full review of all of the objectives and that review will reflect HMI Feedback and the Inclusive Employers feedback from the awaited accreditation. There are some fresh objectives pending extensive engagement with Stakeholders which are more community focused to reflect the journey the Service are in the midst of.
- 11.6 RH asked if the Service are evidencing how much difference is being made in the report. CB replied that some statistics were included, some more of the outcomes could be included. There is an issue in the short-term showing the difference in demographic data as movements are relatively small when you look at the overall number i.e., the new intake cohorts which have greater diversity but when looked at as a percentage of 1400 it is a small percentage point. CB can look at adding some more proof points if the outcomes are not clear.

Action 30/22

CB to add more data points to expand the outcomes.

- 11.7 DH said that the overall impact when you are recruiting a small number of people, it can be difficult to demonstrate. It would be helpful to see some year-on-year comparisons and to see what the last years declaration was built from.
- 11.8 DH is very keen to hear that the objectives are being refreshed and making those more outward looking. It would be great if the PFCC could be involved in that development process.

Action 31/22

When the PSD engagement work is undertaken in early June, CB to invite DH to be part of the stakeholder group.

11b Gender Pay Gap Reporting

- 11.9 The report is a Statutory obligation. The Gender Pay Gap has increased slightly between 2020 and 2021 from 2.4% to 3.1%. It is still very low compared to the public sector average and other FRS.

- 11.10 The reason for the slight increase is that it is occupational segregation, which describes the distribution of workers across occupation and pay quartiles. The majority of employees are male at 83.5% against 16.5% for women. The majority of women are in the lower quartile.
- 11.11 There is an acknowledgement in the report that the gender pay gap continues to be a challenge nationally and we are renewing commitment to carry on the positive action already being undertaken.
- 11.12 RH asked for clarification regarding the slight increase. CB said that looking at the number of women in lower quartile against those in the upper quartiles, there have been some women joining the lower quartile gap which are likely to be new joiners which has shifted the percentage point up. Promotion of colleagues would reflect in the figures and the LRS process encourages all employees to progress and to take some positive action.
- 11.13 RH confirmed that we have had success at recruiting more women and they are at the lowest pay level because they are new recruits and the way out is to promote them. CB agreed. CB said that women are under-represented in the LRS program and there is plenty more positive action to undertake in this space.
- 11.14 CB said that if there was nothing further, the Gender Pay Gap would be submitted as required before the 31 March.

11c Fire Rescue Equality Framework

- 11.15 There have been some positive changes with 21 elements that moved from “Amber” to “Green”. This framework has been used for a couple of years and the Service have applied for an Inclusive Employees Accreditation as it would be positive to have the external benchmarking. The application was submitted before Christmas 2021 and we are still awaiting the outcome.
- 11.16 JT asked if the intention would be to continue with the Equality Framework as well as the Employers Status? CB’s preference would be to do a handover between the two frameworks within 6 months and CB would provide to the Board the closure of the Fire Service Equality Framework with a statement of where the Service are at that time and bring in the Inclusive Employees Accreditation because one of the Public Sector Equality Duty Objectives is about external benchmarking and verification and there is a greater breadth of inclusion in the accreditation.
- 11.17 JT asked if there was benchmarking available with the Equality Framework against other FRS or is that not something that is available. CB replied that this is not available, although the Service could ask for a Peer Review, but we would not lose any benchmarking information as nothing is currently published. CB is hoping that the Service will be awarded the bronze level accreditation.
- 11.18 RH asked how the switch would go down with the rep bodies? CB would anticipate, following earlier discussions, that they would welcome the external assessment as it triangulates the Services internal view but will pick up the point with Rep Bodies once the accreditation has been received. September would be a good time to bring this together and to close one off and progress with the other.
- 11.19 CB said that this paper was for information and noting and will form part of the new CIB as it develops in terms of continuing the watching brief that is being progressed against the framework.

- 11.20 RH confirmed this paper was for information only and the first two papers were to be approved for publication. CB agreed.
- 11.21 DH asked if the Equality Report would become the Public Section Equality Duty Annual Report? CB agreed. The Board agreed that CB and will make those changes and recirculate to the Board for information and the Decision Report to be attached as an Appendix.

Action 32/22

CB to make the necessary amendments to the Fire Rescue Equality Framework and recirculate to the board with the Decision Sheet as an Appendix.

12. Operational Training Strategy

- 12.1 This is the next version of the Strategy and intended to take the Service from 2022 to 2025. Attached to the Strategy is the Appendix which will guide the action which enables the Strategy. The Board are being asked to approve the Strategy.
- 12.2 The key changes in the Strategy itself has changed very little despite extensive consultation with internal groups. The action plan has significant change.
- 12.3 Within the Strategy the principles and the aim remain the same and are continuing with the training assessment and verification as the three pillars provide the assurance function. The key change in the Strategy is the reference to assuring that we have the same level of quality assurance in the Control and Prevention training and the changes are in the action plan.
- 12.4 There are five workstreams. The Assurance and Competence workstream delivers the core skills in the Assurance Program. This replaces the P2-P3 assessment with an end point assessment style. PDRPro continues to be the recording mechanism which ensures competence at all levels in the organisation. LearnPro gives the electronic learning packages.
- 12.5 Delivery of Operational Training Plan for 2022 – 2025 reflects the priorities around Control, casualty care and training related to the National Operational Guidance procedural changes. More needs to be done in the Firefighter space to gain feedback in a timely fashion.
- 12.6 The third workstream is the review and upgrade of training facilities to include safe working at height rigs and the refurbishment of the BA training facilities.
- 12.7 The Governance workstream involves the embedding of the Quality Assurance Framework across Prevention, Protection and Control and the continuation of the governance mechanisms that have been in place over a number of years, including the Steering Group with an independent member and a member of the PFCC. Some further governance has been put in place regarding casualty care training which needs to be embedded over the next 24 months.
- 12.8 the final workstream is regarding resources and investing in effective command software and the upgrade of the technology in the OCAT suite.
- 12.9 RH confirmed that CB is asking for an additional £0.75m in total. CB agreed. NC said that not all the items are in the strategies, however, he is comfortable that these items can be funded bearing in mind what has been seen today in the Strategy reviews.
- 12.10 RH asked if it was ambitious enough. Development work began last August and taking into consideration all that is coming down the line re Fire Standards and recommendations, recruitment, and succession planning. The ambition is around ensuring that we have the facilities to be able to continue to deliver to the standard.

- 12.11 RH wanted assurance that there will be Firefighters on Stations that feel trained, competent, and empowered to do essential work in their communities as he has not picked that up from the Stations that he has visited. CB will investigate this area for the next phase of what is needed.

Action 33/22

CB to look at the next phase of the Operational Training Strategy in regard to the assurance that Firefighters will feel trained, competent, and empowered to do essential work in their communities.

- 12.13 CP said that what is encouraging is the Prevention and Protection training as there will be a £250,000 investment in upskilling operational Crew and Watch Managers in Fire Protection to give them formal Fire Protection qualifications and also building in more regular training for Prevention, from new recruits through to continuation training and safeguarding and also Prevention. The operational piece for Essex is strong and the Service wants to strengthen Prevention and Protection.
- 12.14 DH said that the Fire and Rescue Plan has two years left to run and this is an opportune time to reflect if everything is being covered that we want to and what is the ability to move faster. RH added that the current plan expires in 2024, he has two more years in office as PFCC. There is a long run-in time to a new Fire & Rescue Plan, and we will think about this early next year.
- 12.15 RH noted that there were a few circular strategies, and circular strategies lead to circular behaviours and a strategy with objectives and goals that align seem to deliver better. RH suggested that direction and objective be a consideration in the next phase.
- 12.16 RH agreed that the Operational Training Strategy could be taken forward with no amendment.

13. Property Update

- 13.1 KE went through a presentation which has been inserted into the Decision Sheet and went through the key highlights.
- 13.2 KE went through the current status with the Training Facility. A Property Training Consultant is now on board and he will lead development and design such as the business case. He is experienced in delivering very similar training across the Country with other Emergency Services.
- 13.3 KE said that the focus is on the current direction of travel that centralised training facilities will be at Kelvedon Park. There are several considerations with this project will are being looked into.
- 13.4 There will be continued discussions with EP around opportunities for shared used.
- 13.5 A new classroom was procured 18 months ago which has been delivered to Wethersfield which will give the ability to have extended training and more space for more students. This is a mobile unit which can be moved when ECFRS have to leave Wethersfield. Talks are still being held with the MOD as to exit plans at the end of 2023 with a possible extension to 2025 depending on the sale of the land.
- 13.6 A lot of work has taken place regarding the Old Harlow relocation. The options are limited due to the amount of land needed. One of the options is the TA Centre which is two minutes away from the current site which will not affect fire response times. Some capital investment will be needed for the relocation to the TA Centre. Discussions are underway and a business case and public communication will follow in due course.

- 13.7 The Environment Strategy has got a piece of ongoing work regarding the Vehicle Replacement Schedule and Programme over the next 10 years to encompass the move away from diesel vehicles to petrol, hybrid and finally electric in a planned way. There is work also being undertaken with EP re the siting of Electric Vehicle Charging Points which will commence at the end of this month. This will lead into the Sustainability Programme to identify how ECFRS will move into decarbonisation by 2015.
- 13.8 Frinton Station site is now being shared with the Ambulance Service and the East of England have said they would like to move forward in 2022 to include a further six Fire Stations to create Response Posts.
- 13.9 Regarding Fleet Workshops the presentation includes a proposed timeline. There are two phases; the people phase and the design and build phase. KE is working with Mark Gilmartin around the S22 Agreement to see how this impacts on the Service. The tender for this should be released in the next 3-4 weeks.
- 13.10 The modernisation of W/T stations is moving forward with the transformation of Chelmsford which will be a blueprint for other stations with better facilities.
- 13.11 Workspaces are being redesigned in line in line with new ways of working. There are working groups set up across the organisation from all different departments over the next four to five weeks. A proposal regarding redesign of the workspaces will be brought back to support agile working.
- 13.12 Work is currently being done on all the business cases for each of the streams of work regarding where they are to land and will be brought to the Strategic Boards during the course of 2022/23.
- 13.13 JT said that some of the items looked like updates. Can there be a discussion as to whether this is the right place for them to come to ensure that the right items are given the right amount of time at the right meeting. KE wanted to ensure that the aspects were noted but happy to be guided. RH happy for important issues to be brought to the Board.
- 13.14 RH asked that regarding the training centre at KP, is there good dialogue with EP regarding joining ECFRS. EP are also looking at their training facilities as they need to be upgraded in Chelmsford. KE confirmed that discussion was ongoing and would not want these discussions to lose traction. EP would want to use mainly classroom-based training space. Some of EP's more specific training needs are being dealt with elsewhere i.e., shooting ranges. JP can pick up with ACC Prophet, and also reopen the action and collaboration in this area. RH agreed.

Action 34/22

JP to liaise with ACC Prophet regarding reopening the action and the collaboration between ECFRS and EP concerning the use of joint training facilities at KP.

- 13.15 RH asked KE how the charging of electronic vehicles would work at KP for personnel during the day. KE said that currently there is the facility to use the debit card to pay for the charge and the information is fed back into a system which would store the information. This will be looked at further as to whether this is a benefit in kind. RH added that this is decision that would require a lot of consideration. At the moment it is perhaps only six vehicles which is negligible but in five years' time there will be a lot of vehicles that would need charging. KE said that the Service are liaising with EP as to

mapping out where the charging points are across the estates that are being internally used.

- 13.16 RH noted that looking at the refurbishment plan there is still a TV room. KE confirmed that this was a rest room, and it would not be expected that Firefighters would be there for their entire shift as they will be involved in other activities.
- 13.17 DH said that it would be a good idea for RH to bring up with MP and Council regarding the move as well as the public to ensure that it is seen as positive.
- 13.18 DH was interested to see the training facilities included in the station refurbishments and asked if these facilities would be available to others or just for that station and will this have any implication for the drop in centres that have been opened up for police. KE said that the Service are looking at the central training facility being a high level state of the art facility which other FRAs can utilise. Especially regional services. All services/partners will be able to utilise the drop in centres at the stations. CB added that there has been training at Kelvedon this week for Suffolk FRA sharing classrooms with police etc.

14. PFCC FRA Decision Sheet Shoeburyness

- 14.1 KE has listed some items out of the Decision Sheet to talk through where the Service would like to get to. In 2019 the decision was made to purchase the existing police station site; however, it is currently not fit for purpose.
- 14.2 The request today is for temporary approval for relocation to a nearby site until Shoebury Station is refurbished. An application was made for change of use which was approved on 23rd February through Rochford District Council as it was essential that we use the building. Both appliances would be housed here, and crews would respond 24/7 but there are out of hours gates to be opened/closed when leaving. This should not affect response times.
- 14.3 Potter Raper have been consulted and they have led the procurement in terms of going out to tender using a ECC framework using a standard construction contract. If approved today the Service would like to award the contract to BORAS construction Company.
- 14.5. Response times will not be affected, and the Service are satisfied that there is no risk to the public or the community by moving to a separate facility. The fire crews are also confident re response time.
- 14.6 The budget costs are £1.22m for the full-scale delivery. There are capital costs of £1.32m which is an increase compared to the 22/23 budget. There are some lease costs and a lease agreement of £26k per annum or £39k should we extend into the full 18-month contingency period.
- 14.7 All the legal implications have gone through Capsticks re the contract and the re-tender, and they have provided legal verification which is supported by them at minimal risk.
- 14.8 If approved this would need a comms plan on how this is communicated in terms of engagement with the public.
- 14.9 KE has run through the Decision sheet with Pippa who raised a number of points which have now been closed off.
- 14.10 KE is asking for approval of the JTC Construction Contract to allow the Service to appoint BORAS as the appointed bidder to begin work at the station. The costs are to

agree the additional £1m in the capital budget. The project has been funded from Capital Reserves and the awarding of the lease agreement and the associated costs.

- 14.11 RH asked that the Lease Agreement for the temporary bids that the name and entity are correct. KE said that this has already been done.
- 14.12 RH said that in terms of construction of the new bid, BORAS have excluded some points on page 9 and are we content with those. KE confirmed that the Service and Capsticks are content with the bid as they were not essential points to the build.
- 14.16 JP asked NC if there were any revenue consequences around the capital. NC confirmed that this would be capital funded from the reserves and there would not be any further anticipated revenue costs.
- 14.17 RH agreed the paper. KE said that the crew would be delighted.
- 14.18 DH noted that there were some good processes learnt through this in how to process efficiently in an effective way and to include the PFCC. KE agreed.
- 14.19 NC would like to have a conversation outside of this forum regarding legal aspects and what can be done in a more cost effective way. DH agreed and said that this would be a conversation to have including PBI. RH would like to be sighted on direction taken as previously there were a lot of contracts that were not in the Service's interests. RHy is happy to look at this but also would like to get the right legal advice for the Service.

AOB

RH asked if there were any papers that needed to be redacted: -

JT noted that Appendix D item 13 gives indicative prices expected on what might be paid for capital works so will not be published

JT & KE may need a discussion on item 14 and which papers can be circulated and what can be redacted as some are in the public domain, but some contain commercially sensitive information. RHy is happy to leave this with JT & KE with PBI as Monitoring Officer advice if needed.

JP asked if this should be an item B. RH would rather keep as much as possible to publish in Part A. The conversation between KE, JT & PBI will determine what may need to be drafted with CHB to put this into Part B.