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RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Performance and Resource Board to note the updates in the paper against the Protection Strategy.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fire protection is a cornerstone of the modern fire and rescue service; it is a core activity, as stated in the National Framework Document, the Fire and Rescue Services Act (2004) and our Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). A significant part of achieving this priority is to develop a more integrated approach to fire safety and the work that is carried out by operational personnel.

In meeting this priority Protection will ensure the authority's statutory fire protection duties are discharged efficiently and effectively to reduce the incidence of fire and the effects of fire should it occur. Protection will use all the powers enabled by legislation in a proportionate way to minimise the risk within regulated premises. This includes utilising central government initiatives and legislation changes to drive down the risk in high rise buildings including student accommodation.

The Service protection strategy, in conjunction with the prevention and response strategies, enables the Service to work with partners to ensure the public continue to have trust and confidence while maximising the use of all our resources. A significant part of being able to achieve this priority is to develop an integrated approach to fire safety and utilise both our professionals within the Protection department, and our operational personnel. In meeting this priority, we will ensure we discharge our statutory fire safety duties in relation to:

- Inspection and audit.
- Statutory consultations.
- Undertaking enforcement activities as appropriate.

- Carrying out activities associated with Higher Risk Residential Buildings (HRRBs).
- Reducing unwanted fire signals.

BACKGROUND

The key elements within the Protection Strategy to achieve this are:

- Engaging with businesses to ensure employees and the public are safe in the workplace, not becoming a burden for business, but our Service is viewed as a partner to business in ensuring public safety.
- Operating a Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP), which identified areas for priority and ensures our Service protection activities are proportionate to risk.
- Enforcement – Our Service will use the powers of legal enforcement and prosecution, where this is appropriate to ensure public safety.
- Responding to all statutory consultations within the required timeframes and, wherever possible, provide timely and accurate advice to those who request it.
- Ensure our Service maintains an adequate number of trained and skilled staff to achieve other elements of our strategy, including having effective succession planning processes in place.
- Have effective assurance processes in place to ensure that our protection function is fit for purpose and delivering against the Fire and Rescue Plan.

ANALYSIS OF PROTECTION ACTIVITY

RISK BASED INSPECTION PROGRAMME (RBIP)

The ECFRS RBIP identifies those premises which will be subject to a pre-planned visit by ECFRS personnel to check compliance with the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order, referred to as The Order. With over 88,000 properties that currently fall within the scope of this work within Essex, it is recognised that attending all these properties annually is unrealistic. The RBIP sets out an evidence-based approach to selecting properties on a year-by-year basis to audit across the county, to confirm compliance with The Order.

All data within this report is accurate as of end of January 2023.

Properties within the RBIP are classified into four categories:

- Very High Risk – (1,868 premises)
- High Risk – (7,886 premises)
- Medium Risk – (22,570 premises)
- Low Risk – (55,895 premises)

The commitment we have made within Protection:

- Very High Risk – pre-planned audits – committed to visiting all premises over a 3-year period.
- High Risk – pre-planned audits – committed to visiting all premises over a 5-year period.
- Medium Risk – operational crews to carry out FSO40's visits over an 8-year cycle, with any premises that are non-compliant triggering a follow up audit.
- Low Risk – education from our Business Engagement Team. Any non-compliances will trigger a follow up audit.

Following the data refresh from July to December 2022 the Service has a monthly target of 148 audits (varying as premises information updates reviewed 6 weekly) at our Very High and High premises. Capacity of our officers in this area is based on 9 audits per month, confirming the Service must have 17 competent officers to deliver this target.

Protection is currently budgeted for 21 inspecting officers and increasing to the budgeted establishment of 22.6 officers from April 2023. The Protection team is under established at this time due to retirements of Inspecting Officers, but overall Protection have enough inspecting officers to meet these targets and have developed a recruitment plan with the National Fire Chiefs Council Partners to increase our numbers and build in the resilience and succession planning required as part of the workforce planning strategy.

The re inspection by the HMICFRS acknowledged that the Service has governance arrangements in place for continued oversight. Improvements have been made across the recommendations, specifically in developing a clear strategy and reviewing the risk-based inspection programme. The Protection team are developing an action plan to present to the Service Leadership Team with assurance the team has relevant Policy, Process Performance and Evaluation captured to address the embedding of activity in the following areas.

- ensure it has enough appropriately trained inspectors
- assure itself of the quality of its inspections
- make appropriate and consistent use of enforcement powers
- improve its proactive engagement with businesses
- understand the effectiveness of its protection strategy through effective evaluation.

The areas listed have been set as objectives for the Group Manager Protection and assured and monitored at the Protection monthly governance board Chaired by the Area Manager Protection with representation from the PFCC to challenge and question progress.

HOUSES OF MULTIPLE OCCUPATION (HMO)

Protection are advertising to recruit a Housing Officer into the Business Engagement to work more closely with LHA's and develop clear Memorandum of Understanding on legal responsibility. HMO's fall under the Housing Act 2004. The Order only applies to the common shared areas (except for serving a prohibition notice under Article 31(10)) of such premises. Therefore, the Local Housing Authority (LHA) should take the lead in auditing and enforcement activities in HMO's. The Business Engagement Team will work closely with LHA's to sample audit the common areas of some HMO's less than 7 storeys high (less than 18m) based on our risk intelligence data. Where possible such audits will be carried out jointly with the LHA.

BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT TEAM SAFE AND WELL VISITS

The Business Engagement Team (BET) Strategy will be finalised in April 2023 with an approach to share information and educate on the legal responsibilities that sit with each business owner in a bid to drive up understanding and compliance with The Order and to make businesses safer. The strategy also outlines the work the BET will do with Local Authorities (LA) and the plans in place to build professional working relationships. Developing a BET Strategy is an activity in 2023/24 Annual Plan priorities.

In the Business Engagement Strategy, the BET team will carry out Business Safe and Well Visits. These are visits are aimed at (but not limited to) the Medium and Low Risk Premises (as defined in the RBIP) as these are the properties that are less likely to be audited by our Inspecting Officers due to their risk profile. The aim of these visits is to educate businesses on The Order, their responsibilities under The Order, and to carry out basic safety checks of the property, feeding back to the Responsible Person on any non-compliances found.

To support this Protection are finalising Role Profile and Person Specs for a new Fire Safety Advisor role. This role will be at Crew Manager level, and once in post the Fire Safety Advisors will deliver the Business Safe & Well Visits. The creation of these Crew Manager posts also establishes a pathway for grey book personnel into the Protection department.

IMPACT DAYS

The BET will deliver Impact Days once per quarter. An Impact Day is a multiagency event organised by the BET but involving the Local Authority, partnership agencies and all areas of the Protection Department, to target a specific area for a day. An Impact Day will look to target businesses of a certain type, most likely to fall within the High and Medium Risk category (dependant on the risk identified within the area) in the assigned area of the county, using audits as a way of educating and informing businesses of any non-compliances against The Order.

Protection will be asking Local Authorities to provide Housing and Environmental Officers to support these events and deliver their own messages in a collaborative approach to improving business safety. An initial pilot is currently being planned for the Uttlesford and Braintree area and in collaboration with the newly appointed Uttlesford and Braintree Tri Service Officer.

UNWANTED FIRE SIGNALS

The Protection Departments BET will be responsible for monitoring UwFS for ECFRS. The BET will monitor the data and respond to any premises that demonstrate an unacceptable level of UwFS. They will also use the data to work with businesses across Essex, educating in ways to reduce the number of UwFS being received by the fire service. Having this activity led by one team creates a consistent approach across the county. A paper will be provided to SLT by the AM Protection and Response in April detailing the approach to reduce attendance, charge for attendance, or enforce where appropriate to free up capacity of operational crews without increasing risk to the public.

NOTIFICATION AND MARKING OF SITES (NAMOS)

Under the Dangerous Substances (Notification and Marking of Sites) Regulations 1990 (NAMOS), any person in control of any site or premises where a total quantity of 25 tonnes or more of dangerous substances are used or stored, or are to become used or stored, must give written notification to the local fire service.

The BET will be responsible for receiving these notifications, reviewing the information, and then informing the Operational Risk Information Team, the Operational and Community Risk Team, and the local fire station. The BET will work with other areas within Protection should any additional action be required.

FIRE SAFETY ENGLAND REGULATIONS 2022

The Business Engagement Team have been working with CFRMIS data to ensure that all Responsible Persons (RPs) were aware of the new regulations that came into force on January 23rd, 2023. All RPs received multiple letters from the Service informing them of the changes in the regulations and what they would be required to do under these changes.

The Regulations make it a requirement in law for RPs of High-Rise Residential Buildings (HRRB) to share information with the Fire and Rescue Service. The RP's for HRRB are required to supply FRS with electronic floor plans and external wall reports. In addition to supplying FRS with this information, all existing HRRBs will now be required to have a Secure Information Box and inform FRS of any faults with essential firefighting equipment. The Protection Department has worked with the CFRMIS team to purchase and implement a CFRMIS data solution. This online data solution has been embedded into our website and is now being used as the platform for information to be shared.

Once plans are received, it is the responsibility of the BET to quality assure the plans and liaise with the RPs if the plans are not in the correct format. BET forward the floor final plans on to the Risk Information Team so they can be uploaded onto the MDT's and tablets of operational appliances providing operational crews with up-to-date information.

The BET has also embedded a CFRMIS online form on the ECFRS websites so the RPs for HRRB can inform the fire service of any faults with firefighting equipment. These forms, once completed by the RPs, will automatically go to the relevant departments for action. The BET will monitor activity from these forms to ensure faults are being repaired within an appropriate timeframe.

This was a huge piece of work that has been successfully implemented to ensure the Service is compliant with the changes. The use of the CFRMIS form allows all information to be stored in one place and a single source of data for smoother processes updating the new mobilising system.

To date the Service has received 10 floor plans, of which 8 were not at the required standard. The Protection Team is working with councils to ensure that they're buildings are compliant at the earliest opportunity. The BET has also been granted access to the Land Registry Portal to allow us to identify with certainty the RPs on the premises where plans are outstanding and circulate additional letters to remind them of their legal requirements. The Protection team has also engaged with NFCC Policy Protection and Reform Unit to establish this is an England wide problem with RPs not sending in plans and working towards actions to address the issue collectively for consistency of action across all fire and rescue services.

ENFORCMENT

Currently within our Engineering & Enforcement arm of the department we have 2 Senior Fire Engineers, who are also trained in the enforcement aspects, both carrying out 0.5 of a role. Our Engineering & Enforcement Manager will imminently graduate with a degree which will give us another full Fire Engineer within the team.

The succession planning and business continuity for this area of the business is currently being explored, and the budgets are being reviewed, with an aspiration to realign the budget that has been saved by reducing a Station Managers position to fund another Fire Engineer post. Having a dedicated Enforcement Officer was considered, however it was decided that having all our engineers trained in enforcement offers a better resilience and doesn't create a single point of failure.

A review of the regional MOU's is underway for shared service engineers work delivered by the Service to understand the income being generated from this work and deciding the growth of this area of Protection and enforcement activity.

To support the analysis the Engineering & Enforcement Manager is currently working with our Data Analyst to create a PowerBI dashboard that reflects all activity within engineering & enforcement. Once completed, an update on figures will be added to dashboard and reported on at the monthly governance board.

HMICFRS reported as a Service our enforcement activity is low compared to other Fire .This is being addressed firstly, by increasing the level of knowledge on enforcement within the team, which we are doing by putting 3 members of the team through the legal training organised by the NFCC PPRU, and secondly, by revisiting our processes on enforcement within our QA work to ensure that our approach to enforcement is documented and the process with thresholds is created. This will support a more consistent approach to enforcement across the county.

Working with the Protection Training Team, a pdrPro book is being created for the Fire Engineers to maintain all their formal qualifications. This will also evidence competency in the roles.

FIRE SAFETY OUT OF HOURS

The responsibility for managing the out of hours Fire Safety Officer (FSO) rota currently sits with our Engineering & Enforcement Manager. This is going through a full review to identify if the way it is currently being run is the best way, or if a new model needs to be explored. Consideration was given to training more flexi officers, however, unless they are working within the Protection Department it would be very hard for them get the experience required, and for people to maintain their competency.

STATUTORY CONSULTATIONS

The Service Delivery Points (SDPs) continue to respond to all statutory responsibilities within the required frames. The numbers received vary on a month-by-month basis, and it is accepted that some months, due to demand, our RBIP audit numbers may drop due to the number of planning applications or building regulations the Service receive.

To counter act this, there will also be some months where our RBIP audit numbers increase as the demand from statutory consultations is lower than expected.

Our responsibility as a fire service is to respond to our statutory tasks within the required timeframes. These are:

- Alleged Fire Risks – 24hours – 7days, depending on the risk.
- Planning Applications – To review and respond to planning applications within 20days of receipt.
- Building Regulations – To review and respond to building regulation consultations within 15days of receipt.

PROTECTION TRAINING

A risk identified within Protection was how was the Service recording the training of all inspecting officers, and how we could prove competency if asked during audit. A review of this process showed that a spreadsheet was kept centrally with a list of qualifications, but we had no way to cross reference that spreadsheets against training records.

A priority was set to the Training & Policy Manager to review the way in which we record training, and to embed a new method to both record training and evidence competency. This review resulted in us deciding to align Protection with the process followed by operational crews. This saw a move to use pdrPro and LearnPro as our single point of recording training completion and competency.

PDR PRO

An Inspecting Officer pdrPro book was also created for all Inspecting Officer. This provides a yearly training schedule of tasks and training needs to maintain competence. Training for all Inspecting Officers was completed in January 2023, and the pdrPro book launched to all Inspecting Officers in Protection on 1st Feb 2023.

All personnel working under grey book terms and conditions are automatically issued a pdrPro book. Until this point, no green book personnel within the service had been issued them. This created a challenge within Protection, due to a high percentage of Inspecting Officers being green book. Learning & Development worked with the Service provider to procure licenses to be issued to our green book personnel, which is now in place. Longer term, the Service is exploring OfficePro as a platform for green book personnel.

LEARN PRO

LearnPro is being adopted within Protection to deliver all fire safety eLearning to both protection and operational personnel. This creates a consistent approach and allows all training completion rates to be captured in one place. Packages that Protection developed with Learning & Development went live on Monday 16th January were:

- Fire Safety (England) Legislation
- Evacuation Alert Control Systems
- Firefighting Lifts

Future packages are being developed in line with the training required for operational crews to complete FSO40 visits. Once developed, all wholtime crews will be expected to participate in the LearnPro packages to refresh their knowledge. All On-Call personnel will be expected to complete the training too, as this will confirm that all operational personnel have a basic understanding of fire safety.

DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY

A development pathway is being created for all new Inspecting Officers. Once created, it will map out the learning journey for a new officer and ensure that the tasks required to ensure competence are completed within the allocated timeframe. It is expected that this will be fully developed and ready for launch in July 2023.

LEVEL 3 AND LEVEL 4 DIPLOMA HOLDERS

Protection scheduled a Fire Safety Level 3 course that started in Feb 2023. The course is being run by XACT and is being funded using the PPRU Uplift Fund. On the course Protection has 2 new Inspecting Officers, that joined us in February following a recent recruitment campaign.

An internal advert asking for expressions of interest from people with a genuine interest in fire safety was also circulated service wide, 25 applicants were received, and these were shortlisted down to 11 people that we offered a place on the course. These people support our succession plans and once trained, will offer the Protection Department some resilience should it be required. There is a plan to run a Level 4 Diploma course later this year and the funding has been allocated within the PPRU Uplift Fund Financial Plan.

THIRD PARTY ACCREDITATION

It is a new requirement that all Inspecting Officers inspecting High-Risk premises need to be third part accredited. This is achieved by all Inspecting Officers being on the IFE's Auditor Register. All fire and rescue services are working towards accreditation with the IFE, and their Inspectors are completing the relevant course work and assignments.

There is an increase in workloads and cost associated with achieving a place on the auditors register. Due to the demand and the cost, the IFE are only releasing a certain amount of spaces per year to each fire Service. Essex was awarded 4 spaces last year, and another 4spaces in 2023. We now have 8 Level 4 diploma holders working towards achieving this status. It costs £850 per person and an ongoing cost of around £450 per person every 3 years.

SUCCESSION PLANNING

Current Vacancies within Protection are:

- **Group Manager** – Forms part of the GM review. The T/GM is in post until May 15th; however, a permanent solution needs to be found to create the consistency and stability that the department requires.
- **Office Manager Southend** – Vacant post, currently being covered by T/WM. Advert live to fill vacancy.
- **Officer Manager Rayleigh** – Vacant post, currently being covered by T/WM. This advert will be released once process for Southend has been completed.
- **Office Manager Basildon** – Vacant post, currently being covered by a WM. This advert will be released once process for Rayleigh has been complete. The staggering of recruitment to these posts supports the succession planning of other posts and the development of personnel to the required levels.
- **Inspecting Officers x5** – These posts go to advert imminently.
- **Fire Investigation Officer (WM/ S8) x3** – Role profile and person spec being finalised.
- **Training & Policy Officers (WM) x2** – Process is in place, with interviews taking place on 28th March 2023.

New positions within Protection, that have been budgeted but require role profiles and person specs are:

- **Fire Engineer** – Will be funded following a review of the Station Managers, as the aspiration is to have one SM looking after Delivery, and not two. The removal of this second post will fund this additional fire engineer post.
- **Fire Safety Advisor x2** – 1x post permanent, funded by using one on the additional posts within Protection, and 1x post funded for an initial 12months using the Uplift Fund, with a view to extend if funding continues.

- **Housing Officer** – 1x post funded by the Uplift Fund for an initial 12months, with a view to extend if funding continues.
- **Building Safety Regulators x2** – 1x post funded fully by the BSR funding from the Home Office. The second post is funded 50% by BSR, and 50% within the department's budget.

ASSURANCE

A new post was created and recruited against in December 2022 for a Station Manager that is now responsible for reviewing current practices within Protection and creating a common thread throughout the department when it comes to quality assurance. The goal is to align the Protection Department with the services overall approach to quality assurance, by creating a three-strand approach to QA.

The fire standards are being reviewed as part of this process to identify areas where we are already working well, and where we need to spend time improving. As well as a SM post, a supporting officer post was created, with the successful candidate moving into post on the 15th of March 2023. With both the SM & Officer in post, this work should now start to gain some real momentum.

By introducing a clearly defined QA process, not only does it ensure high standards, but it also ensures consistency, especially when it comes to auditing and enforcement activity. This is an area identified by HMICFRS and our approach to addressing this will ensure we are performing well, and the process is embedded for the future.

Areas currently being reviewed within the scope of this role include:

- **Alignment to Fire Standards** – this is against the 19 criteria set and measured by the HMICFRS
- **Competency/development pathways** – ensuring those carrying out the role of fire safety regulators are suitably trained for the level of risk, and skills maintained in line with national standards. This will include development pathways.
- **Internal QA of the inspecting officers** – this includes sample testing of audits against agreed standards and assessed against internally set criteria. This covers all persons considered as 'fire safety regulators' and includes operational crews performing FSO40s.
- **External QA of inspecting officers** (Contextualised Auditors Register) – best practice requires all officers inspecting 'high risk' premises to be 3rd party accredited. This is currently the IFE and will require officers to maintain a portfolio of audits, and complete an assignment based independently assessed. The QA manager will act as SPOC with the IFE and our candidates required to audit high risk premises.
- **Guidance/policy** – ensuring versions control is in place on internal platforms.
- **Statutory obligations**
 - Risk based inspections against premises identified under the Fire Safety Order – measured against RBIP KPIs
 - Building Regulation consultation – 15-day completion requirement under the Building Act
 - Licencing consultation – no time frame set within the Licencing Act 2003, but 15 days has been used internally.
 - Planning Applications – To review and respond to planning applications within 20days of receipt.
 - Enforcement activity – This will be assuring data on 'live' enforcement is correct and outward facing information is aligned to Home Office Date.

BUILDING RISK REVIEW

The Building Risk Review (BRR) across Essex's High Rise Residential Buildings (HRRB) was conducted following an immediate action from the Grenfell Tragedy. Currently there are still 15 HRRB under review as part of the BRR. It is likely that 4 of these properties will be proceeding to enforcement soon. A review of the BRR premises still under review, and the action taken by the Service shows a supportive approach and a willingness to work with the Responsible Persons (RP's) to rectify their non-compliances. The new quality assurance process will review these interactions to ensure the balance between supporting and enforcement is where it needs to be, and our approach is consistent moving forward.

The Inspecting Officer who was leading on the BRR work has recently moved across to the PAS (Primary Authority Scheme) role within Protection. With some gaps in the data recognised, a review of our HRRB's in Essex will start from April 1st and will be led by a Protection WM. The WM has been identified as our competent person to support the BSR Project, so this work will not only support the Protection Department in filling some of the gaps we've identified, but also support the new role once moved over to BSR. We are due to recruit for the other BSR position shortly, and once recruited, their time will be split between BSR and this BRR review.

BUILDING SAFETY REGULATOR (BSR)

The BSR project is a HSE led initiative. The BSR has three functions:

- Overseeing the safety and standards of all buildings.
- Helping and encouraging the built environment industry and building control professionals to improve their competence.
- Leading implementation of the new regulatory framework for high-rise buildings.

BSR will regulate high-rise buildings. These are buildings with 7 or more storeys or that are 18metres or higher, and either:

- Have at least 2 residential units.
- Are hospitals or care homes (during design and construction).

The HSE reached out to the NFCC for support with this initiative, and in turn each region was given a responsibility to provide resources into this project. The breakdown of resources being supplied by the region are:

Eastern Region	Original Plan			Latest Plan		
	IOs	FE	Mgr	IOs	FE	Mgr
Beds	1			1		
Cambs	0			0		
Essex	1	1	0.5	1.5		
Herts	1			0		
Norfolk	1			0.5	0.5	
Suffolk	0			1	0.5	0.5
Total	4	1	0.5	4	1	0.5

The “Latest Plan” figures have been submitted to the Home Office to allow to draw down funding to be amended to reflect each services commitment. For Essex, the draw down funding for wages and training is:

Essex	Qty	2022/23		2023/24		2024/25	
		Salary	Training	Salary	Training	Salary	Training
Inspecting Officer	1.5	£26,775	£0	£112,455	£33,230	£118,078	£0
Sub Total		£26,775	£0	£112,455	£33,230	£118,078	£0
Total		£26,775		£145,685		£118,078	
							£290,537

This funding was available from January 2023 to draw down once the positions had been filled. Essex, as is the rest of the region, is now working to identify the people we will be supplying to the BSR project. The commitment from Essex is to provide 1 Level 4 Diploma holder, who is fully qualified and ready for the role. The other 0.5 post will be someone that potentially has no previous experience in fire safety but will be trained to the standard required by the BSR project.

The other 0.5 FTE of their role will be absorbed into the Protection Department and will support the BRR work. The direction from the NFCC is to get the identified people into posts as soon as possible and start drawing down the money. The expectation from the NFCC is that they can carry on doing the work we require of them within the Service until they project is in a place where they can be redirected onto the BSR work. On top of the funding listed above, there is another pot of money that will be made available once the resources are working within the BSR for all other expenses to be drawn down.

The BSR job descriptions are being finalised. The competent Level 4 has been identified, following an internal process, however the role specs need to be signed off before he can be officially moved across, and the funding drawn down. The job description for the second post needs to be agreed before Protection can advertise.

PRIMARY AUTHORITY SCHEME (PAS)

In 2014 Fire Services were introduced into the Office for Product Safety and Standards ‘Primary Authority’ scheme. The scheme demonstrates a legally recognised partnership between a business and a primary authority. This can be either set up as a co – ordinated or direct partnership. This scheme allows businesses that operate across more than one authority area to standardise their procedures in a manner that will be accepted across all their business premises.

To this end, Essex County Fire & Rescue Service work with our current partners that operate in the Care, Hotel & Leisure, Housing and Retail areas providing information, advice & support to them that is used nationally and locally.

Currently we have 13 partners on the PAS scheme. These are:

1. The Salvation Army (Care)
2. Care UK (Care)
3. East of England Co-Op (Retail)
4. The Radisson Group (Hotels & Leisure)
5. British Frozen Food Federation (Trade Association)
6. Q Hotels (Hotels & Leisure)
7. Leonard Cheshire Disabilities (Care)
8. Dimensions UK (Care)
9. Apetito (Food Production)
10. Greggs (Retail)

11. CHP (Housing)
12. Anglian Water Services (Utilities)
13. The Chesterford Group (Retail)

Protection is looking to expand our PAS portfolio, but the direction given to the PAS team is to expand the portfolio so that it benefits Essex and supports the objectives laid out in our own RBIP. A new PAS Manager was recently appointed and is currently working between PAS and BRR, to ensure the BRR commitments are fulfilled. This may result in the growth of the PAS portfolio being minimal until alternative arrangements are made for BRR. PAS is an income generation tool for Protection and currently generates around £15,000 per year. As the portfolio increases, so will the income generation.

FIRE INVESTIGATION

The Forensic Science Regulator has placed a requirement on any organisation within England and Wales that investigates a fire as part of the Criminal Justice setting to be accredited to ISO 17020. That includes Fire and Rescue Services carrying out an investigation as part of a multi-agency team with the Police or with local, or regional, Scientific Support Services. Scotland are not covered by the Regulator, but they tend to follow the same approach as she recommends on forensic matters. As part of this commitment, Essex entered a national partnership project with four other fire services, to work together and spread the cost associated with bringing all five services up to the required ISO 17020 standards.

The original date for the project completion was October 2023, however this date was moved to October 2024 due to the amount of work still to .It should be noted that even though October 2024 is the date that has been set as part of this collaborative project, everything would need to be completed and in place before July 2024, as a steady state of 3-months is required before you can apply for ISO accreditation.

The focus currently within this workstream, to bring the project for Essex back on track, is to resource it properly. We have recently appointed a SM Fire Investigation Manager on a temporary basis initially. We have also budgeted for 3x WM/ Scale 8 Fire Investigation Officer posts (for an initial 24month FTC) and are finalising role profiles and job specs so we can go out to advert for these. This has been created by moving the NFCC & QA roles over to the Uplift Fund for 24months.

Once these positions are in place, the data will be used to create a business case to make these posts permanent and support the departments journey to move towards a dedicated Fire Investigation Team. These roles would also be responsible for delivery of the Tier 1 Fire Investigation courses and supporting activity needed for the ISO 17020 project.

Another area developing on is “Confidentiality”. To bring this to the required standard the Service needs must have a dedicated area for Fire Investigation data, with restricted access. This is an office or room where only fire investigators or members of the team that have completed police vetting can access. All evidence relating to fire investigations would be stored in this room, and all contemporaneous notes from fire investigations would be in a lockable cabinet. The room would be used as a safe space to discuss cases, or to review evidence and photos, or for reports to be written up when required. Protection with property Services have identified a suitable space at Ongar Fire Station and are waiting for Property Services to confirm that we can progress with this plan, as it will not only to support our progress against ISO17020, but the team (once established) will be able to support operational availability at Ongar when required.

A request has already been made to Transport for vehicles to support our Fire Investigation function moving forward. Based on our current calculations, these vehicles should already be captured within our Protection allocation, and a meeting between Transport and the Protection GM is scheduled for later in March to discuss this in more detail.

Once the Service achieves ISO 17020 accreditation, we are anticipating an increase in requests from other fire and rescue services to support their Tier 2 Fire Investigations that have the potential to go to court. The aspiration is to move to a dedicated fire investigation team, as it is easier to maintain the required ISO 17020 standards and it is easier to support any cross-border requests without affecting other operational responsibilities that currently sit with our Level 2's on the flexi rota.

As well as a dedicated team, a review of Tier 2's on the flexi bank will need to be done, as maintaining some cover on the flexi-bank will also offer a level of resilience, should the team be involved in other cases.

POLICY

The expectation has been set that all policies and guidance that relate to Protection activity need to be reviewed. Once reviewed, these will all be moved to a central place, along with an index sheet, so that all documentation can be found easily, and review dates of policies can be monitored. Protection is currently in the process of recruiting 2 Training & Policy Watch Managers, and once in post, they will support the completion of this work. The responsibility for the detail within the policies will still sit with the relevant Station Managers in Protection, but the responsibility to standardise the layouts and content, and meet the deadline set for work completion will sit with the Training & Policies element of Protection.

COMMUNICATIONS / MEDIA

A new Campaigns and Partnership Manager has been recruited within Corporate Communications and is working between Prevention & Protection. Initial meetings have taken place through Feb and March, to detail the areas required in the Comms Strategy that addresses both the internal and external communication requirements of the department. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Communicate any internal legislation communications.
- Increases the awareness of the work Protection does across the wider service.
- Introduce the wider service to the people in Protection.
- Work with the Protection managers to develop an approach to valuing our people that ties in with the wider services reward & recognition.
- Build the Protection brand amongst the commercial market.
- Promote and support national campaigns.
- Promote Protection good news stories.
- Support our Business Engagement Team in creating and circulating consistent safety messages either periodically or following events or incidents.
- Develop press releases and magazine pieces with our Business Engagement Team that meets our proactive business engagement needs.
- Keep our section on the service website up to date and relevant with any legislation changes.

The BET is also working with the new Campaigns and Partnership Manager to develop a Communication and Marketing Strategy to support with educating and informing business owners across Essex on responsibility, and to support internal education on aspects of fire legislation that affect operational crews and connecting to the Service priorities to reduce risk. All the above not only promotes Protection and fire safety in commercial premises, but it supports our succession and workforce planning as a department too.

DATA AND PERFORMANCE

Protection continues to work closely with Performance & Data on all areas of the work that we do. Their Data Analyst has spent time with the Protection GM to develop a dashboard that shows the top end targets and performance. Appointments are now being booked with each Station Manager so the dashboard can be developed to reflect all areas of Protection, making reporting and performance management far more consistent in the future.

RISKS AND MITIGATIONS

None identified for the report.

LINKS TO FIRE AND RESCUE PLAN

This update is to evidence our progress against our commitment within the Protection Strategy.

FINANCIAL

IMPLICATIONS

NominalTopGroup	YTD Actual	YTD Budget	£ Var	% Var
Expenditure	£2,051,717	£2,435,109	£383,392	15.7%
Employment Co...	£1,981,943	£2,407,329	£425,386	17.7%
WholeTime Fire...	£810,569	£1,523,559	£712,990	46.8%
Support Staff	£1,171,374	£883,770	-£287,604	-32.5%
Other Costs	£90,958	£27,780	-£63,178	-227.4%
Support Staff	-£1,522	£0	£1,522	++
Support Costs	£24,752	£6,470	-£18,282	-282.6%
Premises and E...	£145	£0	-£145	++
Other Costs and...	£67,583	£21,310	-£46,273	-217.1%
Operational Inc...	-£21,184	£0	£21,184	++
Operational Inc...	-£21,184	£0	£21,184	++
Funding	-£50,000	£0	£50,000	++
Reserve Movem...	-£50,000	£0	£50,000	++
Movements in R...	-£50,000	£0	£50,000	++
Total	£2,001,717	£2,435,109	£433,392	17.8%

YTD protection is currently £433,392 under budget as a department. This underspend is due to the number of vacancies we have in the department, plus the reduction in grey book posts, and increase in green book posts.

A review has commenced to identify all vacancies and understand the roles that are required against budget and possible efficiency savings for the Service.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None identified for the report.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

Detailed in the body of the report.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

We have considered whether individuals with protected characteristics will be disadvantaged as a consequence of the actions being taken. Due regard has also been given to whether there is impact on people who identify as being part of each of the following protected groups as defined within the Equality Act 2010:

Race	N	Religion or belief	N
Sex	N	Gender reassignment	N
Age	N	Pregnancy & maternity	N
Disability	N	Marriage and Civil Partnership	N
Sexual orientation	N		

The Core Code of Ethics Fire Standard has been fully considered and incorporated into the proposals outlined in this paper.

HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None identified for the report.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

A discussion has been held with the Unions to discuss future roles and aspirations within the Protection Department, specifically focusing on Fire Investigation and the creation of CM positions within Protection.

FUTURE PLANS

Close off the cause of concern for Protection through a robust action plan by embedding activity that is evaluated and assured.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS AND APPENDICES



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