



Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority

## Decision Report

**Report reference number:** 015-23

**Government security classification:** Official

**Title of report:** Operational Training – Business Continuity and Use of Reserve

**Area of county / stakeholders affected:** All ECFRS employees and stakeholders

**Report by :** Colette Black, Director of People Services

**Date of report:** 1/3/2023 (submitted 28/03/2023)

**Enquiries to:** Colette Black, Director of People Services

### 1. Purpose of the report

This report outlines the current invocation of business continuity plans in Operational Training and seeks approval for the use of reserves to fund temporary staffing to enable continued delivery of operational training.

### 2. Recommendations

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner is asked to approve spend from the Operational Training reserve of £130,119.05. The reserves will be used to fund three temporary posts in Operational Training for a period of six months. The posts may be advertised externally.

### 3. Benefits of the proposal

The benefits of the proposal include:

- Continued delivery of the Core Skills Assurance Programme and Civil Resilience training
- Provision of the competency assurance function

Both of these benefits are enablers for ensuring that our people are trained for the roles they carry out and that we can provide assurance of this training.

#### 4. Background and proposal

The business continuity plan of the Operational Training team was invoked on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2023. The plan was invoked due to staff absence relating to unforeseen medium to long term sickness. The current absence position is:

<b><u>Station Managers (SMs)</u></b>		
1 x SM	Civil Resilience	Mid-long term sickness
1 x SM	Competence	Mid-long term sickness
1 x SM	Apprenticeship	Managing vacancy
This equates to 43% of the team being absent.		
<b><u>Watch Managers</u></b>		
1 x Group Trainer		Mid-long term sickness
1 x Group Trainer		Mid-long term sickness
1 x Civil Resilience Instructor RTCi / HRP / Water		Mid-long term sickness
This equates to 50% of the Group Trainer team and 25% of the Civil Resilience team being absent.		
<b><u>Administration</u></b>		
1 x Administrator		Mid-long term sickness

A release of reserve funding is requested to cover the absence of two Station Managers and one Watch Manager. The remaining vacant roles will be covered by a reallocation of existing personnel from other departments.

#### **Action taken so far:**

To date, we have prioritised course delivery and remaining colleagues have taken on additional areas of responsibility. Whilst this has been manageable in the short term, it is not sustainable longer term.

#### 5. Alternative options considered and rejected

##### i. "Do nothing"

The impact of doing nothing would be:

- The Core Skills Assurance Programme (CSAP) would be delivered at 50% of the normal rate for the next three to six months. This would affect the service's ability to provide assurance of competence.
- Civil Resilience – Impacts on the areas of RTC / HRP delivery and Water Courses due to the instructor to learner ratios required.

- PDR Pro – Development of PDR Pro so that we can accurately record maintenance of competence will be affected. The development of National Operational Guidance will also be affected.

## ii. **Utilise existing resources from other parts of the service**

Where it is possible, this is being done. It is anticipated that three or four of the roles will continue to be covered in this way. Further redeployment of this nature, without the ability to fund backfill, would impact availability.

The use of colleagues on modified duties has also been considered but, unfortunately, they do not currently hold the correct skill sets.

## 6. **Strategic priorities**

The proposed use of funding will support delivery of the strategic priorities of our Fire and Rescue Plan 2019-2024 including:

- To have a safe and diverse workforce who we enable to perform well in a supportive culture underpinned by excellent training.
  - Develop a new training programme and extend training opportunities so that all of our staff have the skills and training they need and remain safe in their work
  - Ensure a safe workforce, support health, safety and wellbeing
  - Ensure up-to-date information is available in the right place, at the right time and in the right format

## 7. **Operational implications**

If we are unable to deliver training at full capacity for the next three to six months, the operational implications will be potential cancellation of:

- 50% of CSAP courses
- 3 x RTC Module 2 courses booked for April to May
- 16 x HRP course dates in March / May. This qualification is linked to appliance availability as currently service policy states that three trainer personnel are required per HRP crew.
- 28 x water rescue training days booked over March, April and May. The implications in this area are both operational and financial. Each water rescue day is costed at £280 to £300 per hour for venue hire and cancellation will still be of cost to the service.

The course dates we have booked and programmed cover initial training and CPD, both of which can affect availability as we are required to maintain qualifications to enable our crews to operate in line with service policy and DEFRA's concept of operations.

In addition to potential course cancellations, the impact includes:

- Inability to deliver National Operational Guidance project (building and reviewing Learn Pro packages,) which includes circa 50 packages that require input before August 2023.
- Inability to deliver the action within the 2023/24 Annual Plan to complete a review of PDR Pro and implement any outcomes from the gap analysis.

If we move any more staff from crewing appliances to Operational Training without funding to backfill their positions, we will impact availability.

## 8. Financial implications

Role	Cover required	Cost
1 x Station Manager (or equivalent)	Up to 6 months	£ 47,140.53
1 x Station Manager (or equivalent)	Up to 6 months	£ 47,140.53
1 x Watch Manager (or equivalent)	Up to 6 months	£ 35,837.99
Total		£130,119.05

Roles may be advertised externally and will take an appropriate form to cover the workload. Recruitment will be for a six-month period to alleviate the pressure currently being experienced in the Operational Training department.

## 9. Legal implications

We have a legal obligation under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to ensure that colleagues are trained to carry out their roles safely.

## 10. Staffing implications

Detail is provided above. If approved, funding will enable fixed term recruitment.

## 11. Equality and Diversity

The Authority has 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 any of the following characteristics 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.

## 12. Risks

This proposal would fulfil a control measure for the following risk:

### SRR150020

*Due to a lack of operational training, there is a risk that colleagues do not have the appropriate skills to fulfil their role (in line with the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act) resulting in serious injury or loss of life.*

## 13. Governance Boards

The proposal has been agreed in principle by the Service's Leadership Team (SLT) through direct discussion between the Director of People Services and the SLT (whose membership includes the S151 / Chief Finance Officer).

Approved for onward transmission to the PFCC by the Chief Finance Officer as part of the decision report process.

**14. Background papers**


N/A

**Decision Process (015-22)**

**Step 1A - Chief Fire Officer Comments**

(The Chief Fire Officer is asked in their capacity as the Head of Paid Service to comment on the proposal.)

.....I support this recommendation.....

Sign: .....  ..... Date:.....23/03/2023.....


**Step 1B – Consultation with representative bodies**


(The Chief Fire Officer is to set out the consultation that has been undertaken with the representative bodies)

There has not been a need to consult on this decision although representative bodies are aware of the BCP currently enacted.

**Step 2 - Statutory Officer Review**

The report will be reviewed by the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority’s (“the Commissioner’s”) Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer prior to review and sign off by the Commissioner or their Deputy.

Monitoring Officer Sign:   
Print: P. Brent-Isherwood  
Date: 12 April 2023

Chief Finance Officer Sign: .....  .....  
Print: ...Neil Cross.....  
Date: . . . . 22 March 2023 . . . .

**Step 3 - Publication**

Is the report for publication?      **YES**

**If ‘NO’, please give reasons for non-publication** (Where relevant, cite the security classification of the document(s). State ‘none’ if applicable)

None

