



MINUTES

POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR ESSEX AND ESSEX COUNTY FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES BOARD 29 September 2023 10:30 – 12:30 via Microsoft Teams

Present:

Jane Gardner (JG)	Deputy Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (Chair)
Ian Adams (IA)	Area Manager, Prevention and Protection (ECFRS)
Colette Black (CB)	Director of People Services (ECFRS)
Pippa Brent-Isherwood (PBI)	CEO and Monitoring Officer (PFCC's Office)
Moirra Bruin (MB)	Deputy Chief Fire Officer (ECFRS)
Lucy Clayton (LC)	Performance, Business Planning and Policy Manager (ECFRS)
Neil Cross (NC)	Finance Director and Section 151 Officer (ECFRS)
Karl Edwards (KE)	Director of Corporate Services (ECFRS)
Jo Thornicroft (JT)	Head of Performance and Scrutiny - Fire (PFCC's Office)
Jeremy White (JW)	Finance Manager (PFCC's Office)
Samantha Bardsley	Minutes, Scrutiny Officer (PFCC's Office)

Apologies:

Roger Hirst (RH)	Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Janet Perry (JP)	Strategic Head of Performance and Resources (PFCC's Office)
Andy Smith (AS)	Director of Operations (ECFRS)
Sarah Smith (SS)	Procurement Manager (ECFRS)

1. Introductions

- 1.1. JG welcomed all to the meeting, apologies were noted from those above.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

- 2.1. With regards to the minutes of the previous meeting, MB noted on 9.3 there are words missing at the end of the paragraph, words to the effect of "with the engine not running" or "with the ignition not on" will need adding. On 13.3 it does not make sense as LFB have not shared any news reports around its risk information. Could this be amended to read "MB informed the board that LFB now shares its risk information with Essex Fire and the issue has been resolved."
- 2.2. The remainder of the minutes were approved and agreed.
- 2.3. There were no matters arising

3. Action Log

30/23 Forward Plan - Paper Timings

Q2 Performance Report will be moved from December to November meeting to align with the Panel meeting.

Close

31/23 Forward Plan - Performance report move

Duplicate of above.

Close

32/23 Performance Report – Publishing changes

A corrected copy has been received for publishing.

Close

33/23 Performance Report – CRMP Data and Targets

A meeting is still pending, JT is also to be in attendance and contact with JT will be arranged to diary a meet.

Remain Open

34/23 Quarterly Risk Report – Mandatory Training

This information is still pending as requires manual processing and will be ready for the next meeting.

Remain Open

35/23 Quarterly Risk Report – Risk anomaly

A new risk was added to the strategic risk register that had not been approved by SLT so the discrepancy has been identified.

Close

4. Forward Plan

4.1. JT a request from CB to move the Quarterly Working Well Together paper to the November meeting as the timings for their SLT meetings are not aligned.

4.2. JT we have also agreed with NC and SS that they will bring a paper on the Procurement Contract Transparency Plan to the October board.

4.3. These were agreed with JG and MB.

5. Finance Report

5.1. NC presented the finance report for the period up to the end of August. This covered the Month and the YTD position. The impact of the Grey book award was advised. On Call is £429k overspent - activity was high in July (incident in Stebbing) & August (two large field fires). Items relating to Operational Income and funding were also discussed. The Forecast is per the latest Strategic Board paper. The Balance Sheet and Cashflow Forecast were also presented, there was one key movement in the month with a reduction in cash balances largely driven by a significant number of retirements in the period where lump sums on pensions were required. Capital forecast was £6.6m this has gone down to £6.4m.

- 5.2. JW asked how the service were feeling in terms of break even for this year at this stage? NC stated it will be tight and based around the on-call activity.
- 5.3. JW asked if the budget setting for on call costs was realistic given there is a £429k overspend already? NC in the last few years there has been a lot of work on the on call budget, we have stripped it right back to budget all the detailed line items that make up on-call and will happily walk this through, the level of activity and the level of standby activity is in excess of the budget plan, we budget the level of activity based on the average of a prior few years so there may be something to tweak here.
- 5.4. KE picked up on the capital expenditure, reassurance was given that work with the property team is in place with the key factors being that they spend the capital that they have been allocated and get the projects done. These have been split into confidence factors and when the reports made they are looked through and the work is progressing. JG was pleased with these assurances noting she has not seen it tracked in this way before.

6. Procurement Dashboard

- 6.1. NC Presented firstly highlighting the good news that the Service are up to full quota on the team now, with the new property category manager starting in August. A paper was submitted and reviewed by SLT on the procurement function following the conclusion of the restructure.
- 6.2. There was one Single Tender Action (STA) in August for Southend Fire Station for just under £6,000, this was following a water leak into the kitchen rendering it unusable. This was costing the Service approx. £250 per day in emergency feeding arrangements whilst the kitchen was out of use, and given the time period required to obtain further quotations, NC deemed it better value to progress forward with an STA. JG was pleased to hear the STA decision has been made by NC and wasn't something that had been decided locally.
- 6.3. KE advised of an upcoming STA; there is a server room in Kelvedon Park with an oxygen suppression system to reduce the risk of fire which is not working. We know the company who supply the system and we will be getting them in to fix this rather than risking the time it would take to go out for quotations, this will be £30k in value.
- 6.4. JG asked what the plan was for the emergency fuel cards due to expire in 6 months. NC advise The Service are looking at framework to re-procure.

7. Performance Report

- 7.1. LC presented, the total number of incidents decreased from July, they are 3% below the five-year average and tracking 29% below the total number from last year. The decrease is most likely linked to the heatwave period experienced last year.
- 7.2. In August 2023, the total number of fires decreased by 56% compared to August 2022 and dropped 23% below the five-year average. This decline is again likely attributed to last year's heatwave. Special Service incidents remained consistent with August 2022 but showed a 6% increase over the five-year average. Notably, the Service has been actively involved in assisting other agencies like the Police and Ambulance, possibly contributing to the slight uptick in incidents. False Alarm incidents have increased by 9% compared to the five-year average but have decreased by 11% compared to the

same period last year. This shift may be attributed to a large proportion of goodwill fire alarms during last year's heatwave and a similar pattern this year. Given the recent increase in False Alarms, both Protection and Prevention functions are now receiving detailed incident breakdowns and trend analysis.

- 7.3. In August, two fire-related fatalities were recorded. The first fatality occurred when a light aircraft crashed in the Dunmow area, resulting in the death of the single passenger. The second fatality involved a female of unknown age in the Loughton area. The Service responded to a call from a gas company detecting high carbon monoxide levels at the property. Upon arrival, the female was found deceased.
- 7.4. The number of Primary Fire injuries recorded in August is within acceptable tolerance levels. The number of Accidental Dwelling Fire injuries has increased from the previous month to four people.
- 7.5. Deliberate fires were within higher tolerance levels for August, although the numbers are 29% less than in August 2022 and only 5% above the five-year average.
- 7.6. Non-domestic fires remain in low tolerance levels, tracking 19% below the five-year average and 29% below the same period last year.
- 7.7. Coverage has remained stable at 97%. All strategic stations are at 95% or higher, with Colchester increasing from 94% last month to 97% this month.
- 7.8. The number of Primary Fire Injuries recorded in August is within acceptable tolerance levels. The number of Accidental Dwelling Fire injuries has increased from the previous month to four people.
- 7.9. In August, there were a total of four reported data breaches, comprising one minor, one moderate, and two major incidents.
- 7.10. In August 2023, there were 773 home fire safety visits, showing a 3% increase from the previous month (750 visits) and an 11% increase compared to the same period last year (694 visits)
- 7.11. A project planner has been developed to facilitate audit job planning over 3/5-year periods, accommodating staffing changes, audit workload per staff member, and the distribution of audits between high and very high-risk premises. This tool was presented and very well received, PBI raised the benefit of this meeting having been on MS Teams making this possible.
- 7.12. JG raised that global availability is continuing to fall, MB advised this could be reflective of the impact of the school holidays and leave being taken particularly with on call. PBI agreed you expect to see this at certain times of the year, and suggested target profiling to reflect this.

8. Q1 Performance Report

- 8.1. LC Presented the Q1 performance report. Overall, there has been a 2% increase in the number of total incidents, and a 6% increase when compared to the 5-year average. The increase is largely attributable to an increase in the number of Special Service incidents. The upward trend is consistent with patterns observed over the past 5 years for the Q1 period.

- 8.2. Quarter 1 noted an 8% decrease in the total number of fires, and -8% when compared to the five-year average.
- 8.3. Quarter 1 experienced a 7% increase in the number of Special Service incidents and a 20% increase compared to the 5-year average. This is largely due to a spike in Road Traffic Collision (RTC) incidents attended by The Service. The number of RTCs appear to be an anomaly and outside of historical trends, however, the number of RTC incidents will be monitored closely in the following months to identify if an increase in these incidents is becoming a trend.
- 8.4. Fatalities in Q1 equalled three, two from accidental fires and one from fire related activity. Primary fire injuries are in the higher tolerance levels, although are tracking 18% below the five-year average. Accidental Dwelling Fire (ADF) injuries are in acceptable tolerance levels.
- 8.5. It has been noted by the Area Manager (AM) Response that the travel times are increasing which is impacting the overall response time. AM Response has requested further analysis into the travel times, breaking this down into Incidents and locations to understand what is influencing the travel times.
- 8.6. Coverage remains below the target, primarily due to the impact of a low coverage of Braintree during May.
- 8.7. Updates were also given on Protection covering audits and staffing, additional Level 3 trained officers will be available by the end of September (three Officers) and February (seven officers), potentially leading to an increase in the number of audits undertaken per month. The Risk Based Inspection Programme Premises and Prohibition Notices were also discussed noting that at the end of June a block of flats in Colchester received a prohibition notice due to numerous fire safety issues found during an inspection. As a result, all residents were required to vacate the property.
- 8.8. The Information Commissioners Office (ICO) was notified of a data breach in June, specifically a major/critical breach involving the Essex Pension Fund (EPF). Potentially affecting 50 employees. Security patches have been applied.
- 8.9. JG confirmed there were no comments or questions on this paper.

9. Q1 Annual Plan Report

- 9.1. LC presented advising the Start of year Status showed 37 Activities, 32 In Progress, 4 Waiting to start and 1 Proposed to Close.
- 9.2. There is a new Continuous Improvement Officer, whose role is to dive into these activities, meeting with all staff owning an annual plan activity looking at their plans and evidence and identifying activities that may need re-scoping or that can be closed earlier.
- 9.3. JG confirmed there were no questions on this paper.

10. Public Sector Equality Duty Objectives Update

- 10.1. CB presented the 4 Public Sector Equality Duty Objectives that were approved earlier this year and gave an update on their delivery.

- 10.2. In relation to the first objective demonstrating due regard to equality and diversity in our organisation, over the past 12 months, a key focus has been to improve the quality of the People Impact Assessments, by improving the confidence and knowledge of our people and improving our processes. The Service have completed and reviewed 48 People Impact Assessments, which can be located in our Library.
- 10.3. The second objective relates to having a diverse workforce, Between 1st September 2022 and 1st September 2023, The Service recruited 222 people in total, there are some positive indications here and they are in the main more diverse than they were previously; but the uptick is slow and cautious and not yet matching the demographic of the county.
- 10.4. The third equality objective talks about showing due regard as we deliver our services, to help make sure services are accessible and fair to everyone. Much of this work will come to fruition through the next CRMP.
- 10.5. The fourth objective is around partnership and collaboration, demonstrating community-focused leadership by working in partnership and making the most of our presence in the region.
- 10.6. JT praised that there was a good amount of qualitative and quantitative data to support the outcomes of objectives 1 and 2 and noted data to support objectives 3 and 4 is more complex.
- 10.7. PBI asked if the diversity of leavers as well as joiners was monitored? CB we don't report in the same way but we could, as we collect this data.

11. Positive Action Plan

- 11.1. CB presented all actions complete with one exception. The exception is the recommendation to review all role profiles and specifications within the organisation. T This has so far been being done on an organic basis as and when there is a vacancy. This will be being scheduled into 2024-25 to complete a full review.
- 11.2. We have had the draft audit report on culture and values back from RSM, this has just 1 medium and 1 low action which gives us an indicator of the positive work in this space.
- 11.3. JG acknowledged no questions or comments on this paper.

12. Information Governance Audit update

- 12.1. KE presented the update paper, in July of this year, a second audit was conducted to assess the progress made towards meeting the action plan since the last audit in 2022. The Service received a rating of "Adequate Assurance", which is an improvement over its previous rating of "Limited Assurance".
- 12.2. To achieve Good Assurance, a greater focus should be placed on records management activities and a better guidance on technology use; for example over the past 6 months we have had 5 data breaches all pinpointed back to the use of SharePoint of which 2 were reported to the ICO.

12.3. JG asked the nature of the 2 reported breaches. KE elaborated and assurance was given that these were innocent mistakes caught early where the learning was taken, and nothing breached the organisational walls.

13. RAAC (Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete)

13.1. KE Presented talking through the assessments made to the buildings at potential risk to which it has been given reasonable assurance that there is no RAAC in any of the premises. This has been caveated that to be 110% sure you would have to get a structural engineer in to complete a more invasive survey.

13.2. JG acknowledged no questions or comments on this paper.

14. Converted Stations Transitional Group Update

14.1. IA presented the paper, the headline being to advise that the embedded officers from the SLT funding agreement will be coming to an end April 2024 so all the plans around the risk issues and control measures are within the paper to get the service to the position where they are at BAU without them.

14.2. JT recognised that the Dovercourt availability is looking better but the Waltham Abbey had deteriorated.

15. Protection Strategy Update

15.1. IA Presented advising that the service is confident they will achieve their 3 and 5-year targets.

15.2. One of the annual plan activities was to provide all operational fire offices with some kind of protection training. 8 LearnPro modules were released on 28th July for all operational personnel to complete. The Group Manager Protection will continue to monitor completion rates and engage with the Operational Command teams to maintain the promising progress.

15.3. We are now publicising all our prohibition and enforcement notices on the website.

15.4. The debrief for the Amleen House prohibition was held on 15th August. The information shared within the debrief is being correlated by the services' Assurance Team and will form part of a case study for the NFCC and used as National Learning with the Policy Reform and Protection Unit.

15.5. JG asked what progress had been made on the annual leave policy, CB advised we have reached a failure to agree, and we are looking into resolutions.

16. Deep Dives Update

16.1. JT has been working with the leads on each activity to be looked at and a schedule has been put together as per item 6 on the paper.

17. Any Other Business

There being no further business the meeting closed at 12:25 hours

Future meeting dates

- Thursday 02 November 2023
- Thursday 30 November 2023