



MINUTES

POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR ESSEX AND ESSEX COUNTY FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE ECFRS Performance & Resources Board 29 January 2024 14:00 – 16:00

Present:

Roger Hirst (RH)	Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (Chair)
Colette Black (CB)	Director of People Services (ECFRS)
Pippa Brent-Isherwood (PBI)	CEO and Monitoring Officer (PFCC's Office)
Moira Bruin (MB)	Deputy Chief Fire Officer (ECFRS)
Emily Cheyne (EC)	Assistant Director Communications, 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)
Jane Gardner (JG)	Deputy Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC's Office)
Janet Perry (JP)	Chief Financial Officer / Strategic Head of Performance and Resources (PFCC's Office)
Andy Smith (AS)	Director of Operations (ECFRS)
Sarah Smith (SS)	Procurement Manager (ECFRS)
Jo Thornicroft (JT)	Head of Performance and Scrutiny –Fire (PFCC's Office)
Jeremy White (JW)	Finance Manager (PFCC's Office)
Samantha Bardsley (SB)	Minutes (PFCC's Office)

Apologies:

None

1. Welcome and Apologies

- 1.1. RH welcomed all to the meeting noting that it was good to see JG back after a protracted absence, no apologies were noted. It was agreed that item 7 the Performance Report would be presented out of order after item 4 Forward Plan.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

- 2.1. The minutes of the previous meeting were noted to require the following amendments from MB and CB:
 - In 6.2 the minutes state a company name and this is to be removed.
 - In 8.3 the name of the individual is to be exchanged for the job title of ECFRS Continual Improvement Officer.
 - In 4.1 the wording staff survey engagement survey due in January needs amending to the staff survey engagement report.
 - In 7.9 there is a small typo regarding parked cars that requires amendment.
 - In section 13 the minutes refer to LRS and it requires noting that this refers to the Leadership Resourcing and Succession Pool for clarity.
- 2.2. Subject to the above amendments being made, the minutes of the previous meeting were approved and agreed.

2.3. JP reiterated the requirement to read and confirm the minutes if you have an item presented in any boards to make sure you are content with the write up and ensure they are reflective of the meeting.

2.4. There were no other matters arising.

3. Action Log

38/23 On-Call Support and Development

Not due until April 2024.

Remain Open

42/23 Forward Plan

This is on the agenda for the Strategic Board in March.

Close

44/23 Performance Report

The narrative is now included in the monthly performance reports.

Close

45/23 Q2 Performance Report

The paper was presented at the December P&R Board.

Close

48/23 Quarterly Working Well Together

The key elements were set out in paper 12 which has been withdrawn from this meeting, action to remain open and come back to a further P&R meeting.

Remain Open

50/23 Quarterly Ops Assurance Report

The 2023 plan plus the first 3 months of 2024 have been circulated, awaiting the full plan for 2024. MB agreed to follow this up.

Remain Open

51/23 Forward Plan

This has been discussed between JT and CB and can be closed.

Close

52/23 Q2 Annual Plan Update

KE and LC discussed the appropriate meaning for the definition of Done, it was confirmed by KE this will be agreed at the onset of the item being put into the plan by the action owner to clear up ambiguity.

Close

53/23 Q2 Annual Plan Update

A paper is going to SLT and a workshop with NC and RH will be arranged in due course.

Remain Open

54/23 On Call Remediation Plans including Converted Stations

AS advised the action plan was to maximise availability whilst reducing costs which is being seen. RH advised he would need to speak with Rick Hylton further on this.

Remain Open

JW Joined the meeting at 14:15

4. Forward Plan

- 4.1. JT advised the information governance update at this meeting was delayed from a previous meeting and there is due to be a further update next month, permission to move this a month forward was therefore agreed so they were not presented so close together.

Action 01/24

Move the Information Governance Paper in February 2024 to March 2024

- 4.2. JT a request to align the Quarterly Working Well Together with the Negotiation Meeting dates, this moves Jan to Feb, April to May, July to August and October to December Boards. Agreement to move these so they align was agreed.

Action 02/24

Move the Quarterly Working Well Together Papers to align with the Negotiation Meeting dates.

- 4.3. JT advised there needs to be updates on the Implementation of Fire Standards seen, this was raised at the Fire Standards Day. It was believed a report produced by the ECFRS Continual Improvement Officer that goes to SLT would be of benefit to the PFCC's Office and a request to have sight of this was agreed.

Action 03/24

The Fire Standards Report produced by the ECFRS Continual Improvement Officer to be shared with the PFCC's Office and an item relating to the Implementation of Fire Standards to be introduced to the forward plan in line with this report being produced.

- 4.4. Items 8 Annual Staff Engagement Survey, 9 Update on response to HMICFRS Spotlight on Cultures and Values and 12 People Strategy Update incl. key elements from Culture dashboard were all withdrawn from this meeting. RH noted the cultural change programme has been one of the most important programmes over the last few years. Feedback is that it makes a difference to people's lives. The 3 reports are all around this topic, RH asked for a more powerful narrative as The Service appears to be underselling itself and a strong story is not being told. CB and RH discussed and ratified what was required for each paper for its return and PBI offered to assist in person if helpful. All items were agreed to come back to the February 2024 P&R Board.

Action 04/24

Items 8 Annual Staff Engagement Survey, 9 Update on response to HMICFRS Spotlight on Cultures and Values and 12 People Strategy Update incl. key elements from Culture dashboard are to be expanded on and planned into the February and March 2024 P&R board.

7. Performance Report

- 7.1. LC presented Decembers Performance Report advising overall 1235 incidents were attended which is up slightly on the five-year average. Fire incidents have gone down on the five-year average; whereas Special Services, False Alarms and RTC's are all up on the five-year average, but within the amber tolerances. Core Station Coverage has maintained stability at 97%, showcasing a consistent level of service provision and December 2023 recorded 1 fatality.
- 7.2. Unwanted fire signals were discussed, and LC advised while False Alarm incidents have decreased from the previous month, they still surpass the five-year average. A paper is underway addressing Unwanted Fire Signals responses, and The Service is evaluating alignment with other fire services in handling False Alarms. AS confirmed

this would see fewer resources deployed but the number of calls The Service attend will remain the same.

- 7.3. Prevention saw fewer Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV) from both Central Prevention and Operational Crews due to the seasonal nature of the month; as well as the additional impact of planned annual leave, the 3 non-working days of Christmas alone created a deficit of approximately 95 HFSV that could not be completed. PBI asked why this seasonal affect isn't allowed for in the profiling of targets? LC advised there is a new Long Term Planning Tool which will look at this going forward. PBI noted that the Central Prevention Team was impacted significantly in December by staff abstraction from the Safe and Well Team and asked if the SLT were satisfied that this was an appropriate reallocation of resources. LC advised she did not have this information to hand but would find out and feedback.

Action 05/24

LC to update the PFCC's Office on how the decisions to abstract from the Central Prevention Team came about and if this was considered an appropriate reallocation of resources by SLT.

- 7.4. A meeting occurred with the Safer Essex Road Partnership (SERP) Analyst to explore regional and local analysis, aiming to integrate ECFRS data with SERP data for a more comprehensive understanding of RTC occurrences in the county.
- 7.5. The attendance time for Potential Life-Threatening Incidents was up on the five-year average and out of tolerance, the call handling and turn out time are as expected suggesting that it is the travel time that is having the biggest impact and causing the higher attendance times.
- 7.6. RH asked for more information on the fire fatality. MB advised this was a call to a small vehicle fire on a lorry park in Thurrock which was spreading to other vehicles, it was not known or identified that an individual was in the vehicle until the fire was extinguished, the fire was deemed accidental.
- 7.7. PBI queried the graphs on pg11 showing the RBIP Inspections against target, advising they do not seem to match the positive narrative. LC advised that the planning tool will program in the catch up. This is reviewed monthly and the number of inspecting officers will also be increasing to see the gap close. LC offered to present the planning tool at a future P&R. PBI suggested it might be helpful to extend the graphs into the future to show the planners predictions.

Action 06/24

LC to consider extending the RBIP v's Target graphs to show future predictions and presenting the planning tool to a P&R Board.

- 7.8. PBI noted on Pg12 the Enforcement Notices Issued shows a peak in December and asked if there was anything driving this? AS advised they are starting to see the benefit of the High Rise Task Force doing additional reviews. Notices are therefore increasing as they have the ability that they did not have the previous capacity for.
- 7.9. RH talked about the five-year average and how it includes the Covid-19 years and asked has an exercise been done excluding this data which could be distorting figures. LC advised this is something that has been looked at briefly with a three-year average being explored, but that nothing has been completed in any great detail as there is not the capacity. LC continued to advise however, that The Service itself are in a different environment since Covid-19, and it is something we may have to just accept as it could be disingenuous to remove.

LC left the meeting at 15:05

5. Finance Report

- 5.1. NC presented the finance report for the period to December 2023 which shows a deficit position of £870k, which is £207k worse than the monthly Budget position. This month is where the December Green book pay award was included; backdated to the start of this financial year. NC Discussed the Summary Income and Expenditure statement covering items on Employment Costs, Non-Pay costs and Operational Income. NC went on to talk about the forecast advising the projected position of the outturn is currently showing a deficit of £172k. NC advised The Service have also recognised £500k Hospitality S31 Relief after receiving confirmation that this can be recognised as income. Capital shows the latest actual spend as £3m with £6.2m forecast. The main projects being Thermal Imaging Cameras and BA Chambers at Harlow, both due to complete in April 2024. Pension rates were also discussed advising the rates have increased by 28.8% to 37.6% which is a substantial increase, there will be a grant of around £85m to the fire sector to fund these contributions.
- 5.2. RH brought up the cascade graph on Pg17, noting the additional findings and reserves are in one column and advised it would be preferred if these would be split out, as they are two different narratives.

Action 07/24

Additional Funding and Reserves to be split in to two different columns on the Movement from YTD projected position to expected Outturn cascade graph.

- 5.3. RH noted that the pay situation has been much more testing than anticipated, as has the pension situation and The Service has been bailed out by £500k business rates and £500k council tax collections they were not expecting and next year the funding guarantee will be making a difference too. NC agreed it was fair to say that this has got The Service through the year.
- 5.4. JP talked about the on call and about the controls and changes that were put in place and asked are the movements here fortuitous, or are they due to the controls and changes that have been made? AS advised that the measures are as a direct result not a coincidence.
- 5.5. RH noted NC stated in his presentation that the additional pensions grant is one off; RH's understanding however from the home office is that it might not be one off. NC agreed this would be good to hear.

JW left the meeting at 15:15

6. Procurement Dashboard

- 6.1. SS presented the Procurement Dashboard highlighting that she attended the superuser group run by the Cabinet Office for the Procurement Act 2023 Update. This superuser group concentrated on the learning and development offering. An overview of the Property / FM Category, ICT Category and Corporate Services and Operations Category Headlines were provided. There were no Single Tender Actions for December.
- 6.2. RH was delighted to hear that SS was in the superuser group for the Procurement Act 2023 and that there were no Single Tender Actions.

SS Left the meeting at 15:25

8. Annual Staff Engagement Survey

8.1. Paper withdrawn.

9. Update on response to HMICFRS Spotlight on Cultures and Values

9.1. Paper withdrawn.

10. Enforcement and Remediation on Clad Buildings

10.1. AS presented the paper on Enforcement and Remediation on Clad Buildings citing the benefits of the High Rise Taskforce. One notable addition to the enforcement notices is Joseph Rank House, a formal appeal was received for the two notices. This now means that the Enforcement Notice is affectively paused while The Service waits for a Magistrates Court date to be allocated.

10.2. RH spoke about Joseph Rank House and asked are we confident that those who remain housed in the premises are reasonably safe. AS advised measures are in place because of the notices that have been issued, The Service are waiting on some more evidence of the smoke clearance system within the building to be 100% sure around that, but they've increased their attendance to the property if there is a confirmed fire so as far as they can assure, they have done so.

10.3. JT noted there were quite a few premises in this update to the board that don't have a progress update, and there is a reason given which is that the resources have been redeployed to enforcement works on other buildings. JT Therefore asked is the team adequately resourced? AS advised more staff would come on board next month and will start to narrow the gap and there is also a contingency of trained office managers who are qualified but are not currently completing inspections that could if required.

11. Information Governance Audit

11.1. KE presented the information governance audit advising they followed up on an action to have an independent audit of all information governance practices undertaken. The auditors looked at 230 different information governance touch points and assessed them all. 142 received full assurance, 76 received some assurance and 12 received limited assurance, this was pushed back on however and there are now only 2 areas of limited assurance.

11.2. RH stated it was good to hear the auditor's think The Service are making progress.

11.3. RH noted the report that said that The Service have told them that their rolls have been scaled back, meaning some tasks are not completed; and also that induction training has been stopped, and asked if this was true? KE advised this was not the case and these were some of the items pushed back on. It is believed this is down to a misunderstanding during some of the interviews and an amended report is due. PBI noted that linked to this it seems that there are some instances where they have taken the testimony of one person and applied this to the whole organisation, there are some areas where they have accepted a low bar as what they have taken as full assurance. PBI did not believe this was a particularly robust piece of work and she would expect there to be some criticism of this from the Audit Committee.

12. People Strategy Update incl. key elements from Culture dashboard

12.1. Paper withdrawn.

13. Converted Stations Transitional Group Update

13.1. AS presented the converted stations transitional group update advising that there has been a dip in availability across the stations in December, this was due to small changes such as a lack of spread of annual leave and winter sickness, the annual leave policy is going through consultation which may help mitigate against this going forward. There may also be further challenges with London Fire Brigade currently recruiting.

13.2. RH talked about maintaining coverage and whether it was more effective to have people on the ground to make sure the pump is available or to have the active dynamic deployment, and asked around the play off over what is more effective over what is more cost effective? AS advised what we are seeing now is the reduction in costs now that we have the ability to move people not pumps but we will need to look at where that balance is, is it best to resource or is it best to move the resource.

14. Response Strategy Update

14.1. AS presented the Response Strategy Update advising the Resource Management Unit has been established and fully resourced, this has enabled a more effective use of resources. This is evidenced by the increased number of moves the service can make to increase coverage at strategic stations. The Performance metrics for Control call handling times has been developed and embedded into the Control Room. The service has developed a 17-point availability action plan which sets out a range of measures in order that availability will improve across the service. Command Order 15 has been removed from use, this has de-risked certain activities for the service around staff multi-tasking. Work has taken place to provide greater clarity around what Phase 1 (trainee) firefighters can do in relation to wearing Breathing Apparatus on the fire ground, this will ensure consistency of approach across all stations. The service has advertised for external competent firefighters to join Essex, CB advised there were 7 potential recruits under this advertisement at present.

14.2. JG noted this was a big stride forward since it was last reported and this was very encouraging.

15. Any Other Business

There being no further business the meeting closed at 15:55 hours

Future meeting dates

- Tuesday 27 February 2024
- Thursday 28 March 2024