



**POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR ESSEX AND
ESSEX COUNTY FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE
ECFRS Performance & Resources Board**

28 March 2024

10:00 – 12:00

Present:

Roger Hirst (RH)	Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (Chair)
Jane Gardner (JG)	Deputy Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Pippa Brent-Isherwood (PBI)	CEO and Monitoring Officer (PFCC)
Janet Perry (JP)	Chief Financial Officer and Strategic Head of Performance & Resources (PFCC's Office)
Jeremy White (JW)	Finance Manager (PFCC's Office)
Moira Bruin (MB)	Deputy Chief Fire Officer (ECFRS)
Jim Palmer (JPa)	Deputy Director of Operations (ECFRS)
Karl Edwards (KE)	Director of Corporate Services (ECFRS)
Colette Black (CB)	Director of People Services (ECFRS)
Neil Cross (NC)	Finance Director and Section 151 Officer (ECFRS)
Lucy Clayton (LC)	Performance, Business Planning and Policy Manager (ECFRS)
Sarah Smith (SS)	Procurement Manager (ECFRS)
Heather Kinzett	Occupational Health Manager (ECFRS)
Borka Price (BP)	Minutes (PFCC's Office)

Apologies:

Andy Smith (AS)	Director of Operations (ECFRS)
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1. Welcome and Apologies

- 1.1. JG welcomed all to the meeting and advised that RH would be late attending. Apology received from Andy Smith.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

- 2.1 Two corrections were agreed to the draft minutes: paragraph 10.3: "suppression" should be replaced by "frustration"; paragraph 10.5 "Safe Together" should be replaced by "Safe Share". The amended minutes were approved as a correct record.

3. Action Log

38/23 On-Call Support and Development

Not due until April 2024.

Remain Open

48/23 Quarterly Working Well Together

Culture Dashboard was presented at the February P&R Board.

Close

05/24 Performance Report

JPa reported that two of the Central Prevention Team were moved to the Community Wellbeing Officers and recruitment has been paused until April 2024 pending a review of the prevention activities.

Remain Open

06/24 Performance Report

Proposal included from April 2024.

Remain Open

08/14 Converted Stations Transitional Group Update

MB confirmed that AS was aware and would update.

Remain Open

09/24 Finance Report

NC confirmed that the accounts cannot be closed until a Pension Audit Assurance letter is received. The LGPS Audit has not been started and there is as yet no timeframe for completion.

Close

10/24 Quarterly Risk Review

Meeting with SLT scheduled for April 2024.

Remain Open

11/24 Quarterly Risk Review

JW advised the last quarter's data column on the risk register spreadsheet has been reinstated.

Close

12/24 Converted Stations Transitional Group Update

All embedded officers to be removed from 1 April 2024.

Close

4. Forward Plan

- 4.1 JW advised that Agenda item 12 'Performance Framework' has been deferred to the May 2024 P&R Board.
- 4.2 PBI noted Action 47/23 regarding oversight of complaints system was closed as this was discussed at the PFCC and CFO one to one in February 2024. It was agreed that HK would be reviewing as part of the development of Professionalism for discussion at the March 2024 SLT and thereafter presented at the ECFRS Strategic Board or ECFRS P&R Board.

- 4.3 KE stated that the current process for Complaints and Compliments was administered by the Information Governance Team and SLT agreed it should be incorporated into the Professional Standards piece of work being led by HK. A paper is to be drafted for consideration by SLT and thereafter presented at the May 2024 ECFRS P&R Board.

Action 13/24

JW to add Complaints and Compliments Processes and Outcomes to the Forward Plan for May 2024.

5. Finance Report

5.1 NC gave a brief overview of the Month 11 Finance Report for February 2024:

- Period Surplus of £415,000 against a budget of £44,000.
- £80,000 over budget regarding pay costs.
- On-call overspend was £94,000. NC confirmed that an on 'On-Call Report' would be prepared for each month for the Director of Operations.
- Plans in place to reduce the 'On-Call' overspend through the budget setting process.
- Non-pay budget overspends of £159,000 due to additional pension costs, one-off operational training (funded separately through the reserve), backdated fees for premises and equipment and additional consultancy costs (partly offset through additional reserve funding).
- £181,000 improvement to operational income budget, due to interest accrued.
- Additional money received through the shared services income.
- In terms of overall funding, ECFRS was ahead based on the Government grants and business rates relief catch up.
- Projected a deficit of £91,000 but may see a small surplus.
- Capital spend was £3.4 million with the projection being £5 million. £900,000 has been committed to the control project but the invoices would not be submitted during the 2023/24 budget year.

5.2 NC advised that the ECFRS Extraordinary Strategic Board to discuss accounts scheduled for 28 March 2024 was postponed to 18 April 2024 due to the documentation from the auditors not being completed.

RH joined the meeting at 10.28am.

5.3 NC stated that 'DR 009-24 FRA Productivity and Efficiency Plan' sent to RH needs to be published by 31 March 2024. RH highlighted that we were now in the pre-election period and suggested referring the decision report to PBI. PBI confirmed the decision report was discussed at the 6 March 2025 ECFRS Strategic Board where it was agreed and had no objection to it being processed.

Action 14/24

RH to sign DR 009-24 FRA Productivity and Efficiency Plan. Complete

5.4 NC reported that the new finance system will go live on 8 April 2024 and formally thanked the team for their assistance with the implementation which was concurred by JW.

5.5 RH noted the difference between the projected £5 million and actual capital spend of £3.5 million. NC reported commitments of £1.4 million, namely the control system where they had held back the milestone payments.

5.6 RH noted the staff overspend was linked to the decisions regarding Great Baddow, Dovercourt and South Woodham Ferrers and asked ECFRS to ensure that the stations are functioning appropriately. RH stated he was not asking for the spend to be reduced.

6. Procurement Dashboard

6.1 SS confirmed the 'Procurement Act' as the official title for the primary legislation with the secondary legislation that sits under it to be titled 'Procurement Regulations 2024'. SS stated that the Cabinet Office were planning for the regime to commence in October 2024 but the date had not been confirmed. Technical Guidance, which will cover all the regulations will be available from April/May 2024, together with learning aids and flow charts.

6.2 SS advised that the Procurement Team has worked hard to support the new finance system.

6.3 The Procurement Team attended Modern Slavery Training.

6.4 The Contract for the installation of 14 vehicle charging points across the sites has been awarded.

6.5 The Procurement Team have been supporting the Property Team regarding office furniture, vending machine and lockers.

6.6 They joined 7 Forces Procurement in relation to the water supply and waste services for which a decision report will be drafted and submitted for approval.

6.7 SS advised that the contract awarded to the successful bidder was terminated due to contingencies not being included in the price and the tender went to the second placed bidder, which was accepted.

6.8 Awarded the Mobile Display Terminals Mapping Software and Crash Recovery System to Airbus Defence.

6.9 Started to look at a Resource Optimisation Tool to assist in saving fuel and resources from appliances to increase the standard response time.

6.10 Progressing the 'Workwear Project' with the first set of samples being trialled.

6.11 Preparing the tender for the 'End of Life Vehicles for RTC training' due to supply issues from the current contract.

6.12 Standstill was completed and tender awarded for the Positive-Pressure Ventilation Fans.

6.13 Tender awarded for the Layflat Hoses.

6.14 No expired contracts.

6.15 There were no STAs in February 2024.

- 6.16 JW asked whether there would be a disruption to procurement due to the finance system change. SS confirmed plans were in place and no urgent requests had been raised.
- 6.17 JG thanked SS for ensuring the team completed the Modern-Day Slavery Training which was a concern for RH.

SS left the meeting at 10.46am.

7. Performance Report

- 7.1 LC talked through the monthly performance report and confirmed ECFRS was 97.73% quality assured at the time of reporting and there were no significant trends or patterns.
- False alarms had increased but there were no significant outliers and the figures were in line with the upward trend.
 - There were no fire related fatalities recorded in February 2024 and the fire related injuries were within acceptable levels.
 - Core Station Coverage maintained at 97%.
 - Risk-Based Inspection Plan – projected to deliver ahead of the three and five-year target.
 - The Safe and Well Team were affected by planned and unplanned staff absences, 15 days lost due to annual leave and 22 due to sickness.
 - 26 Freedom of Information requests received.
 - Three data breaches recorded, one as a near miss/minor and two as moderate with no referrals to the ICO.
 - 60% of ECFRS attendance at road traffic collisions was to ensure scene or vehicle safety with 20% due to the release or extrication of individuals. Meeting with SERP to discuss working together.
- 7.2 JP queried the sickness figures, noting that the five-year average for January 2024 was 7.7%, 7.3% in December 2023, 7.2% in January 2024, and February 2024 at 6.0%. It was agreed that LC would review the sickness figures.

Action 15/24:

LC to review the sickness figures for February 2024.

- 7.3 RH enquired as to how the sickness rate percentage was calculated. LC confirmed it was the percentage of available working time lost to sickness absence and based on the Cleveland Method.
- 7.4 JW queried RBIP data audit, noting the very high-risk completion date declined three months in one month. In January 2024 they were reporting to September 2025 and now the reporting is to 31 December 2025. The high-risk had declined six months in the last two months. In December 2023 they were reporting to 31 July 2026 and now the reporting is to 31 January 2027.
- 7.5 In terms of the RBIP very high-risk audits, JW noted that in 2023 the data stated 742 but in 2024 stated 283. MB confirmed that a meeting was taking place week commencing 2 April 2024 and that it was a complex method of target setting.

- 7.6 LC confirmed the planning tool works and the individual monthly targets that had been missed were being planned as catch ups to achieve the target. The Protection Team review the planning tool monthly.
- 7.7 JPa confirmed the end date slippage was due to not being at the expected numbers in previous months and gave assurance that the recruitment figures in the projection tool for March 2024 were on track.

Action 16/24

JPa to ensure there is a better explanation of the RBIP delivery in the Protection Strategy update at the next ECFRS P&R Board.

- 7.8 RH noted the unwanted fire signals were red.
- 7.9 RH noted the disjoint between the input and outcomes and asked what is being done regarding the input metrics that would have a bearing on the outcomes. It was agreed that MB would produce a Deep Dive paper on the methodology.
- 7.10 LC reported attendance standards were being reviewed as part of the CRMP work and they now have a data scientist within the team. There was a meeting scheduled week commencing 2 April 2024 to discuss the information they would like from the data.
- 7.11 RH noted that a Strategic Assessment of Risk had been done which would form the basis of the CRMP and expressed the need for the review of the attendance standards for the CRMP to be effective. RH asked MB for a deep dive discussion in May 2024.

Action 17/24

MB to draft a Deep Dive paper on the methodology regarding the input and outcomes metrics in May 2024.

8. Q3 Performance Report

- 8.1 MB queried the value of having the monthly and quarterly reports at the board as both reports now contain narratives. RH confirmed that the monthly report is not presented at the Police, Fire and Crime Panel, but would like the quarterly report to come to the board for review prior to presentation at the Police, Fire and Crime Panel.
- 8.2 LC stated the report was an aggregation of the data and commentary provided in the monthly reports and asked whether there were any questions.
- 8.3 It was agreed that JP and LC would discuss the content for the Quarterly Performance Report . which would be presented at the Police, Fire and Crime Panel.

Action 18/24

JP and LC to discuss the content for the Quarterly Performance Report for presentation at the Police, Fire and Crime Panel.

9. Q3 Annual Plan Update

9.1 LC summarised the activity status, advising that additional meetings had been planned due to the questions being asked of the CIB regarding closure reports. No concerns were raised.

10. Annual Accounts Timetable

10.1 NC reported the timetable was in draft form and would be available for the next meeting. JP asked if it could be shared prior to the next meeting which was agreed.

Action 19/24

NC to share the Annual Accounts Timetable with JP week commencing 2 April 2024.

11. Protection Strategy Update

11.1 JPa referred to 'Unwanted Fire Signals' and advised that the Protection Team was drafting a paper for the Service Leadership Team on recommendations for responding to Unwanted Fire Signals.

11.2 JPa stated that social media campaigns would continue, leaflets developed for distribution to fire stations and instructions given to operational crews for leaflets to be left at any premises that they attend due to unwanted fire signals at non-domestic premises.

11.3 Meetings are to be set up at the beginning of April, through the business engagement team on the approach for unwanted fire signals.

11.4 JPa referred to the Enforcement Notices and advised that enforcement activity has increased.

11.5 JPa advised that three Enforcement Notices were issued in February 2024 and within the Appeal period and these were not published.

11.6 JPa said there were a further three that were under appeal and these were paused and not on the register.

11.7 MB formally thanked JPa for the update on Protection and advised that the 'cause of concern' for protection was lifted at the last inspection.

11.8 RH asked about the impact of the ISO 17020 which MB confirmed there was minor impact to the Service but was not sure of the impact should the Police decide to utilise the Service's evidence towards their investigations where there was a deliberate act. The evidence collected by the Service could not be used for criminal convictions. MB stated that many Services are moving away from working towards ISO accreditation as it is lengthy, costly and time consuming and of little benefit to Fire. MB proposed further discussions with Police on the significance of ISO accreditation and how they can overcome the issue.

11.9 RH stated that the Service had a duty to collaborate with the Police. MB highlighted that to be able to provide evidence in Court to secure a conviction the Service would need to comply with the system. RH asked MB to consider a proposal to support the Police.

Action 20/24

MB to consider a local solution as to how the Service can support Police regarding evidence to secure criminal convictions for the next meeting.

12. Performance Framework

12.1 JW advised the item was deferred to May 2024.

13 People Strategy Update including key elements from Culture Dashboard

13.1 CB reported a review was commissioned of the 'People Strategy 2020 to 2024' as the existing action plans associated with the Strategy concluded on 31 March 2024. The review provided assurance that the delivery plan achieved the strategic objectives of the People Strategy.

13.2 CB confirmed the next steps would be to launch the Interim People Strategy Action Plan from April 2024.

13.3 CB advised the learning from the last four years was about making sure the objectives were clear and measurable.

13.4 CB stated they would conduct a 'BAU Vs Change' assessment on the proposed action plans to ensure governance through CIB or PMB and the P&R Board.

13.5 CB proposed the Interim People Strategy Action Plan is added to the P&R Board forward plan. PBI confirmed the action plan would need to be added to the Strategic Board.

Action 21/24

CB to ensure the Interim People Strategy Action Plan is added to the ECFRS Strategic Board forward plan.

13.5 RH formally thanked the Fire Service for their support in ensuring the cause of concern for protection being lifted.

13.6 RH reminded attendees that we are here for the benefit of the public and interested in collaborating with them for the benefit of the workforce.

14 Safer Together Update

14.1 CB advised a review was commissioned on the Safe Share workstream which was launched on 16 January 2023 to see if it was making a difference and whether it should continue.

14.2 CB reported Safe Share received 54 contacts in the last 12 months, the majority were regarding Domestic Abuse and Allegations of Misconduct and positive feedback has been received from users of the service.

14.3 CB advised they would be continuing Safe Share as it is making a difference.

14.4 CB stated that through the culture dashboard methodology they would be able to broaden triangulation of the data through Safe Share with the grievance and discipline data and other routes.

- 14.5 RH noted that the 54 contacts was smaller than the anticipated number, given the scale of the issues raised in the London and National Reports and asked whether further promotion was needed.
- 14.6 CB concurred that further promotion was required. Posters have been displayed across the estate, small wellbeing cards are being distributed across stations and the service is also promoted through the Firefighters' Charity.
- 14.7 In terms of the number of contacts, CB confirmed colleagues are using the service if they are unable to go through the traditional routes such as line managers, occupational health and people partner. CB stated the number of disciplinary cases is rising and was not concerned about the number of calls through Safe Share.
- 14.8 CB reported that they are looking to change the whistleblowing provider as they are not able to share the number of contacts.
- 14.9 JG thanked CB and asked whether the right signposting was available for domestic abuse. CB confirmed calls are picked up by the safeguarding out of hours service and would share the wellbeing card with the board.
- 14.10 CB confirmed that the service would be promoted at the Leaders' Conference on 15 April 2024 and that VAWG was on the agenda.
- 14.11 PBI enquired as to whether any of the 54 contacts to Safe Share had tried other routes first. CB confirmed it was not known whether they went through the traditional routes. Safe Share is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The HR Service is open until 8.30pm on a weekday. CB agreed that users should be asked whether they tried other routes when using Safe Share.
- 14.12 JP asked whether the numbers were increasing or steady? CB confirmed the level of usage has been consistent over the 12-month period. JP suggested sharing how helpful the service has been, which could encourage more contact.

17 Converted Stations Transitional Group Update

- 17.1 JPa noted the second pump availability has dipped for all four stations due to key staff being out of the workplace and that some stations have improved with first pump availability.
- 17.2 JPa reported that coverage is prioritised for Dovercourt, Canvey, Witham and Braintree as they are designated as strategic stations for the Service
- 17.3 JPa confirmed the coverage in February 2024 for Dovercourt was 98%, Canvey 99% with Braintree and Witham both 96% respectively. JPa said the percentage points at the time meant there was an appliance available to respond to a call in those towns.
- 17.4 JPa reported the reason for the dips in availability was due to the time taken to move people through the phases, recruitment has been strong across most of the stations and there is a time lag between taking people from the street to making them into a competent firefighter.
- 17.5 Two key members of staff at Braintree and Witham were away from the Stations but the Witham member is due to return in March 2024.

- 17.6 JPa advised that the teams have worked hard regarding the embedded officers being removed from the end of March 2024 with the biggest impact to Waltham Abbey and Dovercourt.
- 17.7 JPa informed the board that a paper is being presented to SLT which will outline the plans for availability and ensure they remain on budget for next year.
- 17.8 JPa confirmed the plan for Dovercourt was to have two embedded officers for 12 months, one of which would only be required for six months and Waltham Abbey would have one for six months.
- 17.9 RH noted JPa referred to two stations but the transitional proposal was for Dovercourt. JPa confirmed the paper for SLT was Dovercourt for which there may have been a request for a drawdown on additional funding which was not required and therefore the paper was for information only. Similar work was required at Waltham Abbey for which a paper has not been produced as no additional funds were required.
- 17.10 RH asked whether we would be in budget for 2024/25, 2023/24 or both and whether we sustain the level of coverage for Dovercourt which is as good as 100%.
- 17.11 In terms of the 2023/24 budget JPa stated this could not be sustained due to the overspend for on-call and this could not be recovered. Dovercourt would be funded through the agreed response budget for 2024/25 and the predicted vacancy factor. There was a separate piece of work regarding the response budget which would outline how they would prevent the overspend for on-call.
- 17.12 RH reminded the Board of the need to adhere to the CRMP and a Decision Report would be required to agree the overspend.
- 17.13 RH also stated that if the metrics were to be amended to the CRMP then this would also have to be considered by the Board.
- 17.14 JPa reported that the 'Transitional Stations' paper regarding Dovercourt would ensure they continue to improve availability across the first pump for the next financial year and support the coverage for the four strategic stations.
- 17.15 JPa confirmed the paper for SLT would provide an update on the 17-point plan and the procedures that would be put in place moving forward to sustain the improvements in availability.
- 17.16 RH noted the reference to the level of coverage for Dovercourt 98%, Canvey 99%, Braintree 96% and Witham 96% and asked that the figures be included in the next monthly update.

JPa and PBI left the meeting at 12 noon.

15 Public Sector Equality Duty Update – Verbal Update

- 15.1 CB reported the update was presented at the Strategic Board on 6 March 2024 and there was no requirement to bring to the P&R Board, although since the meeting on 6 March 2024 ECFRS had been awarded Silver Accreditation from the Inclusive Employers Standard (IES), recognising the Service's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the workplace. It is the first time a fire and rescue service in the country has achieved an IES accreditation at this level.
- 15.2 JG suggested publicising the Award through the Media which was agreed.

16 Estates Strategy Update

- 16.1 KE advised that Will Newman has been appointed as the Assistant Director of Asset Management and a new Operations Fleet Manager is due to start in May 2024.
- 16.2 Concerto will be moving to the cloud on the back of the new finance system.
- 16.2 Meeting regarding the Joint Fleet Workshop took place on 27 March between the parties to discuss mapping of the new workshop.
- 16.3 Orsett Fire Station due to open on 9 April 2024, Southend will be next and Old Harlow is close to getting a small appliance.
- 16.4 Meeting week commencing 2 April 2024 with all five water companies to discuss improvement of hydrant servicing and installation across the sites.
- 16.5 JW noted the cost overshoot of Shoeburyness and should property management be added as a risk to the risk register. KE confirmed that they have tighter controls in place for property management.

Action 22/24

JW and KE to discuss the change regarding property management outside the meeting and to update JP.

18 Information Governance Update

- 18.1 KE advised that an external audit was conducted to ensure impartiality which is now complete and the actions have been consolidated into three categories: 'Risk & Assurance', 'Records Management' and 'Training & Awareness'. Each of the categories have three key milestones which are being monitored through the Information Governance Board and the Continuous Improvement Board to ensure they are on track to deliver the actions.
- 18.2 RH enquired as to when this can be reviewed by the P&R Board and KE confirmed it would be presented on a quarterly basis.

19 Deep Dive Update

- 19.1 JG confirmed the 'Performance Deep Dives' paper was for information only.
- 19.2 MB advised they were looking at changing the Deep Dive Programme which would be discussed outside the meeting with JW and JP.
- 19.3 JW added to the Teams Chat that Property Management and Maintenance would be discussed on 24 April 2024 with Control and RMU on 22 May 2024. LC asked to be invited to the Deep Dives and said it would be useful to have the Terms of Reference.

Action 23/24

JP to draft Terms of Reference (key lines of inquiry) for the Deep Dives for consideration at the next P&R Board.

19.4 JP asked MB to send a list of people to be invited to the Deep Dives.

Action 24/24

MB to send JP a list of people to be invited to the Deep Dives.

20 Any Other Business

There being no further business the meeting closed at 12:20pm.

Future meeting dates

- Wednesday 24 April 2024 10:00
- Monday 20 May 2024 14:00