

**POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR ESSEX AND  
ESSEX COUNTY FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE  
STRATEGIC BOARD**

**10.00 – 11.00**

**17 January 2024**

**Via Microsoft Teams**

**Present:**

Roger Hirst (RH)	Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (Chair)
Pippa Brent-Isherwood	Chief Executive Officer, PFCC's office
Rick Hylton (RHy)	Chief Fire Officer, ECFRS
Andy Smith (AS)	Director of Operations ECFRS
Colette Black (CB)	Director of People Services, ECFRS
Janet Perry (JP)	Chief Financial Officer and Strategic Head of Performance & Resources
Jo Thornicroft (JT)	Head of Performance and Scrutiny (Fire)
Neil Cross (NC)	Chief Finance Officer, ECFRS
Karl Edwards (KE)	Director of Corporate Services, ECFRS
Moira Bruin (MB)	Deputy Chief Fire Officer, ECFRS
Emily Cheyne (EC)	Assistant Director Communications, ECFRS
Brooke Knight (BK)	Minutes, PFCC's office

**Apologies:**

Jane Gardner (JG) Deputy Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

**1 Welcome and apologies**

1.1 RH welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted from above.

**2 2024/25 Proposed Budget**

2.1 NC presented the formal recommendation for 2024/25. NC informed there was an announcement made on the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 2024 for the confirmation that the precept flexibility of 3% would be confirmed in the local government finance settlement.

2.2 NC requested to increase the precept by £2.34 which is an 2.91% overall increase for 2024/25.

2.3 NC raised the changes since the December 2023 paper and said CPI inflation was applied to the Support Grant and this was in line with the assumption that ECFRS already made. NC noted there is no inflation to the Pension Grant this year, but it will be increasing in the following years. NC said the baseline NNDR increased by £780k which was not planned but there has been a reduction in the Services Grant by £500k. NC stated the Section 31 Business Rates Relief was overestimated by £200k and this has now been finalised within this budget paper. NC requested an increase of funding for ECFRS for £700k as compared to the previous paper.

- 2.4 NC explained the plan to balance the budget is to reduce the pay awards to 3% and ECFRS are taking the decision to remove five roles within ICT, fleet apprenticeship and HR which will have a saving of the budget of around £200k. NC noted the capital receipts have been reviewed and ECFRS have accelerated the use of £1.9 million pounds of capital receipts and re prioritised them for 2024, which has positively reduced the margin to £240k.
- 2.5 NC requested an additional £2.1 million cashable savings to produce the balance MTFS for 2025/26 to 2028/29. NC noted the MRP charge has been modelled out within this paper which will endeavour to incur costs at a later date.
- 2.6 NC said there has been no other changes that applied to the capital programme or general reserves.
- 2.7 NC confirmed the pay awards have been updated but the discussions for 2024/25 have not formally commenced.
- 2.8 RH stated that Essex Police have received the pension costs, but it has been funded by funding formula instead of the pension cost which has caused a discrepancy which ECFRS needs to look out for.
- 2.9 RHy thanked NC and the team for getting as far as they have with the budget set out for 2024/25 and understands how challenging this has been and what challenges lie ahead long term.
- 2.10 RHy noted this paper has been shared with the represented bodies and conversations have taken place with the Fire and Rescue Association and RHy has offered the rep bodies the opportunity to contact RHy and RH ahead of today.
- 2.11 RH thanked ECFRS for their hard work and continued support.

**Action 01/24 – RH to identify what the Revenue Support Grant is allocated on and refer this information back to NC.**

**Action 02/24 – NC to create a risk section within the final published version of this paper.**

The meeting ended at 10:30am.