

## MINUTES

### POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR ESSEX AND ESSEX COUNTY FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

#### STRATEGIC BOARD

0900 to 1100

6 March 2024

Via Microsoft Teams

#### Present:

Roger Hirst (RH)	Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (Chair)
Colette Black (CB)	Director of People Services, ECFRS
Pippa Brent-Isherwood (PBI)	Chief Executive Officer, PFCC's office
Moira Bruin	Deputy Chief Fire Officer, ECFRS
Emily Cheyne	Assistant Director Communications, ECFRS
Neil Cross (NC)	Chief Finance Officer, ECFRS
Karl Edwards (KE)	Director of Corporate Services, ECFRS
Rick Hylton (RH)	Chief Fire Officer, ECFRS
Janet Perry (JP)	Strategic Head of Performance and Resources, PFCC's office
Andy Smith (AS)	T/Director of Operations
Jo Thornicroft (JT)	Head of Performance and Scrutiny (Fire), PFCC's office
Jeremy White (JW)	Finance Manager, PFCC's office
Camilla Brandal	Minutes, PFCC's office

#### Apologies:

Jane Gardner (JG)	Deputy Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
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#### 1 Welcome and apologies

RH welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted apologies from JG.

#### 2 Minutes of the previous meeting and any matters arising

The minutes of the previous three meetings (Strategic - 13 December 2023, Joint - 19 December 2023 and Extraordinary - 17 January 2024) were approved with no amendments.

An update on the pre-planning application for Old Harlow was given by KE and it was agreed that KE would provide a written update for the PFCC's office with the issues raised by Harlow Council.

There were no further matters arising from these minutes.

#### 3 Action Log

67/22 Building Risk Review – interim update

HSE annual report published in September and will be reported on quarterly. Close.

- 20/23 2024/25 Proposed Budget – incl MTFS – MRP projections  
Independent review to be carried out by CIPFA in 2024/25. Due date to be set at Q2 next year.
- 21/23 2024/25 Proposed Budget – incl MTFS – Extraordinary Board Meeting held. Close.
- 22/23 Pension Board Annual report – membership  
Report amended to include JP. Close.
- 23/23 People Strategy Action Plan  
Culture Dashboard information in February P&R papers. Close.
- 24/23 Community Risk Management Plan update  
SAOR redactions explanation email received. Close.
- J01/23 Joint Fleet Workshops  
Awaiting cost information for decision report.
- J02/23 Joint Fleet Workshops  
Relies on information from J01/23.
- 01/24 2024/25 Proposed Budget  
Information sent to NC. Close.
- 02/24 2024/25 Proposed Budget  
NC created risk section in final published version. Close.

#### 4 Forward Plan

- 4.1 An Extraordinary Meeting is scheduled for 20 May to agree the proposed draft accounts, CRMP update and Fire and Rescue Plan update. EC asked that the Strategic Assessment of Risk ('SAOR') be added to the 6 June meeting.
- 4.2 A discussion took place around the need for an accounts meeting and associated auditor responses and sign offs.
- 4.3 It was agreed that the Fire and Rescue Plan will be added as an item on the September agenda and an item on the Constitution added to the December meeting. It was further agreed that an Extraordinary meeting will be set up for October/November to discuss the CRMP.

#### **Action 03/24**

**Fire and Rescue Plan will be added as an item on the September agenda and an item on the Constitution added to the December meeting. It was further agreed that an Extraordinary meeting will be set up for October/November to discuss the CRMP.**

RH took the opportunity to thank JT for her immense contribution over the last few years as it was her last meeting before leaving the PFCC's office at the end of the week.

## 5 Annual Gender Pay Gap Report

- 5.1 CB presented the report for noting prior to publication. From the Executive Summary, the gender pay gap for 2023 has continued to decrease and reflects the actions in this regard, with the gap being less than 2022, 2021 and 2020.
- 5.2 After a discussion, the report was approved and agreed for publication. A statement from the Comms Team around the negative pay gap would be prepared.

## 6 Annual Pay Policy

CB presented the position in relation to the Annual Pay Policy and after a brief discussion, the Pay Policy Statement 2024-2025 was approved and is to be published on the Service's website.

## 7 Annual Equality Compliance Report

CB presented the annual report and the action taken during 2023 to fulfil the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) Objectives. After a brief discussion, it was agreed that the LRS stats would have an 'up and down' trajectory item included and following that inclusion, it was agreed that the narrative report would be reviewed for plain English and have design elements added to it. Following this review, the report is to be published on the Service's website.

## 8 Final Accounts – paper withdrawn

It is to be noted that the paper has been withdrawn.

## 10 Medium Term Financial Strategy

- 10.1 NC presented the MTFS and highlighted items to note (Fleet workshops, loan funding, risk section, pay and claims, and reserves). A discussion took place around the Green Book payments and it was agreed that NC would amend the cost impact to £1.4m. A further discussion took place around the employer pension costs which HMT have committed to cover.
- 10.2 It was agreed that the MTFS could be published now but that further iterations could be made later. NC would include the MTFS as an appendix in the Decision Report that approves the Budget.
- 10.3 RH thanked NC and the finance team for producing a good functioning medium term report.

## 11 Reserves Strategy

- 11.1 NC confirmed that the Reserves Strategy 2024-25 has been prepared for publication and highlighted the key points within it for noting. Following a discussion, it was agreed that NC would add a statement into the Strategy 'Our desire is to have a general reserve that is at the level of 3% of the budget revenue expenditure and that does not exceed 5% of the net budget revenue expenditure.'

- 11.2 The Decision Report 007-24 was agreed with the amendments to the Strategy, and will be submitted to the PFCC's office for sign off.

**Action 04/24**

**Decision Report 007-24 to be submitted to the PFCC's office for sign off.**

12 Capital Strategy

- 12.1 NC presented the Decision Report for the approval of the Capital Strategy and MRP Policy 2024-25 and went through the recommendations and key points. After a discussion, it was agreed that NC would update the headings on MRP and MTFS to show that the forecasts in 24/24 should reflect the budget. A brief discussion took place around the possible borrowing that will be required and the further work to be done on the MTFS.
- 12.2 It was agreed that following the amendments to the Strategy, the Decision Report 008-24 would be submitted to the PFCC's office for processing.

**Action 05/24**

**Decision Report 008-24 to be submitted to the PFCC's office for sign off.**

9 Treasury Management Strategy

- 9.1 NC presented the TM Strategy for approval and set out the recommendations and key points relating to borrowing, liability benchmarks, cash balances and authorised limits for borrowing. After a brief discussion, NC would confirm the available credit line amounts to RH and amend the Strategy to include the clarification point around lining up with the budget. A further brief discussion took place around the exploratory work being done around using bio-fuel for fire appliances.
- 9.2 It was agreed that following the amendments to the Strategy, the Decision Report 005-24 would be submitted to the PFCC's office for processing.

**Action 06/24**

**Decision Report 005-24 to be submitted to the PFCC's office for sign off.**

13 Efficiency Statement

- 13.1 NC presented the Productivity and Efficiency Plan which has to be submitted to the Home Office and published on the Service's website by 31 March 2024 (with the addition of a supplementary table on savings which was not included with the Board papers). After a brief discussion, it was agreed that cashable savings sub-totals and interest receivable figures would be included in the savings table.
- 13.2 It was agreed that the Productivity and Efficiency Plan (and savings table when prepared) would be submitted to the Home Office and published on the Service's website by 31 March.
- 13.3 It was further agreed that the workshop scheduled for 19 March would be addressing the next phase of the Plan.

14 Community Risk Management Plan progress and proposals

- 14.1 MB introduced the report which outlined the project workstreams, engagement/consultation plan, timeline of work and activities along with headlines and themes to note. (Appendix 5 will be issued after the meeting to Board members).
- 14.2 RH asked that the headings be Prevention, Protection and then Response in the CRMP rather than starting with Response.

### **PBI left the meeting at 1100**

### **15 Risk Strategy Refresh**

- 15.1 MB presented the Decision Report (001-24) and associated revised Risk Strategy for 2024 for agreement. The Strategy sets out how risk is managed within the Service and provides a basis for risk based decision making against the Fire and Rescue Plan, Service priorities and delivery of services.
- 15.2 It was agreed that JP, KE and MB would review the ECFRS Strategy categories and look at aligning them with Essex Police's Strategy's categories outside of this Board.
- 15.3 It was agreed that Decision Report 001-24 would be submitted to the PFCC's office for processing.

#### **Action 07/24**

**Decision Report 001-24 to be submitted to the PFCC's office for sign off.**

### **16 Any Other Business**

- 16.1 Decision Report 012/24 – Scheduled replacement of Thermal Image Cameras

KE presented the Decision Report which asks for approval for the procurement of 139 new Thermal Image Cameras. After a brief discussion, it was agreed that the Decision Report would be amended to reflect the revised budgeted figure of £695,000 which will include training and implementation.

It was agreed that following the amendments to the Strategy, Decision Report 012-24 would be submitted to the PFCC's office for processing.

#### **Action 08/24**

**Decision Report 012-24 to be submitted to the PFCC's office for sign off.**

- 16.2 RHy confirmed that the HMICFRS report had been sent to the Service and RH earlier than expected.
- 16.3 RHy commented that he is attending the Transformation Awards in London tonight where the Service has been nominated for Fire Service of the year.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 1118.