



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

ECFRS Performance & Resources Board

24 April 2024 10:00 – 12:00

Present:

Jane Gardner (JG)	Deputy Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC's Office)
Colette Black (CB)	Director of People Services (ECFRS)
Emily Bownes (EB)	Head of Performance and Scrutiny – Fire (PFCC's Office)
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)
Rick Hylton (RH)	Chief Fire Officer (ECFRS)
Tracey King (TK)	Assistant Director of Performance and Improvement (ECFRS)
Heather Kinzett (HK)	Occupational Health Manager (ECFRS)
Helen Notman (HN)	Scrutiny Officer (PFCC's Office)
Janet Perry (JP)	Chief Financial Officer / Strategic Head of Performance and Resources (PFCC's Office)
Shirley Robson (SR)	Continuous Improvement Officer (ECFRS)
Andy Smith (AS)	Director of Operations (ECFRS)
Sarah Smith (SS)	Procurement Manager (ECFRS)
Jeremy White (JW)	Finance Manager (PFCC's Office)
Brooke Knight (BK)	Minutes (PFCC's Office)

Apologies:

Roger Hirst	Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Pippa Brent-Isherwood (PBI)	CEO and Monitoring Officer (PFCC's Office)
Moirra Bruin (MB)	Deputy Chief Fire Officer (ECFRS)

1. Welcome and Apologies

1.1. JG welcomed all to the meeting and the apologies recorded above.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

2.1. The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Action Log

38/23 On-Call Support and Development

Jim Palmer delivered the key metrics in the report to the board for April. The final updated metrics update will be presented today.

Propose Close.

05/24 Performance Report

AS confirmed from SLT that it was a temporary abstraction to get the community well-being officers in place and a short-term restructure within prevention awaiting a longer-term restructure over the summer when ECFRS have got a new kind of prevention in place.

Propose Close.

06/24 Performance Report

LC to consider extending the risk-based inspection programmes target graphs to show future predictions, presenting the planning tool to P&R boards. It was proposed to be included from April's data, and therefore it will be presented at May's P&R board.

Open.

08/24 Converted Stations Transitional Group Update

AS confirmed the coverage updates are included in the report.

Propose Close.

09/24 Finance Report

The auditors have presented their position on the pension scheme at the recent audit committee.

Propose Close.

10/24 Quarterly Risk Review

MB to review the risk appetite at SLT and a meeting has been scheduled for the 30th of April.

Open.

13/24 Forward Plan

JW to add complaints and compliments, process, and outcome to the Forward Plan for May 2024. This has been completed.

Propose Close.

14/24 Finance Report

RH to sign the decision report 009-24FRA around productivity and efficiency plan, he has signed the DR and returned to the service.

Propose Close.

15/24 Performance Report

LC to review sickness figures for February 2024. LC noted the five-year average is for the month in question, so the data presented is for the previous five February's, rather than a 5 year rolling average. It was noted it is more helpful to be able to compare sickness at the time of year, rather than rolling. LC requested to put a footnote on the page to say the role in 5 year is for that specific month.

Open.

16/24 Performance Report

Jim Palmer to ensure there's a better explanation of the risk-based inspection programme. This is not due until June 2024.

Open.

17/24 Performance Report

MB to draft a deep dive paper on the methodology regarding the input and outcomes metrics in May 2024. Deep dive meeting has been scheduled for the 22nd of May 2024.

Open.

18/24 Q3 Performance Report

JP and LC to discuss the content for the quarterly performance report for the presentation at the Police, Fire and Crime panel. A meeting has been organised on the 14th of May to discuss this.

Open.

19/24 Annual Accounts Table

NC confirmed the annual accounts table will be shared with JP outside of the meeting but to leave the action open until this meeting has happened.

Open.

20/24 Protection Strategy

MB to consider a local solution as to how the service can support police regarding evidence to secure criminal convictions. AS confirmed, he will be covering that paper in today's meeting.

Propose Close.

21/24 People Strategy Update

CB to ensure that interim people strategy action plan is added to the Strategic Board forward plan and confirmed that has been added.

Propose Close.

22/24 Estates Strategy Update

JW and KE to discuss the change regarding property management outside of the meeting and to update JP. JW confirmed to schedule a meeting with KE to discuss this. This will be completed as part of the estates deep dive.

Propose Close.

23/24 Deep Dive Update

JP to draft terms of reference for the deep dives for the consideration at this P&R board. EB confirmed a meeting has been scheduled.

Open.

24/24 Deep Dive Update

MB to send a list of the deep dive attendees to JP.

Open.

4. Forward Plan

4.1 EB advised the Forward Plan items for May P&R Board and noted the 'Quarterly Working Well Together' report has been deferred from April to the May P&R Board. Service colleagues confirmed they were expecting the forward plan and agreed the items.

5. Finance Report

5.1 NC thanked The PFCC's Office for the patience with receiving the finance pack given ECFRS went live with the new finance system on the 10th of April.

5.2 NC gave a verbal update on the outturn for the 12 months to March 2024:

- Projecting an outturn of a small deficit of £91k
- Small surplus position of £362k. The overspend on employment costs have been partially offset by additional unbudgeted operational income and funding.
- An additional income of £100k for operational income that was not projected within the forecast. In addition, there has been unplanned income, which was a late notification from DLUHC for £200k.
- Hospitality relief relating to national nondomestic rates of £700k. NC noted this has been recognised through the general fund of £500k and the remaining £200k has been put through as an earmark reserve against NNDR collection reserve.

5.3 NC advised that the Home Office were going to withdraw the payment of the grant due to ECFRS not spending some of the previous year's protection grants. However, the Home Office were happy with all the plans that ECFRS have in place relating to the protection grant and have sufficient plans to spend the grant in 2025, and the funds have been paid in March 2024. NC highlighted the great work from Dave Bond in respect to those plans.

5.4 JG thanked Dave Bond for the hard work on the protection grants plan.

5.6. JW requested a schedule of all the transfers in and out for the earmarked reserves monthly. NC confirmed it will be possible to establish a report that contains this information within the next few months, since the implementation of the new finance system.

Action 25/24 – NC to establish a schedule of transfers in and out for the earmarked reserves within finance report and present to JW in the next following months.

5.5 NC advised the cash balance reduced by £6million this month. This was due to two key reasons being, two pension payments were made in the same month and payment to suppliers happened earlier than usual because the strategic decision to go live with the new finance system.

5.6 Capital spend was just shy of £4.1million. £1.2 million of committed orders are still ongoing.

5.7 JW credited NC for the budget performance for this year, given the challenges around employment costs.

6. Procurement Dashboard

- 6.1 SS confirmed the 'Procurement Act' has an official go live date of 28 October 2024. The Cabinet Office are proactively working on the documents that are being published to support the act. The E-Learning was launched on 22 April 2024. SS noted there will be more updates coming in the future dashboard.
- 6.2 SS advised the Procurement Team delivered training to the Fleet Workshop Team as a reminder of the procurement rules and constitution.
- 6.3 The tender preparation for Southend whole time modernisation is under way, ahead of receiving the technical specification in May.
- 6.4 Work has commenced on two large planned preventative maintenance contracts. These are bay doors and the mechanical works.
- 6.5 SS noted as per last month's update, ECFRS have joined the 7Forces contract for water, wastewater, and billing services.
- 6.6 A lot of contracts within the ICT space are in the request for quote level or framework awards. A few to note are Incident Recording System, Visitor Management System and The Fire Management Information System.
- 6.7 SS advised the workwear trials are still underway with a mixture of roles from across the service. SS will bring more of a detailed update on that project within the dashboard next month.
- 6.8 SS noted the new contract for external audit services cannot be signed until the 2022/23 accounts have been signed.
- 6.9 There were no STAs for March 2024.
- 6.10 SS advised the final savings figure for the collaboration data for the last quarter of the financial year of 2023/24 was just over £485k, which is a huge difference from previous years.
- 6.11 SS advised that this financial year ECFRS will start reporting on the total contract awarded value against a framework or against a 7Forces contract. To ensure the clarity around what values are the service putting through with 7Forces to give some more figures there as well around the collaboration data.
- 6.12 JW queried how the procurement is working with new finance system in place and asked if there was any disruption with suppliers. SS said there were no issues as the service had implemented clear communication plans in that space and are heavily involved with the UAT and training. NC stated there some teething issues around open purchase orders as the coding was incorrect, but the team closed the system for a day to correct the issue.

6.13 JG thanked SS and the team for their hard work and how far we've come with procurement.

SS left the meeting at 10:44am

7. **Performance Report**

7.1 LC talked through the monthly performance report and confirmed ECFRS was 93.88% quality assured at the time of reporting and there are some numbers that will change within the report.

- The service attended 1225 incidents, which is above the five-year average. 227 fires were attended which is below the average, 561 false alarms and 94 RTCs.
- The service has had an incident that has been quality assured, there was a fatality due to an accidentally dwelling fire in Witham. LC confirmed the report will be updated following this meeting to include the fatality information. LC confirmed a Targeted After Incident Response (TAIR) was completed after the incident.
- Station coverage hit the target of 98%.
- LC advised that the service is expected to complete 6.3 audits at unique premises.
- Very high-risk audits are expected to be completed in December 2025 and the high-risk audits in January 2027.
- March has seen a 2% increase in the total number of visits for prevention and, operational crews have matched the number of visits that they completed each month. In the safe and well teams have increased their visits by 3% when looking at previous months.
- Sickness figure is 6.2 which means ECFRS are below what we'd expect to normally see in March and equal to what has been seen over the previous month.

7.2 NC thanked to Tim Rickard and Dave Bond for the time spent going through this over the last couple of weeks.

7.3 EB queried the home fire safety visits for operational crew being a lot higher than what is being completed. AS said that the service has faced some challenges in terms of the standby moves that crews have had previously but assured the service are now seeing steady progress towards target.

7.4 JW queried the target graph and asked if the service are going to meet those challenges. AS explained, this will be more dynamic going forward. There is additional capacity within ECFRS office managers that are not used and are allocated to other work that is involved there.

7.5 JG asked for feedback from ECFRS around the pilot that the service was involved in asked for any insights on the survey process. AS confirmed a positive review from the pilot the service is feeding the results back into the NFCC and LC has shared the positive numbers with EB which will be included within the closure report.

7.6 JG thanked the service for all their hard work and efforts.

8. **Annual Accounts Timetable**

Withdrawn – to be circulated outside of the meeting by NC.

9. Enforcement and Remediation on Clad Buildings

- 9.1 AS advised the benefit the service is receiving from the investments that they have made in the high-risk task force. A number of additional premises and enforcement that the service is carrying out as a result of that task force in addition to the original BRR project.
- 9.2 JG queried if the additional staff promised to start in February as previously discussed at the January Performance & Resources Board had occurred, as this had not been mentioned either way in the report. AS stated this has not been confirmed yet and the service are waiting for the level 3 trained confirmation to be received before the staff can be released back to the very high-risk premises. Training was completed at the end of March, and the promise of the confirmation of pass is to be sent via email will speed up the release of the staff reducing the time from six to eight months to six to eight weeks.
- 9.3 EB questioned how the local housing authorities have responded to the service reminding them of their powers, when the service's own powers are limited under the FSO, and asked if authorities are engaging with the service. AS confirmed the local housing authorities have been very proactive within that space and the service are building those relationships.

10. Response Strategy Update

- 10.1 AS summarised the highlights within the report, advising a positive report this month and starting to see the benefit of a lot of the work that's going on in the response space.
- Availability within March up to 73%, an 8% increase.
 - Average On-Call 74% - this percentage would be higher at 91% but due to the challenges with the second pump. Work is being done around how work can be done differently in future with some of those second pumps and how the service uses those resources.
 - The service has managed to slow down the overspend and in the coming months the figures will improved with measures consistently followed.
- 10.2 AS confirmed a larger number of staff are taking the Breathing Apparatus (BA) course and by June the majority of staff will have completed it.
- 10.3 JP questioned preventing the On-Call overspend and if the service knows in advance what is going to come up on the finance position. AS said the service do not know in advance but this is being closely monitored and reviewed at a monthly meeting to keep up to date with changes. NC stated this is now reported to the OPS Resource Board and will liaise with JP go through the finance pack.

Action 26/24 – NC to liaise with JP on the On-Call overspend finance pack.

10.4 JP queried the mixed crewing and asked how it is performing. AS stated people understand the need for it now and the benefit for those individuals which is generally supported.

11. Converted Stations Transitional Group Update

11.1 AS advised the service are making real progress with availability. All of the pumps are increasing or maintaining a level of availability. AS highlighted a lot of work is being carried out on commands, not just with the recruitment but the retention of staff.

11.2 Issues with sickness rates the service has managed to overcome. AS said the service need to continue to build that resilience as limited capacity when it comes to costs. AS confirmed all measures are in place and teams are working hard to continue to improve.

11.3 JG queried the availability at Dovercourt and to ensure there is coverage there and if the service is confident or should the service think about keeping the embedded offices longer? AS confirmed availability is being used more flexibly and the service are starting to cluster stations now. If it starts to show as it is having an impact through the Resource Board the service may need to look at a reintroduction.

12. Update on Fire Standards (action 03/24)

13.1 TK gave an update on Fire Standards for the past 2 years advising, ECFRS has responded jointly with the OPFCC to 6 consultations on 'Developing Bystanders'.

13.2 'Internal Governance and Assurance' is soon to be published.

13.3 CIB have 16 published standards. While CIB's focus has been initially on the assessment of compliance, the service is now moving to a monitoring space for the standards in service.

13.4 TK advised the HMICFRS published a report into values and culture in the fire service and that named three of the standards in the recommendations made through that report. We had with the recommendations that were made to the Fire Standards Board, had to go back to those 3 standards and make amendments to those standards to incorporate further content, which that was completed in quarter three of this financial year.

13.5 ECFRS held a standards day in service in January 2024, which was a collaborative event with the NFCC.

13.6 TK finalised and said there is a lot of work going on across the service from all colleagues and informed that a beneficial peer review arrangement with Kent ECFRS to peer review each other's fire standards.

13. Protection Strategy Update – supporting police to secure criminal convictions (action 20/24)

14.1 AS talked about the impact of not pursuing the ISO creation at this stage and the services ability to continue to support the police. AS confirmed it will have no impact. There is no ISO standard at the moment, so this does not impact ECFRS abilities to investigate fires or support the police through investigations. AS noted, the service is continuing to work closely with the project. When the ISO makes progress nationally, they are able to jump back on board and ensure that standards can be met.

14. Any Other Business

There being no further business the meeting closed at 11:55am.

Future meeting date

- Monday 20th May 2024 14:00