



SCOTTISH  
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Working together for a safer Scotland

**PUBLIC MEETING - SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE BOARD**

**THURSDAY 26 OCTOBER 2023 @ 1000 HRS**

**VIRTUAL – MS TEAMS**

**PRESENT:**

Kirsty Darwent, Chair (KD)  
Stuart Ballingall (SJB)  
Brian Baverstock (BB)  
Malcolm Payton (MP)  
Mhairi Wylie (MW)

Fiona Thorburn, Deputy Chair (FT)  
Steve Barron (SB)  
Angiolina Foster (AF)  
Tim Wright (TW)

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Ross Haggart (RH)  
Stuart Stevens (SS)  
Liz Barnes (LBa)  
David Farries (DF)  
David Lockhart (DL)  
Mark McAteer (MMcA)  
Iain Morris (IM)  
John Thomson (JT)  
Stephen Wright (SW)  
Kevin Murphy (KM)  
Heather Greig (HG)  
Debbie Haddow (DJH)

Chief Officer  
Deputy Chief Officer  
Interim Deputy Chief Officer (Corporate Services)  
Assistant Chief Officer, Director of Service Delivery  
Assistant Chief Officer, Director of Service Development  
Director of Strategic Planning, Performance and Communications  
Acting Director of Asset Management  
Acting Director of Finance and Procurement  
Deputy Assistant Chief Officer (Item 24 only)  
Group Commander, Board Support Manager  
Executive Officer, Board Support  
Board Support/Minutes

**OBSERVERS:**

Robert Scott, HMFSI  
Marion Lang, Corporate Business and Administration Manager

**1 CHAIR'S WELCOME**

- 1.1 KD opened the meeting and welcomed those present and observing via MS Teams.
- 1.2 Attendees were reminded to raise their hands, in accordance with the remote meeting protocol, should they wish to ask a question.

**2 APOLOGIES**

- 2.1 Paul Stollard, Board Member  
Andy Watt, Assistant Chief Officer, Director of Training, Safety and Assurance  
Lyndsey Gaja, Head of People

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- 3 CONSIDERATION OF AND DECISION ON ANY ITEMS TO BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE**  
3.1 The Board agreed that the *Leadhills Community Fire Station Consultation Report* and *New Mobilising System Procurement Procedure* items would be taken in private. This is due to the potential consultation/negotiations and confidential commercial/financial information (Standing Order 9F and 9E), respectively.

- 4 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**  
4.1 There were no declarations of conflict of interests made.

- 5 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS:**  
5.1 **Thursday 31 August 2023**  
5.1.1 The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

- 5.1.2 **The minutes of the meeting held on 31 August 2023 were approved as a true record of the meeting.**

- 5.2 **Matters Arising**  
5.2.1 There were no matters arising.

- 6 ACTION LOG**  
6.1 The Board considered the action log and noted the updates.

Action 11.17 Organisational Performance Dashboard Q1 2023/24 (31/08/2023): It was agreed that this action would be re-opened, until the presentation had been given at the Strategic Planning Workshop on 2/3 November 2023 and closed thereafter, if appropriate.

Action 13.2 Revised Scheme of Delegations (31/08/2023): The revised Scheme of Delegations was being presented later on the agenda (Item 12), if approved this action would be considered complete and marked as closed.

- 6.2 **Members noted the updated Action Log and approved the removal of completed actions.**

- 7 DECISION LOG**  
7.1 The Board considered the Decision Log noting the impact assessments provided for decisions made 12 months ago.

Item 23 Development of Local Fire and Rescue Plans: September 2023 Update (28/09/2023): Following discussions in the private session, it was agreed that the recorded decision would be amended to read "*The Board agreed in principle to delay the revision of the plans, pending ....*".

- 7.2 **Members noted the updated Decision Log.**

- 8 CHAIR'S REPORT**  
8.1 KD presented the Chair's Update report which noted events that had occurred since the Board meeting held on 31 August 2023 and highlighted the following:
- Attended constructive meeting with John Paul Marks, Permanent Secretary along with CO Haggart and DCO Stevens. High level themes discussed related to budget challenges, continued efforts to deliver best value to communities, need for efficiencies and collaboration, and future high level ambitions over the medium to long term. Following the meeting, a short tour of MacDonald Road Fire Station and Museum was given. The enthusiasm of the museum volunteers and SFRS staff was notable and commendable.

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- Attended COSLA Health and Wellbeing Committee meeting along with DCO Stevens to give a presentation on Health and Wellbeing planning, Safe and Well and the expanded role of firefighters.
- Interviews for recruiting new Board members had concluded and recommendations had been submitted to the Minister for approval. Following formal appointment, an induction programme would commence in early December 2023.

8.2 **The Board noted the report and verbal update.**

### 9 CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

9.1 RH presented the Chief Officer's report noting events which had occurred since the Board meeting held on 31 August 2023 and highlighted the following:

- Attendance at the Annual Firefighter Memorial Trust Service of Remembrance event where FF Barry Martin was honoured. Mrs Martin and family were in attendance and were presented with a Posthumous Medal for FF Martin, following his tragic death.
- Attended Scottish Government's Justice Committee Pre-Budget Scrutiny meeting along with DCO Stevens and John Thomson, Acting Director of Finance and Procurement. The Service shared this session with Police Scotland, however, the Service had the opportunity to deliver key messages during this meeting and had provided a supporting written submission in advance. Thanks were extended to Mark McAteer and all those involved in developing the written submission.
- Attendance at the Brave @ Heart Awards event along with ACO Farries, where FF Ryan Witkoski and Watch Commander John Connell were presented with awards recognising their bravery.
- Appreciation and recognition of the outstanding efforts from all personnel during the recent storms and noted that the Service's thoughts remain with communities still affected.

9.2 **The Board noted the report and verbal update.**

### 10 COMMITTEE UPDATES

#### 10.1 Change Committee (CC)

10.1.1 FT reported that the Committee held a public meeting on 10 August 2023 and referred the Board to the attached draft minutes noting that a verbal update was provided at the previous meeting. The next Committee meeting was scheduled to be held on 9 November 2023.

10.1.2 **The Board noted the draft minutes and verbal update.**

#### 10.2 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC)

10.2.1 BB reported that the next meeting of the Committee was scheduled on Monday 30 October 2023.

10.2.2 **The Board noted the verbal update.**

#### 10.3 People Committee (PC)

10.3.1 MW reported that the Committee held a public meeting 14 September 2023 and referred the Board to the draft minutes, noting that a verbal update was provided at the previous meeting. The next Committee meeting was scheduled to be held on 7 December 2023.

10.3.2 **The Board noted the draft minutes and verbal update.**

#### 10.4 Service Delivery Committee (SDC)

10.4.1 TW reported that the Committee held a public meeting 24 August and referred the Board to the attached draft minutes noting that a verbal update was provided at the previous

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meeting. The next Committee meeting was scheduled to be held on 28 November 2023.

### 10.4.2 **The Board noted the draft minutes and verbal update.**

### 10.5 **Reform Collaboration Group (RCG) Oversight Group**

10.5.1 FT reported that the RCG Oversight Group held a private meeting on 18 October 2023 and highlighted the following:

- RCG Oversight Group was a non-executive led group comprising of both Scottish Police Authority and SFRS Board Members and supported by Executives from each organisation.
- Group's remit was to oversee the steps in the development of the Outline Business Case for Shared Services. Stakeholder engagement being a significant focus, as well as the evaluation of the bids following the Invitation to Tender process. Evaluation process had concluded, and the steps to award of contract were progressing through the various governance forums.
- Next meeting was scheduled for 9 November 2023.

10.5.2 The Board sought clarity on the timescale for this stage of the process. FT advised that pending approval, it was anticipated that the consultant would commence in the coming weeks and be in post until March 2024. It was noted that the process for vetting of consultants may vary and therefore the timescale may be expanded to May 2024. Scottish Government were being kept updated on the position.

10.5.3 It was confirmed that the RCG Oversight Group was not a decision-making forum and as such any strategic decisions would be brought to the Board for approval. The Board were reminded that this was a tendering process for consultation on the potential work which may lead to recommendations being made. The Board were also reminded that full business cases would require to be developed and would be subject to Board approval or otherwise.

### 10.5.4 **The Board noted the verbal update.**

## 11 **BOARD FORWARD PLAN SCHEDULE 2024/25**

11.1 MMcA presented the Board with the proposed schedule of Board and Committee related meeting dates and Board Forward Plan covering the period up to March 2025 for approval. The following key points were highlighted:

- Proposed to continue with hybrid meeting model.
- Proposed for some in person meetings, followed by engagement events, to be held across the country.

11.2 The Board sought clarification whether the hybrid approach to meetings would be evaluated. It was acknowledged that the Service still encourages to adopt the Digital First approach to meetings, but agreed that the evaluation of hybrid meetings would be considered as part of the annual review of Board effectiveness.

11.3 The Board commented on the statement within the report which referenced that the use of virtual meeting technology had brought positive change and questioned whether this was entirely accurate. Noting this comment, it was reiterated that an evaluation on the effectiveness of online/hybrid meetings, as well as costs related to in person attendance, would be considered during the annual review.

**ACTION: RW/BST**

11.4 **The Board approved the proposed schedule of meetings for the SFRS Board and its Committees and the Board Forward Plan 2024-25 along with the arrangements for reviewing these.**

## 12 REVISED SCHEME OF DELEGATIONS

- 12.1 MMcA presented the revised Scheme of Delegations for approval, thereby ensuring the continued effectiveness of governance arrangements. MMcA outlined the reason and process undertaken for further revisions being made to the Scheme of Delegations. The revised Scheme of Delegations had been circulated ahead of the formal presentation at today's meeting and all comments received had been taken into consideration during the revision.
- 12.2 Thanks were extended to Board Members for their comments, and to MMcA and all those involved in the revision of the Scheme of Delegations
- 12.3 **The Board approved the revised Scheme of Delegations.**

## 13 ANNUAL PROCUREMENT REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2022 -31 MARCH 2023

- 13.1 JT presented the Annual Procurement Report for the period 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023, which the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) is required to prepare and publish under the requirements of the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 for approval. The following key points were highlighted:
- 37 Regulated procurements completed within the reporting year, total estimated contract value of £41.8million.
  - Contracted spend was under 96% (first time since the inception of the Service).
  - Number of non-competitive actions reduced from 17 to 5.
  - 96% of Suppliers were paid within 30 days and 79% within 10 days.
  - 73% of spend in collaborative contracts resulting in savings of £1.12million.
  - 47% (£44.0million) total spend with Scottish based suppliers and approx. 30% (£28.0million) is with SME.
  - Decarbonisation projects investment of £4.5million.
  - Continued to support Supported Business with approx. £0.045 million spend.
  - Significant contributions and community benefits through major property work projects.
- 13.2 In regard to fair work contracts, the Board sought further information on the financial value of the 18 new contracts awarded, what provisions were included in existing contracts and clarification on the statement "*mandating the payment of the Real Living wage where it is relevant and proportionate*" and how it is applied.
- 13.3 JT advised the Board that as part of the evaluation criteria there is a requirement to evaluate fair work practices, in support of Scottish Government and to ensure that all contractors and their employees are performing/supporting fair working practices. The statement referencing "*relevant and proportionate*" was necessary due to the differences within contracts and to ensure the Service remained focussed and relevant to the individual contract.
- 13.4 The Board requested an indication of the financial value of fair work contracts awarded.  
**ACTION: JT**
- 13.5 The Board queried the reason for the decrease in invoices settled within 10 days. JT noted that it was challenging to finalise the process within the 10 days and the main target remained 30 days. JT reminded the Board of the option to set up project bank accounts which allowed sub-contractors to be paid quicker. JT further noted that the focus remained on supporting businesses and maintaining cash flows.
- 13.6 The Board asked whether contractors were being asked to sign up to Stonewall. JT advised that the Service seek information from and offer suggestions on how contractors could provide evidence for areas such as Stonewall.

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- 13.7 The Board commented on the community benefits evidenced for the West Asset Resource Centre project and this was not necessarily duplicated in other projects. The McLaughlin Harvey report contained evidence of community benefits which provided a good insight of the community provision but not on other aspects, or the proportionality expected within the contract. Future consideration should be given to engage with contractors to help realise national/wider benefits, how impact can be measured and how this fits with other issues eg corporate parenting.
- 13.8 JT noted the increase in sharing information relating to community benefits and the comments regarding evidencing the impact/differences being made.
- 13.9 The Board noted and welcomed the improvements relating to the non-contractual spend particularly non-competitive actions.
- 13.10 The Board queried whether the procurement spend could be part of delivering efficiencies, ie increased competitiveness in procurement processes and reducing overall procurement spend, changing behaviours, etc.
- 13.11 JT noted that although cashable savings may not necessarily mean cash in the bank, there were greater benefits for the public sector by using a collaborative framework, which improves the competitive process. JT further noted that the focus on the evaluation process was slanted towards costs and through the UIG, the overall procurement process had a focus on achieving cashable savings.
- 13.12 The Board noted that consideration should be given to how cashable savings were being reported if actual cashable savings were not being realised. JT noted the comments.
- 13.13 **The Board approved the Annual Procurement Report for the period 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023.**

## 14 RESOURCE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2022/23 – SEPTEMBER 2023

- 14.1 JT presented a report advising the Board of the resource budget position for the period ending 30 September 2023. JT outlined the analysis of the financial position and referred Members to Appendix A of the report, which identified the current resource position showing an underspend of £0.131 million and a forecast year-end overspend of £2.341 million. The following key points were highlighted:
- Information on Strategic Leadership Team actions, financial risks and Directorate variances were included within report.
  - Employee costs: forecasted overspend in Wholetime (£0.960million); forecasted underspend in Control (£0.030million), On Call (£0.290million) and Support Staff (£0.320million)
  - Other Employer Costs: forecast overspend for travel subsistence costs (£0.500million).
  - Non-Employee costs: overspend in Property (£0.900million), Transport (£0.311million), Supplies and Services (£0.336million) and 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Payments (£0.033million).
  - Main change to the forecast related to the anticipated retirements not materialising as predicted. This has had a positive impact on operational availability but increased risk on longer term retirement profile.
  - Financial risks updated to combine both the Wholetime vacancies and overtime costs.
  - Actions taken by SLT to communicate with budget holders to seek additional savings with the current year.
  - Budget virements made were the release of some contingency monies to support changes in Wholetime and also adjustments relating to Rep Bodies and training budgets.



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- Decrease in budgeted savings achieved and projected.
- Overall risk remains budget overspend and savings not being fully realised.

14.2 The Board referenced previous comments made on optimism bias and the learning needed both for the current year and future year.

14.3 In regard to subsistence/travel, the Board queried whether there were opportunities to reduce these costs. JT reminded the Board that increased subsistence/travel were attributable to increased training activities, engagement activities and significant increase in accommodation/travel costs. All valid reasons for this increase, however, staff were being reminded on the need to reduce any costs.

14.4 The Board sought assurance on the confidence level for achieving a balanced budget. JT advised the Board that a balanced budget was still achievable and that some levers were still available, however uncertainty remained surrounding the pensions remedy situation.

14.5 RH reminded the Board that financial risks were not the only risk/priority facing the Service, citing operational, Health and Safety and training requirements were also imperative. RH noted that all risks/priorities needed to be taken into consideration and the Service would continue to manage the budget to the best of our ability. RH further noted that the Service were not able to hold or carry over reserves and were not able to predict the level of legacy claims coming forward. RH advised the Board that the current forecasted overspend was less than 1% of the budget, noted that levers were available, and actions were in place, and that the risk was not the most significant facing the Service.

14.6 JT noted that specific review and focus had been carried out on the run rate against the forecast and he had taken confidence in the forecast/reduction in risk.

14.7 In regard to the pension remedy, JT confirmed that the latest position was reflected in the current forecast and work would continue with workforce planning to keep up to date on the situation. LBa informed the Committee that SPPA would start to issue pension information from October 2023 through to April 2024. It was noted that statutory notice periods would have to be given ahead of any retirements.

14.8 The Board noted the various risks facing the Service, however a significant risk remained to balance the budget. The Board requested future reports include clearer narrative detail on the varying costs associated with operational requirements and expenditure related to operational priorities. It was noted that this would also raise Scottish Government and the general public's understanding and awareness of other non-financial risks to the Service and the communities of Scotland.

**ACTION: JT**

14.9 In regard to contingency monies, the Board ask for consideration to be given for more transparency/narrative on this budget within future reports.

14.10 **The Board scrutinised the resource budget position for the period ending 30 September 2023.**

### **15 CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2022/23 – SEPTEMBER 2023**

15.1 JT presented a report advising the Board of the actual and committed expenditure against the 2023/24 capital budget position for the period ending 30 September 2023. All efforts would be made to spend out the current revised budget of £32.500million by 31 March 2024. The following key points were highlighted:

- Capital committed/paid to date was £18.0million (54%).
- Budget virements within the reporting period.

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- Current projects were reporting on track, however further updates had since raised concerns on property works projects which are now reporting Red/Amber. There was risk of significant delays in property work which may impact on the current and next financial year.

15.2 IM provided a brief update on the current position noting 5 new/rebuild programmes were ongoing along with 5 major works projects all at different stages of completion. Updated on potential collaborative opportunities with Police Scotland and Scottish Ambulance Service. Moving into next year, the Service would potentially be over committed due to the New Mobilising System and as such the capital programme would need to be adjusted accordingly. The option to advance the fireground radios replacement programme and defer other projects could help realign the budget. Future Board decision would need to be made following the sale of Cowcaddens on how capital receipts were received and the potential future budget virements.

15.3 In regard to capital receipts, the Board commented on the need to confirm how these would be received and for assurance to be sought from Scottish Government on the retention of same. JT advised the Board that there were no guarantees regarding capital receipt retention, however discussions would continue with the Sponsor Unit.

15.4 In regard to RAAC panels, IM reminded the Board that the Service had been aware of these issues for some time and had already taken steps to assess and take mitigating actions across all properties. IM noted that he attended a monthly cross sector group and that, at present, no additional funding was available from the Scottish or UK Governments. IM further noted that the Service continued to explore the option of modular fire stations.

15.5 The Board noted their disappointment that collaboration opportunities were reducing because of capital contributions being requested from partners. IM assured the Board that the Service would continue to identify and pursue all opportunities for shared services.

15.6 **The Board scrutinised the level of actual and committed capital expenditure for the period ending 30 September 2023.**

*(Meeting adjourned at 1135 hrs and reconvened at 1145 hrs)*

## 16 RESOURCE BUDGET OUTTURN REPORT 2022/23

16.1 JT presented a report advising the Board of final Resource Budget position for the financial year 2022/2023, highlighting the following key points:

- Resource funding for 2022/23 was set at £284.07million, various in year adjustments resulted in a reduction of £0.975 million giving a revised budget of £293.234million.
- Prior agreement was sought from Scottish Government to overspend by £2.90million, however, the final overspend was £1.356million.
- Planned savings £4.953million (85%) achieved.

16.2 **The Board scrutinised the report.**

## 17 CAPITAL BUDGET OUTTURN REPORT 2022/23

17.1 JT presented a report advising the Board of final Capital Budget position for the financial year 2022/2023, highlighting the following key points:

- Capital funding for 2022/23 was set at £32.5million, various additional fundings/grants and sale of vehicles resulted in an increase to £36.6million.
- Final underspend against the budget was £137.
- Measures taken throughout the year to achieve maximum spend against the budget.



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- Thanks were extended to IM and all those involved for their efforts and achieving this final position.

17.2

**The Board scrutinised the report.**

### **18 REPORT FOR INFORMATION ONLY:**

#### **18.1 SFRS / Anthony Nolan Partnership - Annual Report - Academic Year 2022/23**

18.1.1 DL presented a report to the Board to provide an overview of the achievements of the SFRS/Anthony Nolan Partnership during the 2022/23 Academic Year.

18.1.2 The Board acknowledged the outstanding partnership work with the Anthony Nolan Trust which has directly resulted in 100 lives saved. The Board commended ACO Watt for his leadership in this area and thanks were extended to all others involved.

18.1.3 The Board commented on the potential for consideration to be given to include charity/voluntary work undertaken by the Service/staff within the future HMFSI audit on culture.

18.1.4 The Board further commented on the potential to link partnership work with the Anthony Nolan Partnership into the Service's corporate parenting responsibilities.

18.1.5 **This report was presented for information only.**

### **19 RISK THEMES**

19.1 The Board noted that the increasing financial risks to the Service were significant and that the risk rating should be reviewed.

**ACTION: RH/JT**

### **20 FORWARD PLAN**

20.1 The Forward Plan was noted and would be kept under review and subject to change.

### **21 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

21.1 On behalf of the Board, KD extended her thanks to JT and IM for their strong contributions, assurance, and support during their tenures as Acting Director of Finance and Procurement and Acting Director of Asset Management, respectively.

21.2 On behalf of the SLT, RH offered his thanks to JT and IM for their excellent contributions and performance in both the Board and SLT forums, as well as their leadership of their own Directorates.

21.3 A special private meeting of the Board is scheduled to take place on Friday 17 November 2023.

21.4 The next public meeting of the Board is scheduled to take place on Thursday 14 December 2023 at 1000 hrs.

21.5 There being no further matters to discuss in public, the meeting closed at 1203 hrs.

### **PRIVATE SESSION**

#### **22 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS PRIVATE MEETING:**

##### **22.1 Thursday 31 August 2023**

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

##### **22.2 Thursday 28 September 2023 (Special)**

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

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22.3 **The minutes of the meetings held on 31 August 2023 and 28 September 2023 (Special) were approved as a true record of the meetings.**

22.4 **Matters Arising**

22.4.1 There were no matter arising.

**23 PRIVATE ACTION LOG**

23.1 The Board considered the private action log and noted the updates.

**24 LEADHILLS COMMUNITY FIRE STATION CONSULTATION REPORT**

24.1 DF presented a report to the Board providing details of the consultation report for consideration and sought approval of the recommendation in relation to the future of Leadhills Community Fire Station (CFS).

24.2 **The Board approved the recommendations.**

**25 NEW MOBILISING SYSTEM PROCUREMENT PROCEDURE**

25.1 JT presented the report to the Board seeking approval to move from using a framework to procure the New Mobilising System (NMS) to an open procurement process.

25.2 **The Board approved the recommendation to withdraw from the Crown Commercial Services Framework and move to an open procurement process.**

**26 NEW MOBILISING SYSTEM UPDATE**

26.1 DL presented an update on the new mobilising system project to the Board.

26.2 **The Board noted the verbal update.**