



SCOTTISH
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Working together for a safer Scotland

PUBLIC MEETING - SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

THURSDAY 14 DECEMBER 2023 @ 1000 HRS

**NEWMAINS COMMUNITY TRUST CONFERENCE CENTRE,
15 MANSE ROAD, NEWMAINS, ML2 9AX**

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)
Paul Stollard (PS)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Ross Haggart (RH)	Chief Officer
Stuart Stevens (SS)	Deputy Chief Officer
Liz Barnes (LBa)	Interim Deputy Chief Officer (Corporate Services)
David Farries (DF)	Assistant Chief Officer, Director of Service Delivery
David Lockhart (DL)	Assistant Chief Officer, Director of Service Development
Andy Watt (AW)	Assistant Chief Officer, Director of Training, Safety & Assurance
Mark McAteer (MMcA)	Director of Strategic Planning, Performance and Communications
Lyndsey Gaja (LG)	Interim Director of People
Iain Morris (IM)	Head of Asset Management
John Thomson (JT)	Head of Finance and Procurement
Chris Fitzpatrick (CF)	Business Intelligence and Data Service Manager (Item 11 only)
Ijaz Bashir (IB)	Asset Governance and Performance Manager (Item 17.6 only)
Stuart Free (SF)	Asset Quality Manager (Item 17.6 only)
Alan Duncan (AD)	Accounting Manager (Item 22 only)
Ann MacDonald (AMacD)	Audit Scotland (Item 22 & 23 only)
Michael Oliphant (MO)	Audit Scotland (Item 22 & 23 only)
Kevin Murphy (KM)	Group Commander, Board Support Manager
Debbie Haddow (DJH)	Board Support/Minutes

OBSERVERS:

Seona Hart, FBU
Neil Mapes
Local Senior Office Management Team

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 Tim Wright, Board Member

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Sarah O'Donnell, Director of Finance and Contractual Services

- 3 CONSIDERATION OF AND DECISION ON ANY ITEMS TO BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE**
3.1 The Board agreed that the *SFRS Annual Report and Accounts* and *New Mobilising System Procurement Procedure* items would be taken in private. This is due to the confidential commercial/financial information and matters deemed confidential (Standing Order 9E and 9G), respectively.

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

- 5 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS:**
5.1 **Thursday 26 October 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 26 October 2023 were approved as a true record of the meeting.**
5.2 **Thursday 23 November 2023 (Special)**
5.2.1 The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.
5.2.2 **The minutes of the special meeting held on 23 November 2023 were approved as a true record of the meeting.**

- 5.3 **Matters Arising**
5.3.1 There were no matters arising.

- 6 ACTION LOG**
6.1 The Board considered the action log and noted the updates.
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.
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 26 October 2023 and highlighted the following:
 - Engagement with MSPs to inform and provide a broad understanding of the Service's budgetary requirement going forward.
 - Meeting held with the Minister for Victims and Community Safety to discuss challenges, in particular budgets and requirement for additional funding, in order to keep communities safe in Scotland.
 - Confident that all relevant information has been provided and the Minister and Sponsor Unit were fully aware of the situation/future requirements.
 - Letter received from the Minister for Victims and Community Safety following the Annual Performance Review in October 2023 which was positive in nature and made no recommendations.

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

- 9 CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT**

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- 9.1 RH presented the Chief Officer's report noting events which had occurred since the Board meeting held on 26 October 2023 and highlighted the following:
- Confident that the Service had provided all relevant information to Scottish Government on budgetary position. Continue to have a positive relationship and support from the Minister for Victims and Community Safety and the Sponsor Unit.
 - Official opening of the Museum of Scottish Fire Heritage at McDonald Road Fire Station by the Princess Royal.
 - Official opening of the West Asset Resource Centre, Cambuslang by the Minister for Victims and Community Safety.
 - Anthony Nolan Recognition event held in November 2023, acknowledging the contributions of all those involved.

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 9 November 2023 and provided a verbal update, highlighting the following:

- Safe and Well (S&W) project update which included a full discussion on revised Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV).
- Portfolio Office update noting the creation of the Community of Practice, review and embedding of lessons learned and consistency of approach to Change across the organisation.
- Positive update on resourcing/recruitment.
- People, Payroll, Finance and Training programme update noting discussions with Scottish Government regarding potential collaboration opportunities.
- New Mobilising System update including discussions on organisational capability from contract award to beyond project delivery, and being an intelligent client.
- New Mobilising System Invitation to Tender was presented which provided the Committee with a greater understanding and assurance on the process.

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

10.2 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC)

10.2.1 BB reported that the Committee held a public meeting 30 October 2023 and referred the Board to the draft minutes, highlighting the following:

- Internal Audit Final Report relating to Budgetary Control presented and commented on further guidance on preparation of business cases.
- Internal Audit Final Report relating to Workforce Planning - On Call Firefighters presented and focused on recruitment and retention. The report noted the positive steps taken by the Service and the generic issues encountered by all Fire and Rescue services.
- External Audit report relating to the annual accounts and the previous recommendation regarding equating budgets to outcomes. Further discussions on transparency of accounts.
- Oversight of risk management and pilot of new process through PowerBI. Although not entirely successful, good learning was taken from the session and further work would be undertaken.

10.2.2 BB noted that a Special Private meeting was held on 30 November 2023 to consider the draft Annual Report and Accounts which were being presented later in today's agenda (Item 22).

10.2.3 **The Board noted the draft minutes.**

10.3 People Committee (PC)

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- 10.3.1 MW reported that the Committee held a public meeting on 7 December 2023 and provided a verbal update, highlighting the following:
- Restructure of agenda to assist in the alignment of assurance within relative areas.
 - People, Workforce Development and Wellbeing updates related to Performance report, Career Ready update, retirement/leaver profiles, policy review and colleague engagement survey.
 - Broad discussion on equality, diversity, culture and fair work and new approach to talent acquisition.
 - Health and Safety Performance report noted an increase in Acts of Violence.
 - Update on Training Continuous Improvement Programme including a review and comparison of historical actions/recommendations.
 - Training Function Vision and Strategy 2023-28 which acknowledges progress and future improvements.
 - Health and Safety update related to performance report, contaminants, annual report and policy reviews.
 - Verbal updates on the recent Employee Partnership Forum and Partnership Advisory Group meetings.
 - Future risk spotlight on SPPA Pension work identified.

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

10.4 **Service Delivery Committee (SDC)**

- 10.4.1 PS reported that the Committee held a public meeting on 28 November 2023 and provided a verbal update, highlighting the following:
- Update on Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS) and the early operational impact of the new response to automatic fire alarms. Further reports to be provided once the new approach has been embedded.
 - HMFSI update noted the completion of the East Service Delivery Area (SDA) inspection and the commencement of the West SDA inspection and future inspection on organisational culture.
 - Informative presentation of the Performance report via PowerBI.
 - Annual Complaints and Compliments report and opportunities to benchmark against other organisations.
 - Risk spotlight relating to communication challenges and the need to invest in early preparation in advance of consultation processes.
 - Operations Control resilience standing agenda item to be moved into the public session of the meeting going forward.

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

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

- 10.5.1 FT reported that the RCG Oversight Group held private meetings on 22 November and 5 December 2023 and highlighted the following:
- Price Waterhouse Coopers were awarded the contract to assist in developing the business case.
 - Discussion on principals around engagement and draft assessment criteria and success factors.

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

(C Fitzpatrick joined the meeting at 1030 hrs)

11 ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD Q2 2023-24

11.1 MMcA presented the Board with the second quarter performance information for the fiscal year 2023-24. MMcA noted that development continues as the platform matures and a summary page would be included in future reports.

11.2 CF highlighted the following key points:

- Format to report continues to develop with the inclusion of axis values and target lines for key performance indicators (KPIs).
- KPI 4 (Fire fatalities) were higher than average.
- KPI 5 (Fire casualties) remains low with increased confidence in the accuracy of the data.
- KPI 6 Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs) reduction based on last year's figures.
- KPI 7 HFSV Vulnerable Group remains consistent with previous years.
- KPI 8 (Percentage of HFSV via partner referrals) increased in previous quarter.
- KPI 10 (Accidental Dwelling Fires) continues to reduce.
- KPI 12 (Total Incidents) significantly lower than recent quarters and attributable to changes in operational response to UFAS.
- KPI 16 (On call availability) reduced to 74%.
- KPI 17 (Wholetime appliance availability) increased by 1% but remains outside the lower control limit.
- KPI 22 (Core skills training modules completed) increased to 95% from previous quarter.
- KPI 23 (Advanced, Support & Emerging risks training modules) improving but remain below target.
- KPI 24 (Flexi Duty Officer training modules) remains below target at 79%.
- KPI 40 (Invoices paid in 30 days) significant increase and exceeds target for first time in 2 years.
- KPI 46 (Resource based crewing FTE) reporting over 100% due to the temporary change in the Target Operating Model. Off Station FTE and On Call (Volunteer) FTE increased and On Call (RDS) FTE reduced.
- KPI 47 (Vacancy rates) reduced to 14.8% (second lowest in the 3-year period).
- KPI 48 (Staff Turnover) increased by 1% on previous quarter.
- KPI 50 (Verbal attacks on firefighters) reduced to lowest in the previous 3-year period.
- KPI 51 (Physical attacks on firefighters) increased on last year's figures.
- KPI 54 (Near misses) increased for the 3rd continuous quarter.

11.3 In relation to KPI 5 (Fire casualties), the Board noted that the significant changes in resourcing had been identified as the reason for improvements and requested further information on the changes. DF reminded the Board of the focus on prevention work, realignment and future of HFSVs focusing on vulnerable individuals within communities, partnership referral pathways and initiatives being led by operational crews. DF noted that this area was regularly reported to the Service Delivery Committee.

11.4 In relation to KPI 35 (Cyber Security breaches), DL advised that no breaches had occurred however seven incidents had been reported to the security team. Although this was a significant reduction on the previous year, this remains an area of focus for the Service. DL summarised the control measures in place to safeguard the Service.

11.5 In relation to attacks on firefighters, the Board noted the importance on understanding the different types, trends and costs associated with attacks. The Board requested the visibility of costs of repairing damage to buildings, appliances and equipment due to attack be reported into the People Committee. IM advised that costs, relating to damaged assets, were captured.

ACTION: SO'D

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- 11.6 RH reiterated the Service stance of zero tolerance towards attacks and the support available to staff who are affected by such incidents.
- 11.7 Within the covering report reference to KPI1-2 was confirmed as a typographical error and should be KPI12.
- 11.8 In regard to KPI 46 (Operations Control FTE), the Board noted their concerns on the decrease in Operations Control personnel and sought assurances that targeted recruitment was ongoing. SS confirmed that recruitment for Operations Control staff was ongoing and regular training courses were available.
- 11.9 **The Board scrutinised the Organisational Performance Dashboard Q2 2023-24 report.**

(C Fitzpatrick left at 1100 hrs)

12 ANNUAL OPERATING PLAN AND PORTFOLIO OFFICE Q2 REPORT

- 12.1 MMcA presented a report advising the Board of the quarterly progress made against the strategic outcomes of the Strategic Plan 2022-25 in relation to the Annual Operating Plan (AOP), Corporate Measures and Portfolio Office Programmes between 1 July and 30 September 2023. The following key points were highlighted:
- Total of 20 actions of which 13 actions were reporting Green, 6 actions were Amber, and 1 action was Red.
 - The one action reporting Red related to the Carbon Management Plan. New Energy Manager was now in post. Access to various funding streams was a key element to the successful delivery of the plan.
- 12.2 The Board requested clarification on the delay in purchasing digital radios considering that approval for virements had been given for this purpose. DL advised the Board that the update was the position as at the end of September 2023 and provided a brief update on subsequent actions taken since. JT reminded the Board that authorisation was sought and received at the start of December 2023, and subsequently the procurement process for radios had been undertaken and would be delivered before the end of the financial year.
- 12.3 With regard to the final milestone relating to UFAS being discontinued, the Board recorded their disappointment at the lack of engagement from Alarm Receiving Centres (ARCs).
- 12.4 **The Board scrutinised the Annual Operating Plan and Portfolio Office Report.**
- ## 13 REVISED SCHEME OF DELEGATIONS
- 13.1 MMcA presented the revised Scheme of Delegations for approval, thereby ensuring the continued effectiveness of governance arrangements. MMcA advised that the amendment related to recent structural changes within the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT).
- 13.2 Brief discussion took place on whether non-material revisions required to be submitted to a formal meeting and whether consideration should be given to seek approval via correspondence.
- 13.3 **The Board approved the revised Scheme of Delegations.**

14 CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2023/24 – OCTOBER 2023

14.1 JT presented a report advising the Board of the actual and committed expenditure against the 2023/24 capital budget position for the period ending 31 October 2023 and to seek approval for virements exceeding the £1.0m delegated limit. All efforts would be made to spend out the current revised budget of £32.725m by 31 March 2024. The following key points were highlighted:

- Current capital forecast was an underspend of £2.444m.
- Authorisation sought and given via correspondence in relation to virement (£2.477m). Formal presentation to record decision in a public forum.
- Revised budget due to funding from Scottish Government (ESN Connect Data First) and Transport Scotland (EV Charging Points).
- Capital expenditure committed to date was £18.761m (57%).
- Overall Property works were reporting an Amber RAG status due to delays in several refurbishments and new build projects. Accelerated purchase of digital radios and minor works programme would help address this.
- Vehicles were reporting an Amber RAG status due to delays with 6 medium weight pumping appliances. Work continues to maximise spend and return to green status.
- ICT equipment, accelerated purchase of digital radios would significantly impact on operations and firefighter safety.
- Overall deviation of £1.275m from originally approved budget.

14.2 IM gave a brief update on the 3-year capital plan noting the ability to adjust in order to achieve maximum spend within the current financial year.

14.3 The Board commented on the increased risk associated with Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) and asked whether they had been reassessed and what mitigating measures were in place.

14.4 IM advised the Board of the new assessments for individual panels, adjusted control measures were in place in premises and new technologies available. IM confirmed that all RAAC premises had been investigated, control measures taken and documented.

14.5 IM reassured the Board that there was no dilution in the level of risk/safety due to the new assessment process.

14.6 **The Board scrutinised the level of actual and committed capital expenditure for the period ending 31 October 2023 and approved the budget virement of £2.477million.**

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

15 RESOURCE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2023/24 – OCTOBER 2023

15.1 JT presented a report advising the Board of the resource budget position for the period ending 31 October 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 £0.164m and a forecast year-end overspend of £2.584m. The following key points were highlighted:

- Forecasted overspend in Wholetime and Other Employee costs and respective underspends in Control, On Call and Support.
- Forecasted overspend in non-employee costs for Property, Supplies & Services and Transport.
- Main reason for overspend in Wholetime costs were attributable to the pension remedy situation.
- Various savings proposals were being considered, however, it was not anticipated that a balanced budget was achievable. Discussions with Scottish Government to

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seek additional funding or cover (authorisation) in the event of an overspend. Formal written request to be submitted this week.

- Current budget savings were forecasted as £8.511m.
- Main risk remains the potential overspend. Appropriate mitigation actions were being taken including engaging with Scottish Government and identifying additional savings.

15.2 The Board sought clarification on the consequences should the Service be unable to balance the budget and/or secure Scottish Government's approval to do so. JT advised that if authorisation is given by Scottish Government, the Service would effectively balance against our position. Should no cover be granted, the Service would overspend against the budget and potentially be subject to Section 22 action from Scottish Government. It was noted that there may be consequences within future budgets from any potential overspend.

15.3 The Board acknowledged that the forecasted overspend was disappointing, however, it was less than 1% of the overall budget.

15.4 The Board noted that a forecasted overspend had been indicated for several months and sought to understand what measures could be taken to achieve a balanced budget. The Board also sought clarification whether approval of a deficit budget would be necessary.

15.5 JT advised the Board that the forecasting was measured against the run rate and as the year progresses confidence increases on the end position. JT informed the Board that there was an overall reduction in financial risk with high overall confidence on the overspend position.

15.6 The Board requested details of run rate and overspend, with written assurance that every possible opportunity to prevent the overspend had been exhausted.

ACTION S'OD

15.7 RH reassured the Board that the SLT were highly focussed on the financial situation and were actively trying to minimise the level of overspend. RH noted that it was right and proper for the Service to engage with Scottish Government to keep them aware of the situation and to seek cover, if required.

15.8 RH reminded the Board that the Service held several risks and as such had to be cautious not to focus on the financial risk at the detriment of other important risks ie operational training and safety.

15.9 RH advised that the Service have and would continue to take appropriate actions in regard to minimising any overspend/delivering a balanced budget. RH commented on the challenges in achieving the proposed savings and noted that every effort was being made to do so.

15.10 The Board requested clarity and regular updates on the governance and decision making required should a balanced budget be unachievable.

ACTION: RW

15.11 JT confirmed that the Service would seek authorisation from Scottish Government for the potential overspend, which equated to 0.65% of the overall budget. As the potential overspend was more than £1.00m, due process had to be followed to inform and seek authorisation from Scottish Government.

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15.12 The Board acknowledged the current position of the increased risk of not achieving a balanced budget and that due process would be followed with Scottish Government. As per earlier discussions, the Board requested assurances that every possible opportunity to prevent the overspend had been explored by the SLT. Also, to receive regular reporting of the situation, in order to provide assurance to Scottish Government that the Board were doing all they could.

15.13 **The Board scrutinised the resource budget position for the period ending 31 October 2023.**

16 REPORTS FOR INFORMATION ONLY:

The Board were reminded that reports provided for information only would be taken as read and only questions, with prior notification, would be allowed.

16.1 Training Vision and Strategy 2023-28

16.1.1 AW submitted the final approved version of the Training Vision and Strategy 2023-28 for information, following its presentation to the People Committee on 7 December 2023 and prior to its publication.

16.1.2 The Board were reminded that this strategy had previously been scrutinised by the SLT and People Committee.

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

16.2 Health and Safety Annual Report 2022/23

16.2.1 AW submitted the Annual Health and Safety Report for 2022/23 detailing the SFRS Health and Safety (HS) performance for information.

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

16.3 Health and Safety Policy and Policy Statement

16.3.1 AW submitted the Health and Safety Policy and Policy Statement following its annual review for information.

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

16.4 Local Plan Review Report

16.4.1 MMcA submitted the report advising that the Local Plan Review Reports have been undertaken for each local authority area and the next steps for information.

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

16.5 Biodiversity Plan

16.5.1 The Biodiversity Report 2021 - 2023 was submitted for information and the report outlined the actions SFRS have taken to protect biodiversity, and how we have incorporated biodiversity into wider policies and engaged with local communities.

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

16.6 Asset Management Policy

16.6.1 IM submitted the report to provide further detail to the Board on the Asset Management Policy.

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

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17 RISK THEMES

17.1 The Board acknowledged earlier discussions relating to finance and financial oversight and noted that these were already contained within the risk register.

17.2 The Board requested re-circulation of the master policy list in relation to governance routes and approval to determine that the right level of papers were being presented to the Board.

ACTION: MMcA

18 FORWARD PLAN

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

19 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

19.1 The next public meeting of the Board is scheduled to take place on Thursday 27 March 2024 at 1000 hrs.

19.2 There being no further matters to discuss in public, the meeting closed at 1215 hrs.

19.3 Thanks were recorded for everyone's contribution and to those in attendance.

PRIVATE SESSION

20 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS PRIVATE MEETINGS:

20.1 Thursday 26 October 2023

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

20.2 Thursday 23 November 2023 (Special)

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

20.3 **The minutes of the meetings held on 26 October 2023 and 23 November 2023 (Special) were approved as a true record of the meetings.**

20.4 Matters Arising

20.4.1 There were no matters arising.

21 PRIVATE ACTION LOG

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

22 ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2022/23

22.1 JT presented a report to the Board seeking approval for the Annual Report and Accounts 2022/23 and requested that the Chief Officer, in his role as Accountable Officer, was authorised to sign and submit this along with the Management Letter of Representation.

22.2 **The Board approved the Annual Report and Accounts 2022/23 and authorised the Accountable Officer to sign and submit on behalf of the Service.**

23 NEW MOBILISING SYSTEM PERIODIC UPDATE – DECEMBER 2023

23.1 DL presented an update on the New Mobilising System project to the Board.

23.2 **The Board scrutinised the report.**