



SCOTTISH
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Working together for a safer Scotland

PUBLIC MEETING - SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

THURSDAY 31 OCTOBER 2024 @ 1000 HRS

**BRAIDWOOD SUITE, SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE HEADQUARTERS,
WESTBURN DRIVE, CAMBUSLANG, G72 7NA / VIRTUAL (MS TEAMS)**

PRESENT:

Kirsty Darwent, Chair (KD)
Brian Baverstock (BB)
Neil Mapes (NM)
Malcolm Payton (MP)
Madeline Smith (MS)
Mhairi Wylie (MW)

Paul Stollard, Deputy Chair (PS)
Angiolina Foster (AF)
Therese O'Donnell (TO'D)
Andrew Smith (AS)
Tim Wright (TW)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Ross Haggart (RH)	Chief Officer
Stuart Stevens (SS)	Deputy Chief Officer
Liz Barnes (LB)	Interim Deputy Chief Officer (Corporate Services)
Craig McGoldrick (CMcG)	Assistant Chief Officer, Director of Training, Safety and Assurance
Andy Watt (AW)	Assistant Chief Officer, Director of Prevention, Protection and Preparedness
Mark McAteer (MMcA)	Director of Strategic Planning, Performance and Communications
Sarah O'Donnell (SO'D)	Director of Finance and Contractual Services
Lyndsey Gaja (LG)	Interim Director of People
Lynne McGeough (LMcG)	Head of Finance (Item 23 only)
Alan Duncan (AL)	Accounts Manager (Item 23 only)
Tommy Yule (TY)	Audit Scotland (Item 23 only)
Chris Casey (CC)	Group Commander Board Support
Heather Greig (HG)	Executive Officer Board Support
Debbie Hadow (DJH)	Board Support/Minutes

OBSERVERS:

Robert Scott, HMFSI

1 CHAIR'S WELCOME

- 1.1 The Chair opened the meeting welcoming those present and those attending/observing via MS Teams.
- 1.2 On behalf of the Board, the Chair offered her congratulations to ACO Craig McGoldrick on his appointment to Director of Training, Safety and Assurance and to his first formal Board meeting. The Chair also acknowledged Paul Stollard's first official meeting since taking up the role of Deputy Chair.
- 1.3 On behalf of the Board, the Chair extended her thanks, appreciation and best wishes to Chief Officer Ross Haggart, ahead of his imminent retirement from the Service.

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1.4 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 Stuart Ballingall, Board Member

3 CONSIDERATION OF AND DECISION ON ANY ITEMS TO BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE

3.1 The Board agreed that the *Draft Annual Report and Accounts, New Mobilising System Update* and *Wellbeing Audit and Recovery Plan* would be taken in private due to the confidential nature of the issues (Standing Order 9G).

4 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

4.1 For transparency, the following standing declarations of interests were recorded:

- Madeline Smith, Board Member of Scottish Ambulance Service
- Paul Stollard, Chair of Board of Institute of Fire Engineers

4.2 There were no other declarations or conflict of interests made.

5 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING:

5.1 Thursday 29 August 2024

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

5.1.2 **The minutes of the meeting held on 29 August 2024 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.

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 29 August 2024 and highlighted the following:

- Recent Assistant Chief Officer selection process resulted in the appointment of Craig McGoldrick and Jon Henderson, to the roles of Director of Training, Safety and Assurance and Prevention, Protection and Preparedness, respectively.
- Completion of Cyber Security training.
- Ministerial Performance Review held on 10 September 2024. The Minister for Victims and Community Safety has since written to the Service confirming the satisfactory review and that there were no areas of concern.
- National Joint Council (NJC) meeting on 22 October 2024 which focussed on the self-led review being undertaken by the employers' side of the NJC with recommendations around improving effectiveness and communications. Feedback was given on changes which allowed Scottish only negotiations to be facilitated. The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) chose not to take part in the NJC review at this stage, however the report would be shared with them and an invitation would be extended to them to join the next stage. A meeting was held with other unions and

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associations not affiliated directly with the NJC as part of good industrial relations and continued communications. Nick Chard and Kirsty Darwent remain in the roles of Chair and Deputy Chair of the NJC, respectively

- SFRS Bicentenary celebrations held at St Giles Cathedral, Edinburgh on 23 October 2024 with the Princess Royal in attendance. All personnel involved in the organising of the event were commended for their hard work, efforts and professionalism.
- Attendance at the Long Service Good Conduct event held at Dunfermline.

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 29 August 2024 and highlighted the following:

- Firefighter Memorial Trust's Annual Service of Remembrance at the National Arboretum on Monday 2 September 2024.
- Criminal Justice Committee on Wednesday 4 September 2024 along with DCO Stuart Stevens and Sarah O'Donnell, Director of Finance and Contractual Services. Thanks were extended to those involved in the preparatory work. SO'D would continue to work closely with the Sponsor Unit to ensure that the budgetary asks were being captured.
- Bicentenary commemoration parliamentary event on Tuesday 1 October 2024 hosted by MSP Ben McPherson.
- SFRS Bicentenary celebrations held at St Giles Cathedral, Edinburgh on 23 October 2024. Thanks were extended to all those involved in the planning and in attendance at the event.
- Long Service Good Conduct event at Dunfermline, and noted the commendable actions of one recipient of the Chief Officer's commendation award.
- Attendance at the re-opening of Dingwall Fire Station following refurbishment work. The £1.6 million investment would benefit both SFRS personnel and the wider community and provides an opportunity to enhance recruitment within the local area.

9.2 In regard to the refurbishment of Dingwall Fire Station, RH noted that the works were similar to those undertaken at Inverness Fire Station and the lessons learnt at Inverness had been applied.

9.3 **The Board noted the report.**

10 COMMITTEE UPDATES

10.1 Change Committee (CC)

10.1.1 AF reported that the Committee held a public meeting on 1 August 2024 and referred the Board to the attached draft minutes, noting that a full verbal update had been provided at the previous meeting. The date of the next scheduled meeting was Thursday 7 November 2024.

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 Committee held a public meeting on 29 October 2024 and provided a verbal update, highlighting the following:

- Internal Auditors, Azets, continue to make good progress with the programme for the current year.
- Final Report on Environmental Management audit reported positively on procedures and policies and recommended some areas of improvement. The Committee noted the ambition of the Service to secure funding/investment and the level actually achieved. Discussion took place on whether there was sufficient governance oversight of investment in carbon management.

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- Verbal update provided on cyber security maturity exercise currently being undertaken by Azets.
- Regular risk reporting noting the specific risk relating to resourcing pressures within Operations Control (OC) had increased in severity.
- Review of draft risk appetite statement noting the good progress that had been made and their submission to the Board for approval (agenda item 12).
- Annual Report and Accounts were reviewed and recommended for the Board's approval (agenda item 24.)

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 on 12 September 2024 and referred the Board to the attached draft minutes, noting that a full verbal update had been provided at the previous meeting.

10.3.2 MW advised that a workshop was held on 24 October 2024 and focused on key performance indicators, assurance levels and potential changes following the implementation of new people systems.

10.3.3 **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 on 22 August 2024 and referred the Board to the attached draft minutes, noting that a full verbal update had been provided at the previous meeting. TW noted that two specific issues raised at the recent Ministerial Review were featured on the agenda for the last 2 committee meetings. The date of the next scheduled meeting was Thursday 26 November 2024.

10.4.2 TW advised that a workshop was held on 1 October 2024 and noted that the organic discussions during the workshop were already influencing future meetings.

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

10.5 **Reform Collaboration Group (RCG)**

10.5.1 KD provided a verbal update to the Board noting that the RCG were currently in a transition phase following the completion of the PwC work. A Programme Board workshop was scheduled on 1 November 2024 and outcomes will be reported back at the next RCG meeting (21 November 2024). A joint meeting of the SFRS, Police Scotland and Scottish Ambulance Service's Boards was scheduled for 12 February 2025.

10.5.2 MMcA noted that the outcomes of the workshop, identified key priorities, innovations and governance arrangements would be discussed at the next RCG meeting.

10.5.3 The Board commented on the recognised barrier for potential collaboration opportunities and the reluctance to share/transfer budget. It was acknowledged that there were active discussions regarding sharing resources. MMcA noted that this would be discussed at the workshop.

10.5.4 SO'D advised the Board that Scottish Government held a Reform budget and potentially the 3 Services could consider jointly submitting a business case to access this funding.

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

11 **BOARD FORWARD PLAN SCHEDULE 2025/26**

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- 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 2026 for approval.
- 11.2 The Board noted the proposed timescale for the Health and Safety Annual report being presented and asked for consideration to be given to shorten the timescale. AW reminded the Board that the draft Health and Safety Annual report was submitted to the People Committee for scrutiny ahead of submitting the finalised version for Board approval. It was noted that performance statistics for the year were reported to and scrutinised by the People Committee on a quarterly basis and the annual report was the formal presentation of this data. It was agreed that further discussions would be held off table in regard to timescales, opportunities for the Board to shape/influence draft reports and the role of the Committees.
- 11.3 SO'D advised that the Debt Write Off item on the draft Board Forward Plan was a placeholder in case there was a requirement for any debts to be written off.
- 11.4 **The Board approved the proposed schedule of meetings for the SFRS Board and its Committees and the Board Forward Plan 2025-26.**

12 DRAFT RISK APPETITE STATEMENTS

- 12.1 SO'D presented a report providing the Board with the draft risk appetite statements for approval. The following key points were highlighted:
- Outline of the process undertaken to develop the revised draft risk appetite statements and levels.
 - Next steps would be to incorporate risk appetite statements into working processes and decision-making processes and reviewing the corporate report template to include risk appetite.
 - Once approved, the risk appetite statements would be implemented for an initial 12 month period and would then be subject to review.
- 12.2 SO'D confirmed that the recommended revisions suggested at the recent ARAC meeting (29 October 2024) would be made.
- 12.3 With regard to the increased appetite for risk, the Board queried how the Service felt about seizing the opportunity for more openness to an ambition for risk. The Board noted the revisions made to the risk appetite statements and the Board were reminded that the draft statements were scrutinised and welcomed by ARAC.
- 12.4 Discussion took place on the Board being more open to an ambition for risk. The Board noted the revisions made to the statement which had been scrutinised and welcomed by the ARAC. The Board were reminded that the presentation of the risk levels was a blunt tool and that the risk appetite applied may not be for the entirety of the category of risk.
- 12.5 The Board commented on the RAG status for the risk, ie red for ambition, green for minimalist. RH explained that the RAG status aligned with the risk register and was applied to avoid any additional confusion/aid understanding across the Service. SO'D noted consideration had been given to the RAG status and requested that this remains for the initial 12-month period, after which it would be reviewed.
- 12.6 The Board noted the reasons for aligning RAG status but cautioned on the potential behavioural issues or complacency regarding high risks rating not being driven down. SO'D noted that an initial task was to align individual risks with the appropriate statement.

12.7

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RH reminded the Board that there were resource implications required when reducing risks and that it may be necessary for the Service to tolerate the risk due to resources being prioritised elsewhere.

12.8

The Board queried how the Service would measure success and what outcomes were anticipated to be achieved. SO'D noted that this was about staff awareness across the organisation, how it was being used and put into practice and how it impacted on decision-making. An important measure of success was embedding into corporate narrative across the whole Service.

12.9

It was noted that the Committees regularly reviewed the risk register and the Board review this on an annual basis. Within the corporate template, one of the key strategic implications would be risk and risk appetite. This would be the tool that would help the Board engage and discuss risks more fully and help to inform decision making.

12.10

The Board were content to approve the draft statements and would review in 12 months times. The future review of risk appetite should incorporate how the mechanism and reporting methods was performed and whether there should be any changes required.

12.11

The Board approved the draft risk appetite statements and approach.

13 ANNUAL PROCUREMENT REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2023 TO 31 MARCH 2024

13.1

SO'D presented the Annual Procurement Report for the period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024, 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:

- During the reporting year, there were 43 regulated procurements with a combined estimated value of £34.0 million excluding VAT.
- Collaborative contracts accounted for 64% of total contract spend and resulted in £1.1 million savings.
- Details of work with small and medium sized enterprises, supported business and 3rd sector bodies.
- 40% of supplier spend within Scotland was with local based suppliers which positively contributed to local communities and economies.
- Focus on climate changes, supported businesses on fair work and community benefits.
- Identified areas for improvement include contract management and cyber security.

13.2

In regard to spend with Scottish based suppliers, the Board queried whether the 40.67% achieved was a good position and contributed to the sustainability of communities. SO'D noted that this information was reported to Scottish Government for analysis. The Service were slightly below Scottish Government's quoted 43%, however, this was due to procurement of specialist items through UK national contracts. Overall this was a positive position for the Service.

13.3

With reference to the recent Contract Management audit report, the Board sought clarity on any key issues highlighted. SO'D noted that improvements in relation to documentation and documenting meetings/discussions with suppliers was highlighted.

13.4

The Board noted that the Scottish Government's focus, as stated in paragraph 1.3, did not accurately reflect the wording within the National Performance Framework. SO'D to review and update as necessary.

ACTION: SO'D

13.5

In regard to regulation procurement awarded, the Board sought clarity of the statement negotiated procedures with competition. SO'D suggested that the original competition

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may not have been successful and, therefore, the Service had moved towards a negotiated contract. SO'D offered to provide specific details, outwith the meeting, if required.

- 13.6 The Board noted the higher portion of Non-Regulation Procurement in this reporting year and queried the potential increased risk associated with this.
- 13.7 SO'D advised the Board that the top 3 contract values related to the pension fund consolidation and 2 frameworks. SO'D further advised that the pension fund consolidation was a positive position for the Service and had resulted in substantial savings.
- 13.8 SO'D confirmed that the Service remained committed to paying suppliers within 30 days for all invoices. This was achieved for 98% of payments within 30 days and for 85% of payments within 10 days.
- 13.9 The Board commented on the level of supported business spend recorded within this reporting period and questioned whether the Service could make improvements in this area. SO'D noted that this had previously been a focus for the Service and further work was required to identify what improvement could be made in the current year. The Board noted that this was an area that would be further explored.
- 13.10 **The Board approved the Annual Procurement Report for the period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024.**

(Meeting broke at 1124 hrs and reconvened at 1135 hrs)

14 RESOURCE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

- 14.1 SO'D presented a report advising the Board of the resource budget position for the period ending 30 September 2024. SO'D 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 £0.748 million and a forecast year-end underspend of £1.465 million. The following key points were highlighted:
- Notwithstanding the forecasted year-end underspend, financial risk remains in relation to property repairs/maintenance and operational availability/recruitment.
- 14.2 The Board queried how the Service could be assured on underspends in employee costs, particularly due to the previous years overspend. SO'D noted that the overspend last year was due to higher than anticipated holiday accruals and work had been undertaken to increase the understanding in this area. SO'D further noted that the salary forecast was based on accumulative experience and knowledge from previous years and that all salary related elements were closely tracked.
- 14.3 SO'D advised that the position with holiday accruals has been highlighted within the submission to Scottish Government for future years. SO'D noted that there may be the opportunity to challenge how this is budgeted for, considering changing the holiday year or closer monitoring of quarterly leave allocations.
- 14.4 **The Board scrutinised the resource budget position for the period ending 30 September 2024.**

15 CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

- 15.1 SO'D presented a report advising the Board of the actual and committed expenditure against the 2024/25 capital budget position for the period ending 30 September 2024. It was currently anticipated that the approved budget of £43.026 million would be spent out by 31 March 2025. The following key points were highlighted:
- Work relating to the New Mobilising System contract and early discovery.

15.2 The Board noted the good progress being made and the forecasted position for the end of the financial year.

15.3 **The Board scrutinised the level of actual and committed capital expenditure for the period ending 30 September 2024.**

16 RESOURCE BUDGET OUTTURN REPORT 2023/24

16.1 SO'D presented a report advising the Board of final Resource Budget position for the financial year 2023/2024, highlighting the following key points:

- Reduction in anticipated overspend from over £1 million to £0.9 million.
- Work underway to review modelling of holiday accruals for future years.
- During this particularly challenging financial year, the Service achieved savings of £11 million.

16.2 **The Board scrutinised the report.**

17 CAPITAL BUDGET OUTTURN REPORT 2023/24

17.1 SO'D presented a report advising the Board of final Capital Budget position for the financial year 2023/2024, highlighting the following key points:

- Budget incorporated capital programme spend and ring-fenced funds for leases.
- Detailed summary for capital spend and what had been achieved during this financial year.

17.2 The Board welcomed the transparency of the report and the successful work from all involved in sourcing, identifying and achieving maximum spend.

17.3 In regard to the installation of 2 new fuel sites, SS advised that these new sites had been strategically identified to ensure national resilience. The removal of older sites had reduced environmental risks.

17.4 SS commented on the alignment of the operational strategy and various SAMPS, which have influenced capital spend and made significant improvements particularly on the frontline.

17.5 **The Board scrutinised the report.**

18 GRENFELL TOWER FIRE – PHASE 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

18.1 AW presented a report to the Board providing an update on the recommendation of Phase 2 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry (GTI) Report and the actions that the Service were taking in response. The following key points were highlighted:

- Phase 2 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry (GTI) Report was published on 4 September 2024.
- High Rise Continuous Improvement Group (HRCIP) stood up to review the Phase 2 report. HRCIP will consider all recommendations and the wider report. Any recommendations would be submitted to the Strategic Leadership Team for approval and subsequently presented to Scottish Government for incorporating into the national action plan.
- Within the Phase 2 report, there were 59 recommendations with 12 being specifically related to fire services. The other recommendations are aligned to Scottish Government and key partners/stakeholders. Overall, the Service would consider 27 recommendations.
- SFRS were represented on both the Scottish Government's Ministerial Working Group (ACO Watt) and Officials Working Group (AC Chris Getty).
- Scottish Government's response to the Phase 2 report within 6 months would align with the UK Governments timeline.

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- Progress update would be reported to the Service Delivery Committee, Strategic Leadership Team and Board, as appropriate.

18.2 With regard to recommendations which applied to government, the Board noted that the report did not distinguish between UK wide and devolved decision-making. The Board commented on the potential for the Service to proactively support Scottish Government to progress recommendations in the interest of communities. The Board commented on the potential benefits of a cross party parliamentary group focused on fire safety and how the Service may advocate this.

18.3 The Board requested that the progress report presented to the Service Delivery Committee should categorise all recommendations and outline the Service's position for each.

18.4 RH noted the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) proactive view in terms of the UK wide government's responsibility for both England and Wales and efforts to simplify the political landscape. RH further noted that a similar approach should be taken in Scotland and that the Service should maintain accurate records of what actions, progress and discussions have taken place.

18.5 The Board commented on the potential benefits of a cross party parliamentary group focused on fire safety and how the Service may advocate this.

18.6 AW confirmed the decision making and governance in place in relation to the recommendations to be taken forward.

18.7 In regard to Recommendation 10, the Board felt that this recommendation was confusing and suggested rephrasing. It was suggested that the original recommendation wording should be used.

ACTION: AW

18.8 **The Board scrutinised the report.**

19 RISK THEMES

19.1 There were no new or emerging risks identified during this meeting.

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 The next public meeting of the Board is scheduled to take place on Thursday 19 December 2024 at 1000 hrs.

21.2 On behalf of the Board, KD offer her thanks to RH for his support, leadership and commitment throughout his career and wished him well for his retirement.

21.3 There being no further matters to discuss in public, the meeting closed at 1206 hrs.

(The meeting broke at 1206 hrs and reconvened in private session at 1215 hrs)

PRIVATE SESSION

22 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS PRIVATE MEETING:

22.1 **Thursday 29 August 2024**

22.1.1 Subject to one amendment, the minute of the meeting held on 29 August 2024 was approved as a true record of the meeting.

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22.2 **Matters Arising**

22.2.1 There were no matters arising.

23 PRIVATE ACTION LOG

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

23.2 **Members noted the updated private Action Log and approved the removal of completed actions.**

(L McGeough, A Duncan and T Yule joined the meeting at 1215 hrs)

24 DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2023/24

24.1 SO'D introduced LMcG who presented a report to the Board seeking approval of the draft Annual Report and Accounts and to authorise the Chief Officer, as the Accountable Officer, to sign and submit along with the Management Letter of Representation. SO'D thanked all those involved in the preparation and production of the report for their efforts.

24.2 **The Board approved the Annual Report and Accounts and authorised the Accountable Officer to sign and submit the Management Letter of Representation on behalf of the Service.**

(L McGeough, A Duncan and T Yule left the meeting at 1230 hrs)

25 NEW MOBILISING SYSTEM UPDATE

25.1 AW provide a verbal update on the New Mobilising System project.

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

26 WELLBEING AUDIT AND RECOVERY PLAN

26.1 LB presented a report to the Board to provide information on the recent wellbeing compliance audit and recovery plan which was created to address the outcomes.

26.2 **The Board scrutinised the report.**

There being no further matters to discuss in private, the meeting closed at 1317 hrs.