



SCOTTISH
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Working together for a safer Scotland

PUBLIC MEETING - SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

THURSDAY 19 DECEMBER 2024 @ 1000 HRS

VIRTUAL (MS TEAMS)

PRESENT:

Kirsty Darwent, Chair (KD)
Stuart Ballingall (SJB)
Angiolina Foster (AF)
Therese O'Donnell (TO'D)
Andrew Smith (AS)
Tim Wright (TW)

Paul Stollard, Deputy Chair (PS)
Brian Baverstock (BB)
Neil Mapes (NM)
Malcolm Payton (MP)
Madeline Smith (MS)
Mhairi Wylie (MW)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Stuart Stevens (SS)	Chief Officer
Andy Watt (AW)	Deputy Chief Officer
Liz Barnes (LB)	Interim Deputy Chief Officer (Corporate Services)
Jon Henderson (JH)	Assistant Chief Officer, Director of Prevention, Protection and Preparedness
Craig McGoldrick (CMcG)	Assistant Chief Officer, Director of Training, Safety and Assurance
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
Richard Whetton (RW)	Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance
Ijaz Bashir (IB)	Head of Asset Management (Item 15 only)
Stuart Free (SF)	Asset Governance and Performance Manager (Item 15 only)
Jim Holden (JHo)	Head of Safety and Assurance (Item 16 only)
Derek Wilson (DW)	Area Commander NMS Project Lead (Item 24 only)
Kate Whitelaw (KW)	Senior Project Manager (Item 24 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
Colin Brown, FBU
Group Commander Miles Stubbs, SFRS

1 CHAIR'S WELCOME

- 1.1 The Chair opened the meeting welcoming those present and those attending/observing via MS Teams.
- 1.2 The Chair acknowledged Stuart Stevens, Andy Watt and Jon Henderson's first official public meeting since taking up their respective new roles of Chief Officer, Deputy Chief Officer and Assistant Chief Officer.

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1.3 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 David Farries (DF), Assistant Chief Officer, Director of Operational Delivery

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

3.1 The Board agreed that the *National Joint Council Update, Working Draft SFRS Strategy 2025-2028* and *New Mobilising System Update* 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 31 October 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 31 October 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 31 October 2024 and highlighted the following:

- Several meetings with Scottish Government ahead of the budget allocation which was received on 4 December 2024.
- Board Members mid-year appraisals undertaken and recommendations for reappointment for Board Members nearing the end of their term were submitted to Scottish Government.
- Recent Strategic Development Days were productive and beneficial.
- Visit to Orkney to meet with the Chief Executive of Orkney Islands Local Authority and attend a Long Service Good Conduct ceremony.
- Constructive Reform Collaboration Group meeting where Strategic Leads provided feedback from workshops on the future direction and programme of works.
- Attendance at Trainee Graduation event at East Service Delivery Area Headquarters.
- Regular progress meeting with HMFSI Chief Inspector.

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

9 CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

9.1 In recognition of his first official public meeting, SS recorded his privilege and honour to lead the Service. SS offered his thanks to retired Chief Officer Ross Haggart for his leadership throughout his tenure and wished him well in his retirement. SS acknowledged and congratulated newly promoted and appointed members of the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT).

9.2 SS presented the Chief Officer's report noting events which had occurred since the Board meeting held on 31 October 2024 and highlighted the following:

- Outline of budget allocations noting increases in both resource and capital of £14.8 million and £4.0 million, respectively. Within the resource allocation, no provision had been made for National Insurance increases (circa £6.0 million) which remained a significant risk for the Service. Timescales were unknown however work had begun on various scenarios. Outline of various improvements achieved due to increased capital investment.
- Work had commenced with budget holders regarding budget needs/allocations which would be discussed by the SLT in January 2025 and submitted to the Board thereafter.
- Agreement reached on the harmonising of RDS terms and conditions which would be implemented in January 2025. Thanks were extended to DF, LG and Fire Brigades Union (FBU) colleagues for their efforts throughout this process.
- First Strategic Managers Development Session held on 4 December 2024 which focused on the approach/priorities for future years, the development of the Strategy, leadership and culture. Further sessions were scheduled in 2025.
- Ongoing programme of Chief Executive Local Authority meetings which provided an opportunity to discuss challenges, priorities and collaboration opportunities.
- Attendance at Trainee Graduation events at East Service Delivery Area Headquarters and SFRS Headquarters (20 December 2024).
- Recent charity events including the Family Support Trust St Andrew's Ball and Firefighters Charity Santa Dash.

9.3 **The Board noted the report.**

10 COMMITTEE UPDATES

10.1 Change Committee (CC)

10.1.1 SJB reported that the Committee held a public meeting on 7 November 2024 and referred the Board to the attached draft minutes, highlighting the following:

- Terms of Reference for the new Committee to be submitted to the Integrated Governance Forum and Board for approval. Discussions relating to the transition to the new Committee were ongoing.
- Consideration had been given to the rebalancing of Committee business being taken in public and private session.
- Discussion had taken place on raising the level of reporting to a higher level of oversight.
- Report on the progress of the capacity and capability issues to be discussed at the next meeting.

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

10.2.2 SO'D confirmed that the annual report and accounts had been laid before Parliament and no feedback had been received to date.

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

10.3 **People Committee (PC)**

10.3.1 MW reported that the Committee held a public meeting on 5 December 2024 and provided a verbal update, highlighting the following:

- Safety and Assurance Annual Report was presented, and the Committee acknowledged the continued improvements in this area.
- Update on recruitment activities including the On Call/Wholetime migration (January 2025), Wholetime recruitment (early 2025) and the successful Operations Control process which resulted in over 500 applicants.
- Continued roll out of 3 day Leadership Programme.
- Delivery and roll out of 200 sets of PPE for key training sites as part of the contaminants work.
- Proposals for benchmarking opportunities.
- Update on BA recovery process and XVR technology.
- Completion of Internal Audit action plans relating to SVQ and On Call Workforce Planning.
- Risk spotlights focussing on recruitment/retention within ICT and pension remedy.

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

10.4 **Service Delivery Committee (SDC)**

10.4.1 TW reported that the Committee held a public meeting on 26 November 2024 and provided a verbal update, highlighting the following:

- Meeting held at Galashiels Fire Station which allowed the Committee to engage with local personnel and observe the ongoing refurbishment/RAAC panel replacement works.
- Regular update reports on Service Delivery and HMFSI activities.
- Local Senior Officer report provided by Marc Pincombe and focussed on local service delivery activities.
- Risk Spotlight focus on the approach to staffing and central staffing processes.
- Deep drive into operational learning processes and future direction.
- Update provided on the Grenfell Phase 2 report and the Service's response.

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

10.5 **Reform Collaboration Group (RCG)**

10.5.1 MMcA provided a verbal update to the Board on the priorities discussed at the RCG Programme Board meeting held in November 2024. The following key points were highlighted:

- The RCG Programme Board agreed 5 strategic workstreams to be progressed.
- The workstreams were Estates, Staff Wellbeing, Innovation Strategy, Place Based Approach to Improved Community Outcomes and the Redesign of Urgent and Unscheduled Care Pathways.
- Existing operational or tactical groups across the 3 Services would be brought together to refresh collaboration agendas and where necessary new groups would be created.
- Terms of Reference have been created.
- Programme Board to work with these groups to raise awareness of how the operational/tactical level collaboration work can drive benefits for the RCG.
- Reconsideration of the no regrets options arising from the PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) report on the collaboration exercise with Police Scotland.

10.5.2 MMcA agreed to circulate a short summary paper to the Board for information.

ACTION: MMcA

10.5.3 MMcA advised that the regular update meeting with the Cabinet Secretary and Minister for Victims and Community Safety on 18 December 2024 had been cancelled due to parliamentary business and would be rescheduled in due course.

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

11 SOCIAL IMPACT PLEDGE

11.1 MMcA presented the Board with three proposed pledges for submission to the Scottish Government's Social Impact Pledge initiative for approval. The following key points were highlighted:

- Previous pledges had been both national and local projects.
- Challenges in evidencing the impact of previous pledges and this area would be improved.
- Continued commitment to sustaining and progressing work against previous pledges through individual projects or wider national developments.
- Outline of the 3 recommended initiatives relating to corporate parenting, sharing our facilities for the benefit of communities and working with ex-offenders.

11.2 In regard to publicising this important work, MMcA noted that discussions were taking place on the creation of a web page. This would allow the Service to demonstrate, raise awareness and highlight the benefits from all initiatives to the communities across Scotland.

11.3 The Board noted that there were no targets or deadlines assigned to the pledges. The Board suggested that Pledge 3 would benefit from further development to outline what would be delivered. MMcA noted that additional information could be provided and reminded the Board of the Service's work with Polmont Young Offenders Institution.

11.4 MMcA reiterated the challenges in evidencing the impact of this work and noted that the impact may not be directly seen by the Service but by our wider partners and communities. MMcA further noted that this would be captured within future iterations.

11.5 The Board noted the importance of these initiatives and commented on the potential that social impact at a local level was not being represented or being supported to grow nationally. MMcA noted the comments and indicated that further details and evidence on social impact and national delivery would be provided to the Board.

11.6 The Board noted that, within the covering report, the reference to Blairgowrie in Aberdeenshire was incorrect.

11.7 In regard to Pledge 3, the Board commented on potential organisations which the Service may wish to contact as they had experience of working with ex-offenders. MMcA noted the comments and would discuss further with individual Board Members outwith the meeting.

11.8 The Board approved the recommended initiatives and looked forward to the future iterations with wider national connections.

11.9 **The Board approved the 3 recommended initiatives for submission as the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's Social Impact Pledges initiative.**

12 ANNUAL OPERATING PLAN PROGRESS REPORT - QUARTER 2

12.1 MMcA presented a report providing the Board with a quarterly progress report on how we are performing against the Annual Operating Plan (AOP) 2024/25 for the period 1 July 2024 to 30 September 2024. The following key points were highlighted:

- Total of 39 actions of which 2 actions were reporting Blue, 25 actions were Green,

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9 actions were Amber and 3 actions were Red.

- The 3 actions reporting red related to health and wellbeing, Strategic Service Review Programme (SSRP) and health and safety external accreditation.
- Outline of reasons for delaying SSRP public consultation.
- Outline of reasons for transferring health and safety external accreditation into business as usual.

12.2 In regard to the People, Payroll, Finance and Training (PPFT) timescale, the Board sought assurance that the risks associated with the delay of an automated system would be fully articulated and understood. LG outlined the reasons for the extended timeline and advised that there was still work to be undertaken on the articulation of risks. In particular, capacity to deliver existing processes in the absence of an automated system. Updates would be provided to the People Committee.

12.3 In regard to the Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ), the Board sought assurance that there was no de-prioritisation in the improvement plan or process. LG provided her assurance on this and noted that Skills Development Scotland had confirmed the satisfactory completion of the improvement plan. LG further noted that the extended timeline related to the work being undertaken to the development policy and pausing of the modern apprenticeship to allow improvements to be made/embedded.

12.4 In regard to the SSRP, SS advised that the slippage in timescale was primarily related to the scale and complexity of the programme and the public consultation on the SFRS Strategy. SS noted that a business case has been approved to enhance the resources within the SSRP team. AW outlined the significant work being undertaken to achieve the June 2025 date for the public consultation.

12.5 In regard to drug and alcohol screening, LG advised that no timescale had been identified as the legislative requirements were still being assessed. Further clarity would be available over the coming year.

12.6 The Board commented on the number of actions with due dates of 31 March 2025 which were 50% or less complete. MMcA noted that this would be discussed further under the SFRS Strategy (item 23). With reference to the Community Resilience Hub at Portree, SO'D noted that this action related to Phase One only. Phase One was the sign off on the project agreement document, which was almost complete with only the site/land purchase still to be finalised. Work continues with Highlands Council to identify a suitable location.

12.7 The Board commented on whether consideration could be given to review predictions/actions and successful delivery.

12.8 SS advised that the SLT recognised that planning and prioritising processes required to be strengthened. SS outlined the plans on how this would be improved, including strengthening support processes, aligning resources and risk appetite for stopping work if necessary. SS noted that an update would be brought to the Board in due course.

12.9 **The Board scrutinised the Annual Operating Plan Progress Update Q2 Report.**

(Meeting broke at 1109 hrs and reconvened at 1115 hrs)

13 RESOURCE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

13.1 SO'D presented a report advising the Board of the resource budget position for the period ending 30 November 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 £0.139 million and a forecast year-end underspend of £0.592 million. The following key points were highlighted:

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- Variances and risk remain consistent with previous reporting periods.
- Appendix A contained the new financial overview summary dashboard for consideration and feedback.

13.2 The Board welcomed the inclusion of the Progress on Budgeted Savings and asked whether this information had been shared with Scottish Government to evidence what the Service was achieving within planned savings. SO'D advised that this information had not been shared directly with Scottish Government however noted that it would be helpful to do so.

13.3 The Board commented on the inclusion of the Contingency Fund information.

13.4 In regard to wholetime forecasting, SO'D advised that the Service take the most up to date information, which includes outcomes of promotion/recruitment processes, and projects forward for the remainder of the year.

13.5 The Board commented on the higher than budgeted income and asked how this situation could be maintained. SO'D advised that this was due to increased funding from modern apprenticeships and shared services.

13.6 In regard to funding reserves, SO'D reminded the Board that there was no opportunity to retain surplus monies. Any surplus would be returned to Scottish Government. As such, the Service's aim was always to maximise spend against the budget. SO'D noted that discussion had taken place on potential opportunities to bring forward future spend options and that the current level of variation was within normal levels.

13.7 **The Board scrutinised the resource budget position for the period ending 30 November 2024.**

(I Bashir & S Free joined the meeting at 1130 hrs)

14 CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

14.1 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 November 2024. It was currently anticipated that the approved budget of £43.216 million would be spent out by 31 March 2025. The following key points were highlighted:

- Good progress within property major works.
- Consideration being given to potential spending opportunities should additional funds be received.
- Continual review and adjustment to delivery within the 3-year programme.

14.2 The Committee queried the reason for the large virement out of the ICT budget. SO'D explained that this budget included provision for the New Mobilising System (NMS) project. Following award of the NMS contract, the budget had been adjusted accordingly. SO'D commented on the change in ICT which would increase resource spend and reduce capital spend.

14.3 The Board noted that information on whether anticipated benefits/objectives etc were being achieved and/or remained on track would be helpful. SO'D noted that discussions had taken place on future capital spend and the impact of same. IB further noted that an update would be provided at the Board Strategy Day in January 2025.

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

15 STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT REVIEW

- 15.1 SO'D introduced IB who presented the annual update report on the Strategic Asset Management Plans (SAMPs) for the management of property, fleet and equipment assets, for scrutiny. The following key points were highlighted:
- Review of progress made within the SAMPs for fleet, property and equipment.
 - Development of the training SAMP and future review of office accommodation.
 - Continuation of the asset management improvement journey whilst highlighting the good, the bad and areas requiring significant improvements.
 - Increased stakeholder communications and feedback.
 - Review of existing structure and capacity within the property team.
- 15.2 The Board noted and welcomed the Service's involvement in the blue light collaboration on Electric Vehicle (EV) charging network.
- 15.3 In regard to breathing apparatus renewal, the Board queried whether the resources were adequate for the level of engagement required ahead of managing the contract and requested clarity on the governance oversight. IB outlined the resources allocated to this project. IB advised that the Service were engaging, through the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), with other fire and rescue services who had or were going through the same process and were learning from their experience. IB noted that the governance oversight would be via the Service Delivery Board and Enabling Infrastructure Board and regular updates would be provided to the Board.
- 15.4 In regard to community resilience hubs, the Board queried how the Service were maintaining momentum on this important area. IB reminded the Board of the Service's work with North Hub and the difficulties encountered in securing a suitable site at Portree. The Service continues to explore options with Highland Council and were also engaging with Shetland Council for other potential opportunities. IB noted that the 5-year capital programme, which would feature community resilience hubs, would be presented to the Board in early 2025.
- 15.5 SS reminded the Board that the overall community resilience hub concept was not supported within the budget settlement allocated from Scottish Government. As such, the Service would need to work closely with local partners and local authorities to progress any potential collaboration opportunities. The Board noted their disappointment in the limited progress due to the lack of national funding.
- 15.6 In regard to resources (staffing), IB commented on the issues with recruiting staff and that a review of the full property team would be undertaken in the near future.
- 15.7 The Board commented on the potential to proactively identify and commence planning processes which allow the Service to develop projects ahead of site acquisition. Following a brief discussion, the Board noted that the Service were already considering this and that SSRP would be a key factor going forward along with partnership working with local authorities and partners.
- 15.8 In regard to the metric on utilisation of assets, the Board noted that it would be helpful to know what data was being collected and how it was being used. The Board sought to understand whether the standards being applied were still appropriate due to improvements in technology etc and whether the capacity was accurate.
- 15.9 IB explained that the light fleet review would consider the metrics and make recommendations as appropriate. IB advised that the standards being applied were industry benchmarks for vehicles. However, IB noted that the Service also carried out condition assessments which could increase the vehicle lifespan and provided an example. It was further noted that the ambitions and SSRP could impact on the Service's heavy fleet requirements.

15.10 The Board scrutinised the report.

*(I Bashir & S Free left the meeting at 1158 hrs)
(J Holden joined the meeting at 1158 hrs)*

16 SAFETY AND ASSURANCE ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2023/24

16.1 CMcG introduced JHo who presented the approved Safety and Assurance Annual Performance Report 2023/24 detailing the SFRS Safety and Assurance (SA) performance prior to publication.

16.2 The Board commended the report particularly welcoming the benchmarking information and that no enforcement actions were raised during the reporting period.

16.3 In regard to the fluctuation within previous years for both accidents/injuries and near miss reporting, JHo advised that over a 5-year period accident/injuries levels remained fairly consistent and relatively low for an organisation of this size. JHo noted that all events were investigated and preventative measures were put in place to reduce reoccurrence. The increase in near miss reporting was positive and resulted from increased engagement and promotional campaigns.

16.4 In regard to the format of the report, JHo advised that the Service were required to produce an annual report, and the content was based on elements of compliance. However, the KPIs were set by the Service.

16.5 The Board noted that there were a small number of actions outstanding and queried the level of concerns arising from this. JHo advised that the outstanding actions had been carried forward and had since been completed.

16.6 It was noted that the recent Strategy Day session relating to health and safety and the Board's responsibility, and the presentation of this report provided the Board with significant assurance that formal processes were in place within the organisation.

16.7 The Board scrutinised the report.

(J Holden left the meeting at 1214 hrs)

17 RISK THEMES

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

18 FORWARD PLAN

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

18.2 The Board queried the reason for the PMF Quarterly Performance 2024-25 Q2 being submitted for information only. It was noted that the majority of the KPIs were scrutinised at Committee level, however some were not. It was agreed that this would be taken to the Integrated Governance Forum to discuss and consider how this report is brought forward.

19 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

19.1 A special private meeting was scheduled for Thursday 30 January 2025.

19.2 The next full public meeting of the Board is scheduled to take place on Thursday 31 March 2025 at 1000 hrs.

19.3 There being no further matters to discuss in public, the meeting closed at 1220 hrs.

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(The meeting broke at 1220 hrs and reconvened in private session at 1230 hrs)

REPORTS FOR INFORMATION ONLY:

The following reports were provided for information only and were taken as read.

- Health and Safety Policy and Policy Statement
- PMF Quarterly Performance 2024-25 Q2

PRIVATE SESSION

20 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS PRIVATE MEETING:

20.1 Thursday 31 October 2024

20.1.1 The minute of the meeting held on 31 October 2024 was approved as a true record of the meeting.

20.2 Thursday 28 November 2024 (Special)

20.2.1 The minute of the special meeting held on 28 November 2024 was approved as a true record of the meeting.

20.3 Matters Arising

20.3.1 In regard to the Wellbeing Audit and Recovery Plan, LB informed the Board that she incorrectly reported that the Service had engaged with the HSE to make them aware of the situation. The HSE were informed of the situation 2-3 days after the Board meeting on 28 November 2024. Post meeting update was added to the approved minutes for record purposes.

21 PRIVATE ACTION LOG

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

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

22 NATIONAL JOINT COUNCIL UPDATE

22.1 The Board were provided with a verbal update in relation to the National Joint Council.

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

(L Patrick joined the meeting at 1245 hrs)

23 WORKING DRAFT STRATEGY 2025-2028

23.1 MMcA presented the working draft of the SFRS Strategy 2025-28 (formerly titled SFRS Strategic Plan) for scrutiny and feedback on the direction that the document is taking.

23.2 **The Board scrutinised the report.**

*(L Patrick, A Smith, C McGoldrick, L Barnes left at 1330 hrs)
(D Wilson & K Whitelaw joined the meeting at 1330 hrs)*

24 NEW MOBILISING SYSTEM UPDATE

24.1 JH advised the Board of his intention for future NMS reporting to be taken in the public session. The Chair acknowledged the progress and improving circumstances within the NMS project and as such, future reporting to the Board would only be as and when required. Future scrutiny and oversight would be undertaken by the Change Committee in public session, if appropriate.

24.2 DW presented an overview report of the NMS Project delivery and progress to date and the next steps.

24.3 **The Board scrutinised the report.**

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There being no further matters to discuss in private, the meeting closed at 1345 hrs.