



SCOTTISH
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Working together for a safer Scotland

PUBLIC MEETING - SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE BOARD

THURSDAY 18 DECEMBER 2025 @ 1000 HRS

VIRTUAL (MS TEAMS)

PRESENT:

Kirsty Darwent, Chair (KD)
Stuart Ballingall (SJB)
Angiolina Foster (AF)
Therese O'Donnell (TO'D)
Andrew Smith (AS)
Paul Stollard (PS)

Mhairi Wylie, Deputy Chair (MW)
Brian Baverstock (BB)
Neil Mapes (NM)
Malcolm Payton (MP)
Madeline Smith (MS)
Tim Wright (TW)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Stuart Stevens (SS)	Chief Officer
Sarah O'Donnell (SO'D)	Deputy Chief Officer (Corporate Services)
Andy Watt (AW)	Deputy Chief Officer
Jon Henderson (JH)	Assistant Chief Officer, Director of Prevention
Craig McGoldrick (CMcG)	Assistant Chief Officer, Director of Training, Safety and Assurance
Mark McAteer (MMcA)	Director of Strategic Planning, Performance and Communications
Deborah Stanfield (DS)	Interim Director of Finance and Contractual Services
Chris Fitzpatrick (CF)	BI and Data Service Manager (Item 11 only)
Asha Narsapur (AN)	Legal Services Manager (Items 21 & 22 only)
Christopher Casey (CC)	Group Commander, Board Support Manager
Heather Greig (HG)	Executive Officer Board Support/Minutes
Debbie Haddow (DJH)	Board Support/Minutes

OBSERVERS:

Liz Humphreys, Scottish Ambulance Service and Public Health Scotland
Robert Scott, HMFSI
Seona Hart, Fire Brigade Union

1 CHAIR'S WELCOME

- 1.1 The Chair opened the meeting welcoming those attending 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. Due to the volume of business, the Board were requested to keep questions concise to allow sufficient time for all agenda items.

2 APOLOGIES

- 2.1 David Farries, Assistant Chief Officer, Director of Operational Delivery
Fiona Ross, Director 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 *Draft Private Minutes, Private Action Log, Item 21 – Jenners Investigation Update, Item 22 – Update on Claim Against Systel* and *Item 23 – Service Delivery Review: Critical Path and Key Deliverables* would be taken in private due to the confidential nature of the issue (Standing Order 9G) (Item 23) and being the subject of legal proceedings (Standing Order 9D) (Items 21 and 22).

3.2 No further items were identified.

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 MEETINGS:**

5.1 **Thursday 30 October 2025**

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

5.1.2 **The minutes of the meeting held on 30 October 2025 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. One minor typographical error was highlighted and subsequently corrected.

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 stated that her term of office would end on January 2026 and formally announced the appointment of Mhairi Wylie, as the future Board Chair from February 2026. In the interim, MW would take up the role as Deputy Chair. KD acknowledged and thanked Paul Stollard for his contribution, support and challenge throughout his tenure as outgoing Deputy Chair.

8.2 KD presented the Chair's Update report which noted events that had occurred since the Board meeting held on 30 October 2025 and highlighted the following:

- Strategic Planning and Development workshops and Board Strategy Day to discuss the Service Delivery Review (SDR) including ongoing work and further consideration of consultation outputs.
- Regular meetings with the Minister Victims and Community Safety and the Scottish Government (SG) Sponsor Unit. The focus was operational delivery and budget needs.
- Attendance at the National Joint Council meeting where discussions centred on pay structure reform for firefighters and the aim to develop remuneration structures for current and future roles.

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

9 CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

9.1 SS presented the Chief Officer's report noting events which had occurred since the Board meeting held on 30 October 2025 and highlighted the following:

- Attendance at the Criminal Justice Committee to provide evidence on pre-budget scrutiny. Board Members were encouraged to review the recording of this session and also the Fire Brigade Union's (FBU) session for a balanced perspective.
- Significant political engagement with Criminal Justice Committee members individually, Minister of Victims and Community Safety and SG Sponsor Unit. Areas discussed included budgets, SDR, and wildfire activities.
- Attendance at the NJC Advisory Forum noting discussions on pay structure reform, sustainability and ongoing negotiations.

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

10 COMMITTEE UPDATES

10.1 Strategic Planning and Change Committee (SPCC)

10.1.1 Draft Minutes of Meeting: 6 November 2025

SJB reported that the Committee held a public meeting on 6 November 2025 which was chaired by AF in his absence. SJB referred the Board to the attached draft minutes, highlighted the following:

- Update on the New Mobilising System (NMS) which had since been successfully implemented across all Operation Control sites. Recognition and congratulations were offered to all those involved throughout the process.
- Update on the People, Payroll and Finance System noting the decision to proceed independently rather than as a shared service with SG.

10.1.2 The Board extended their thanks and congratulations on all those involved in the successfully delivery of the NMS.

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

10.2 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC)

10.2.1 Draft Minutes of Meeting: 23 October 2025

BB presented the draft minutes from the public meeting held on 23 October 2025, noting that a verbal update was provided at the last meeting.

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

10.3 People Committee (PC)

10.3.1 Verbal Update of Meeting: 11 December 2025

MW chaired the public Committee meeting on 11 December 2025 and highlighted the following:

- Discussions on the People Directorate Performance Report included the Volunteer Duty System (VDS) and need for increased clarity, Target Operating Model (TOM) and the inability to scrutinise effectively against it and abstraction rates within OC.
- Overview of the Wholetime Trainee Firefighter recruitment process.
- Update on the Leadership and Management Development Framework.
- Positive update on the BA Recovery process and the next steps.
- Finalised Safety and Assurance Annual Report 2024/25 was presented for information, following thorough review and scrutiny throughout its development process.
- Containment Update Report outlining the progress being made.
- Risk Register Update and discussions on its place on the agenda for future meetings.

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- Partnership working update
- Key Case Update report within the private session.

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

10.4 **Service Delivery Committee (SDC)**

10.4.1 Draft Minutes of Meeting: 25 November 2025

TW reported that the Committee held a public meeting on 25 November 2025 and referred the Board to the attached draft minutes, highlighted the following:

- Presentation from Local Senior Officer Bobby Lennox, Westerns Isles, Orkney and Shetland (WOIS) on the challenges, improvements, developments in training provision and the TINA Project.
- Update on the Home Fire Safety Visits App (HFSV) App particularly the issues with the referral process which have now been resolved.
- Risk Update report was presented, and concerns were raised on the Committee's ability to scrutinise the outdated information being presented.
- Positive Youth Volunteer Scheme (YVS) Evaluation Report was presented for information and Board Members were encouraged to review this report.

10.4.2 In regard to the Risk Update report, SO'D noted that work had been undertaken to review the scheduling of future Board and Committee meetings in 2026/27 and the challenges posed by the manual updating.

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

10.5 **Reform Collaboration Group (RCG)**

10.5.1 KD noted that no formal RCG meeting had been held since the previous Board meeting and the next meeting was scheduled in February 2026. KD reminded the Board that Scottish Ambulance Service had taken over the chairing and administration role for this group and had advised that work was ongoing to arrange the next meeting.

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

(C Fitzpatrick joined the meeting at 1025 hrs)

11 **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE 2025/26**

11.1 MMcA, introduced CF who presented the Board with the second quarter performance report for fiscal year 2025-26 for scrutiny. The following key points were highlighted:

- KPI 6 and 18, Home Fire Safety Visits and OI Inspections, were showing exception variations
- KPI 41, Service Desk incidents, were declining and related to resourcing issues
- KP46, On Call Retained, continues to deteriorate and remains a focus for the Service
- KPI 36 and 38, Subject Access and Freedom of Information requests, were reporting below target levels and temporary resources had been allocated to the Team.
- KPI 56, Health and Safety Action, remains consistent over the last 3 quarters

11.2 In regard to call handling times, the Board queried the impact made by the staffing profile. AW advised that this was influenced by the number of OC Firefighters in development and additional support required.

11.3 In regard to KPI 6 (Home Fire Safety Visits), the Board noted the improvements in Q2 and challenged whether the Service were being overoptimistic. JH advised that going forward there would not be an arbitrary number identified for Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV) as the focus would be on high risk visits. The number of high risk HFSV carried out would be reported on. Additional KPIs to report on effectiveness, evidencing

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outcomes, etc were being developed.

- 11.4 It was noted that further discussion may be required at the Service Delivery Committee, to help to understand why capacity planning cannot include estimated target volume.
- 11.5 In regard to HFSV partner referral, JH advised that this work remained key and assurances had been provided that this would be fully in place by April 2026.
- 11.6 In regard to KPI3, CF advised that there was no evidence or pattern of trends to indicate that electric vehicles contributed to the increase in incidents.
- 11.7 Brief discussion took place on the use and optimising opportunities of Co-pilot and AI. MMcA noted that the DaDT Strategy had recently been approved and the action plan was being finalised. One action related to the use of AI holistically across the Service. MMcA commented on the value of AI but the Service would have to remain cautious on how it was used. MMcA to provide off-table update on current AI validation methods.
ACTION: MMcA
- 11.8 In regard to KPI 33 (carbon funding), the Board queried the mismatch between the graph, figures and narrative. SO'D explained the mismatch between narrative and figures, noting that the carbon management plan would be reset to reflect realistic funding and that the team continued to actively seek all available funding sources.
- 11.9 The Board queried the Strategic Leadership Team's (SLT) reflection on the overall satisfaction with the performance level and suggested that consideration be given to include this within future reports.
- 11.10 In regard to KPI14 and 15 (response and call handling), the Board queried whether there was adequate understanding on any underlying causes. Following the recent Strategy Day session, MMcA advised that discussions had been held with colleagues at Northumberland University relating to analysing response times. An update would be brought forward in due course.
- 11.11 In regard to KPI 38 (Freedom of Information), MMcA provides a brief update on the current resourcing within the team and the additional post being recruited in the new year. MMcA noted the Service were currently performing at 89% against the target.
- 11.12 In regard to KPI 51 (physical attacks), the Board queried the need for the target line as there was zero tolerance for any acts of violence. CMcG offered his assurance that the Service remained committed to zero tolerance and confirmed that he would review the target.
- 11.13 In regard to KPI 14 (fire fatalities), JH reminded the Board that all fire fatalities incidents were subject to a follow up debrief for learning purposes.
- 11.14 In regard to KPU 16 and 17 (availability), the Board requested consideration for absolute data to be provided ie number of appliances off the run, to help clarify the situation. CF indicated that the dashboard includes a toggle feature enabling the presentation of absolute figures.
- 11.15 In regard to KPI 46 (resource based crewing), SO'D to provide further explanation on the percentage being reported.
ACTION: SO'D
- 11.16 In regard to KPI 41 and 42 (service desk incidents and requests), the Board noted the long term down trending of service desk incidents with SLA and sought assurance that this would be addressed. SO'D offered her assurance that this remained a key focus for

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the Service. DS noted the recent DaDT restructure and ongoing recruitment processes.

11.17 The Board scrutinised the report.

(C Fitzpatrick left the meeting at 1110 hrs)

12 THREE-YEAR DELIVERY PLAN 2025-28: QUARTER 2 2025/26 PROGRESS REPORT

12.1 MMcA presented the Board with the quarter 2 progress report on how we are performing against the 2025/26 actions within the Three-Year Delivery Plan 2025-28. The following key points were highlighted:

- Five actions have been completed this year, 23 actions green, 6 Amber (changing in due date for approval),
- SC11.5 Replacement of In-Vehicle devices, was reporting Amber but remained on target for completion by April 2026.
- Dashboard provide an overview of status, completion rates, etc.
- Minor glitches in presentation of information would be rectified in future reports.
- Reference to delivery plan would be added to future reports.

12.2 The Board commented on the slippage relating to People, Payroll and Finance project and Leadership Culture and queried the reasons for this. SS indicated that this was due to capacity issues and the need to balance competing priorities. SS noted that overall good progress had been made with the successful delivery of the NMS project and significant level of SDR work undertaken. The Service remains ambitious to deliver change and this is evident through projects, ongoing work and scale of programmes. SO'D commented on the level of work undertaken in relation to leadership and culture across the Service. It was noted that the Service needed to be more articulate on the work being undertaken.

12.3 In regard to SC6.3 and 6.4, the Board noted the status and queried how the Service would be tracking progress over the extended timeline. The Board commented on the need for clarity on values, how these underpin training and leadership, and prioritising of resources effectively to achieve the best outcomes. SO'D noted that there were 2 competing aspects, one was to act quickly and the other was ensuring the proper underpinning work was in place. SO'D commented on the continuing progress across the Service and the need for better articulation of the links to the outcomes. In terms of resourcing, staff members were also required to undertake other duties and the prioritisation/decision on core duties were required to be made by the SLT. The importance of identifying values was recognised as this would underpin the next stages. The benefits of more frequent milestones and monitoring was also recognised.

12.4 It was agreed that a Leadership and Culture session would be presented at a future Strategy Day to ensure that the Board were kept updated on progress being made.

12.5 In regard to the Executive Summary, consideration to be given to include the date.

ACTION: MMcA

12.6 In regard to SC11.5 (in vehicle systems), the Board requested an update on whether this was now back on track. MMcA advised that the project manager remained confident that this would be delivered by the due date and agreed to circulate information outwith the meeting.

ACTION: MMcA

12.7 The Board noting the number of revised dates queried whether these were achievable and the governance route for these revisions. AW advised that the decision on revised dates were made by the Change Portfolio Progress Group (CPPG), following recommendation by individual project boards.

12.8 The Board scrutinised the report.

(Meeting broke at 1144 hrs and reconvened at 1150 hrs)

13 ANTI FRAUD AND CORRUPTION POLICY FRAMEWORK

13.1 DS presented a report to provide the Board with the revised Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy, the new Counter Fraud Strategy and the new Fraud Response Plan for approval. The following key points were highlighted:

- Core component of governance framework and had been scrutinised by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.
- Policy strengthens approach across key areas with clear responsibilities and escalation routes, stronger alignment between fraud investigation and HR processes and greater awareness on awareness and prevention.
- Continued work through the Fraud Initiative.
- Improvements in contract management controls.
- Introduction of the Safe Call Confidential Reporting line.

13.2 DS advised that the Service fully recognise the risks with fraud. The new Fraud Framework had been designed to move away from a culture of deference and towards empowering individuals to feel confident and responsible for raising concerns.

13.3 In regard to training and awareness, SS noted that this links with the values, leadership, management and culture within the Service. SO'D further noted that this would be picked up within the leadership and management development framework and through the mandatory training module for all staff.

13.4 The Board commented on the potential collaboration or learning opportunities with other blue light services. DS indicated that further action was being taken to explore these possibilities.

13.5 Brief discussion took place on the statement that all SFRS managers were directly responsible for the prevention and detection of fraud. The Board queried whether this was reasonable and what actions would be taken in a result of any failures. DS noted that the wording reflected SG's zero tolerance and helped to reinforce the responsibilities of all managers within the Service to drive prevention and detection of fraud. DS further stated that any subsequent actions would be determined on the specifics of each individual case. DS outlined the process for reporting any fraudulent activities.

13.6 The Board approved the revised SFRS Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy, the Counter Fraud Strategy and the Fraud Response Plan for implementation.

14 RESOURCE BUDGET MONITORING NOVEMBER 2025

14.1 DS presented a report advising the Board of the resource budget position for the period ending 30 November 2025. DS outlined the analysis of the financial position and referred Members to Appendix A of the report, which identified the current resource position showing an overspend of £0.349 million and a forecast year-end overspend of £0.643 million (2% of budget).

14.2 DS highlighted the significant reduction in forward year end overspend and outlined the additional funding and actions taken to achieve this position.

14.3 In regard to On Call, the Board queried whether there had been any impact, or analysis on the impact, since the new contracts had been implemented. DS advised that the analysis was still in progress and additional information would be provided in the new year.

14.4 The Board queried the inconsistencies between the original budget figures contained

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within the covering report and resource monitoring report table and also the Wholetime forecast. Consideration to be given to what information is presented within the resource monitoring report table. DS to review and provide feedback outwith the meeting.

ACTION: DS

14.5 In regard to transport costs, DS noted that these had increased due to wildfire activities levels and were now returning to budgetary levels. Repairs and maintenance costs were likely to rise due to the aging fleet; however, this had been factored into the capital programme and budget setting processes. It was suggested that any financial impact from wildfire activities should be included within the narrative.

14.6 In regard to physiotherapy and counselling services, the Board commented on the reduction in costs and sought clarity on the reasons for this. CMcG to circulate information outwith the meeting.

ACTION: CMcG

14.7 The Board commented on the improved financial position and additional funding from SG but queried what actions the Service had taken to address the underlying issues. DS noted that operational activity levels, increased pay costs and support staff vacancies had contributed to the financial position. However, the Service's actions and measures taken had stabilised the position and work would continue to stabilise the position further.

14.8 In regard to reimbursements, DS advised that additional funding for wildfire activities would be provided by SG in the spring budget review. Reimbursement for costs associated with the US President and Vice President visits were still awaited.

14.9 **The Board scrutinised the resource budget position for the period ending 30 November 2025.**

15 CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

15.1 DS presented a report advising the Board of the actual and committed expenditure against the 2025/26 capital budget position for the period ending 30 November 2025. It was currently anticipated that expenditure of £47.192 million can be achieved. Correction actions would have to be undertaken to ensure the budget of £48.364 million would be spend out by 31 March 2026. The following key points were highlighted:

- Underspend mainly attributable to NMS contingency and late funding for ESN/ESMCP projects.
- Actual spend to the end of November was 60% of the total programme
- Work remains ongoing to reallocate monies and maximise spend within the current year.
- Positive outcome of the cost engineering exercise undertaken on the Dalkeith Fire Station project and the next steps.

15.2 The Board sought assurance on the Service's ability to deliver the pipeline of projects and to fully spend out the capital monies. DS acknowledged the risk and advised that the Capital Monitoring Group were meeting regularly to review progress and maximise spend. DS noted that the unused contingency funds from the NMS project was a positive position

15.3 The Board sought clarification on the removal of 15 additional OC posts which were no longer required. JH reminded the Board that the original intention had been to over establish OCs to support training. However, this had not been possible and OC personnel recruited were allocated to business as usual. The provision of training had been delivered, on time, through alternative means

15.4 The Board commented on the positive outcome in relation to the Dalkeith Fire Station project and queried whether the Service were accurately estimating project costs. DS confirmed that she remained confident in budgeting for projects. DS advised that a similar

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approach would be undertaken for the Liberton Fire Station project.

15.5 It was noted that future session relating to Standard Station Design was on the Strategy Day Programme.

15.6 **The Board scrutinised the level of actual and committed capital expenditure for the period ending 30 November 2025 and noted the actions being taken.**

16 RISK THEMES

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

16.2 The Board noted concerns around the leadership and management development and whether this was accurately reflected within an existing risk. To be considered further at a future Strategy Day session.

17 FORWARD PLAN

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

17.2 **Report(s) for Information**

17.2.1 Safety and Assurance Annual Report 2024/25

The Board noted their concerns that this report was presented for Information Only and that it should be brought forward as a substantive item. The Board were reminded that the People Committee has previously scrutinised and provided input during the drafting of the report. The People Committee were also provided with a quarterly update report, for scrutiny, throughout the year.

17.2.2 It was agreed that the Safety and Assurance Annual Report 2024/25 would be presented, for scrutiny, at the next formal Board meeting (March 2026). Added to Forward Plan

17.2.3 It was agreed that the future draft Safety and Assurance Annual Report would be added to the Board Forward Plan, as early as possible, for scrutiny. Added to Forward Plan

18 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

18.1 The next public meeting of the Board is scheduled to take place on Thursday 26 March 2026.

18.2 There being no further matters to discuss in public, the meeting closed at 1255 hrs.

18.3 *(The meeting broke at 1234 hrs and reconvened in private session at 1255 hrs)*

PRIVATE SESSION

19 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS PRIVATE MEETINGS:

19.1 **Thursday 30 October 2025**

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

19.2 **Matters Arising**

19.2.1 There were no matters arising.

20 PRIVATE ACTION LOG

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

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

(A Narsapur joined the meeting at 1300 hrs)

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21 JENNERS INVESTIGATION UPDATE

21.1 AW presented a report to Board to provide an update on the progress of the Jenners Investigation and to seek a decision the approach to be taken.

The Board approved the recommendations outlined within the report.

21.2

22 UPDATE ON CLAIM AGAINST SYSTEL

22.1 SO'D introduced AN, who presented a report to the Board to provide an update on the outcome of the Appeal Hearing which took place on 2 May 2025 in Poitiers, France for the claim raised to be included within the continuation plan for recovery of debts owed by *Systemes et Telecommunications SA* (Systel) via the French Court Action, following termination of the Services Agreement. DS sought instructions from the Board for next steps to take in relation to both the claim in France and progression with our claim in Scotland against Systel for damages following breach of contract.

22.2 **The Board approved the recommendation.**

(A Narsapur left the meeting at 1422 hrs)

23 SERVICE DELIVERY REVIEW: CRITICAL PATH AND KEY DELIVERABLES

23.1 AW presented a report to the Board which set out the work underway, activities and deliverables still required to enable the Board to make decisions on the Service Delivery Review (SDR) options for change.

23.2 **The Board noted the report.**