PUBLIC MEETING – STRATEGIC PLANNING AND CHANGE COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 14 MAY 2026 @ 1000 HRS

VIA MS TEAMS

PRESENT:

Therese O'Donnell (TOD), Chair	Angiolina Foster (AF), Deputy Chair
Stuart Ballingall (SJB)	Paul Stollard (PS)
Tim Wright (TW)	

IN ATTENDANCE:

Andy Watt (AW)	Deputy Chief Officer
Richard Whetton (RW)	Head of Governance and Compliance
Curtis Montgomery (CM)	Head of Strategy and Change
Heather Martin (HM)	Centre of Excellence Manager
Richard Warren (RWa)	Business Change and Implementation Manager
Mhairi Wylie (MW)	Chair of SFRS Board
Christopher Casey (CC)	Board Support Manager
Heather Greig (HG)	Board Support Executive Officer
Margaret Kyle (MK)	Minutes

OBSERVERS:
Andrew Smith, Board Member

1 CHAIR'S WELCOME

1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed those in attendance. Attendees were reminded to raise their hands, in accordance with the remote meeting protocol, should they wish to ask a question. This meeting would be recorded for minute taking purposes only.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2.1 Sarah O'Donnell, Deputy Chief Officer (Corporate Services)
Mark McAteer, Director of Governance, Strategy & Change
Deborah Stanfield, Interim Director of Finance, Digital and Infrastructure
Lynne McGeough, Head of Finance and Procurement

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

3.1 The Committee agreed to defer the People, Payroll, Finance Closure Report item to the next meeting due to absence of key members. The previous draft private minutes and action log would be discussed as per the agenda.

3.2 During the meeting, the Committee agreed that the Rostering Project would be discussion further within the Private Session.

4 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

4.1 There were no declarations of interest noted.

5 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS:

5.1 Thursday 5 February 2026

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

5.2 Thursday 16 April 2026 (Special)

5.2.1 The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting

5.3 **The minutes of the meetings held on 5 February 2026 and 16 April 2026 were approved as a true record of the meetings.**

6 ACTION LOG

6.1 CC presented Strategic Planning and Change Committee (SPCC) Rolling Action Log for consideration. The Committee were asked to review and approve the removal of (9) actions noted as complete, note (2) actions categorised as green status, and note (0) actions categorised as yellow status.

Action 7.1.15 SFRS Strategic and Financial Planning Process (05/02/2026): The Committee requested clarification on the update for this action expressing confusion about its practical implications and whether this action was now superseded or redundant and whether uncertainty remained regarding the 2026-27 Financial Plan. CC explained this action related to a proposed meeting in March that did not occur, and the relevant paper was subsequently addressed at the Board, therefore recommended the action be closed as redundant and apologised for not doing so before this meeting. In respect of the 2026-27 financial position, AW reported that the budget had been set and was not aware of any outstanding uncertainties, reassuring Committee that no significant changes were expected. The Committee noted the explanation and agreed the action should be closed.

Action 7.1.17 SFRS Strategic and Financial Planning Process (05/02/2026): The Committee inquired whether the scheduled meeting for the Committee aligned with the planning cycle. CM explained that due to changes in the schedule, it would be prudent to review the dates and ensure alignment. This action would be reopened and reassigned to CM, who would review and verify alignment of meeting dates with the planning schedule.

Action 11.1.3 SFRS Project Lifecycle Report (05/02/2026): The Committee requested an updated regarding user feedback on the project Life Cycle Report. CM confirmed survey had been issued, and a short life working group were gathering feedback, noting that most misunderstandings were related to rollout and training. Feedback to date had been positive about the robustness of the process, and the working group would conclude with findings to be presented. The Committee requested that the survey results and findings from the working group be presented at the next meeting (August 2026).

6.2 **The Committee noted the updated Action Log and approved the removal of completed actions.**

7 COMMITTEE ASSURANCE STATEMENT

7.1 The Chair introduced the Annual Committee Assurance Statement, questioning whether it should be signed by the current Chair or previous Chair. RW clarified it is standard to use the current chair's name, but the statement should reflect the previous Chair's tenure.

7.2 The Committee raised concern that the covering paper (section 5.9.1) was too self-satisfied, suggesting that it should reference the areas for improvement noted in the main statement.

7.3 The Committee agreed that section 5.9.1 with the covering report should be updated to include cross-reference to the areas of committed improvements.

ACTION: BST

7.4 **Subject the proposed amendment, the Committee approved the Committee Assurance Statement**

8 PLANNING /STRATEGY

8.1 Long Term Vision – Refresh Proposal and Method Statement

8.1.1 RWa presented the proposal to refresh the 10-year vision and develop a strategic roadmap, emphasising a light-touch approach with regular five-year reviews. He noted that the current vision, developed in 2021, remained outcome-focused but may require updating in light of the rapid changes since COVID. The refresh would help to ensure the vision remained relevant and acted as a living guide, supported by a strategic roadmap linking it to operational strategies, plans and subordinate documents.

8.1.2 RWa reported the timing was appropriate, as the drivers for change continue to evolve and delaying action would make future change more difficult. Referring to previous Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) sessions using the three-horizons model, RWa explained that the roadmap would cover 1–2, 3–5 and 5–10 year periods to align current and future change initiatives.

8.1.3 The Strategy and Change team would lead the refresh, with the Chief Officer as Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) and regular scrutiny from the Board and Committee. The SLT would approve the scope and content, with final sign-off by the Board.

8.1.4 The Committee held mixed views, questioning the value and resource implications, expressing concern about "planning" versus "doing", and whether the vision should change if aspirations remain constant. Some Committee members advocated for a light touch review whilst others supported the refresh and stressed the need for outward looking, opportunity focused thinking.

8.1.5 The Committee agreed the refresh should be light touch rather than a full redraft, with the strategic roadmap seen as the main benefit. It also agreed that resource implications should be considered, noting that the original vision had been shaped by the COVID context and that future challenges have since changed.

8.1.6 The Committee queried whether the five-month timeline for a light touch refresh was excessive. AW clarified that governance processes impacted on the timeline. It was suggested that the vision should be a rolling, iterative document, not tied to arbitrary 10-year cylces, highlighting the need to address evolving risk profiles and technology. RWa agreed a proposed five-year cycle within the 10-year horizon.

8.1.7 The Committee sought assurance that technical risk reviews such as those relating to construction, vehicles, etc were informing the vision. AW confirmed that an Emerging Risk Group were collaborating with partners and government to monitor and address these risks and the vision would set out the approach to managing them.

8.1.8 The Committee challenged the necessity for the long-term vision, noting that it was rarely referenced in comparison to the strategy and risked becoming another artefact without a joined-up planning process. AW acknowledged the need for further SLT and Board discussions on it purpose and format.

8.1.9 The Committee supported the refresh, emphasising the need for outward-looking, world-class future thinking rather than purely internal workshops, and called for balance between risk and opportunity in the vision. The Committee requested assurance that the three-horizons model, would be applied as an integrated rather than non-sequential, approach. CM to provide further offline discussion, with AF, on three horizons model.

ACTION: CM

8.1.10 **The Committee scrutinised this report.**

8.2 **Local Plan Development Progress Update**

8.2.1 RW provided an update on the revised Local Fire and Rescue Plans, noting these were a statutory requirement and that the Service was currently outwith timescales. Local review reports had been completed, with Aberdeenshire shared as an example. Local teams were now drafting plans using the revised template for consistency, whilst allowing for local needs and community planning arrangements. Plans would be finalised over the summer, followed by an eight-week public consultation. Deputy Assistant Chief Officer's (DACO) would review and sign off local reports, and SLT would review plans before submission to local Scrutiny Committees for approval.

8.2.2 The Committee noted their raised concerns regarding the timing of public consultation, stressing the need to reflect Service Delivery Review (SDR) outcomes within local plans and ensuring Local Senior Officers (LSO) were briefed. RW confirmed that this was the intention and acknowledged SDR could affect consultation and plan approval.

8.2.3 AW clarified that local plan objectives would remain unchanged regardless of SDR outcomes. Whilst resource deployment may change, the aims for local communities would remain the same. Communication plans would address this for Scrutiny Committees.

8.2.4 The Committee requested that insights from the local plan review would be shared with the Service Delivery Committee. RW agreed and suggested adding this to the IGF agenda for further discussion. The Committee supported this approach and noted minor typographical errors within the template, which RW acknowledged. (Captured under Item 11.2)

8.2.5 **The Committee scrutinised the report.**

9 CHANGE

9.1 **Portfolio Progress Report**

9.1.1 HM presented the updated report format including RAG dials for the overall portfolio and each programme. All four programmes had approved briefs, with over £50 million committed for the next three years. Most of the spend has been profiled for later this year and spend profiles would be closely monitored for slippage. HM provided Programme Highlights as follows:-

9.1.2 <u>Service Delivery Review</u>: Board decision scheduled; resourcing remains a challenge due to fixed-term contracts ending. New resourcing model was proposed for more flexibility and consistency.

9.1.3 <u>Corporate Services Review Programme</u>: Still being defined, work ongoing with focus on corporate business solutions and recruitment for a Senior Project Manager.

9.1.4 <u>Enabling Infrastructure</u>: New mobilising system remained on track, with a compressed timeline for integration platform (Boomi) but no escalation needed. Rostering timelines had been extended due to user acceptance testing issues; integration with NMS would be moved to phase two to de-risk delivery.

9.1.5 <u>Organisational Culture & Leadership</u>: Six initiatives, with briefs, were scheduled to be presented to the SLT for review and approval next month.

9.1.6 Ongoing resourcing challenges with fixed-term positions ending, especially for the Service Delivery Review. Conversations underway about contract extensions and backfill, but details were not shared in meeting. CM confirmed discussions are active and would provide updates as required.

9.1.7 AW noted Business Case for SDR team funding had been approved, but the team may change post-decision to match required skill sets.

9.1.8 The following specific project updates were provided to Committee.

9.1.9 Rostering: Timeline extended due to supplier and testing issues; Committee raised concerns about rostering project delays and requested more information. It was agreed that further discussion would be undertaken in the private session.

9.1.10 SCBA Procurement: Tender delayed by up to four weeks to allow for an external procurement review and reduce the risk of legal challenge. The review concluded sooner than expected, so the delay may be shorter than four weeks, with no further escalation required. Committee requested clarification on the procurement process and tender timing for the self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) project.

ACTION: CM

9.1.11 CM to provide further updates on contract extension discussions and resourcing to the Committee.

ACTION: CM

9.1.12 **The Committee scrutinised report and noted progress.**

10 FINANCE

10.1 **Portfolio Finance and Performance Report**

10.1.1 CM reported that most projects remained on track or were forecasting underspends, with time performance fully on target for included projects.

10.1.2 In terms of the Rostering project, cost status was Red for the current period due to Supplier delays and additional development costs but were expected to return to Green after re-baselining and approval of change request granting a 3-month extension. Benefits work was ongoing.

10.1.3 In terms of the New Mobilising System (NMS), costs status was green, with whole life forecast expenditure below the approved business case. Benefits validation had been completed, the toolkit had been approved and submitted to the Digital Assurance Office for go-live review. Key benefits included improved satisfaction, process simplification, enhanced system reliability and risk reduction.

10.1.4 In terms of the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP) In Vehicle Systems (IVS)**:** Cost status was green, with forecast costs below approved business case.

10.1.5 In terms of the Safety and Assurance Management Systems (SAMs)**:** Cost status was green, with final project costs to be confirmed once supplier agreement had been reached. Initial benefits include improved compliance, streamlined document management, and increased efficiencies.

10.1.6 In terms of the People, Payroll and Finance Project**:** Project agreed for closure; outline business case for replacement activity approved.

10.1.7 In terms of the Service Delivery Review Programme**:** Financial performance was amber, with an overspend due to uniformed wholetime firefighter staff costs charged without corresponding budget provision. Benefits development was underway.

10.1.8 In terms of the overall portfolio: Approved Business Case costs totalled £37.229 million, with forecasted cost at £35 million. Forecasted underspend was £1.45 million (variance 3.89%), within the 5% tolerance.

10.1.9 In terms of the KPIs: All projects reported 0% variance against approved duration after re-baselining.

10.1.10 It was noted that the SCBA Project would be included in the next report once documentation had been processed.

10.1.11 The Committee scrutinised this report.

11 COMMITTEE ROLLING FORWARD PLANNING

11.1 **Committee Forward Plan**

11.1.2 The Committee considered and noted the Forward Plan. The following items were to be added:

- Feedback from the overall Project Strategy (August 2026)

11.1.3
- Project Life Cycle Report (August 2026)

11.1.4 **The Committee noted the Forward Plan.**

11.2 **Items for Consideration at Future IGF, Board and Strategy Day meetings**

11.2.1 The following items were added to the IGF Forward Plan

- Insights from the Local Plan review would be shared with the Service Delivery Committee.

12 REVIEW OF ACTIONS

12.1 Several formal actions were recorded during the meeting.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

13.1 The next full Public Committee meeting is scheduled to be held on Thursday 6 August 2026.

These being no further matters to discuss, the public meeting closed at 1115 hrs.

(The Public Meeting broke at 1115 hrs and Private Session convened at 1120 hrs)

PRIVATE SESSION

14 MINUTE OF PREVIOUS PRIVATE MEETING: 5 FEBRUARY 2026

14.1 The Committee approved the minute as an accurate record.

15 PRIVATE ACTION LOG

15.1 There were no outstanding actions.

16 PEOPLE, PAYROLL, FINANCE CLOSURE REPORT

16.1 Deferred to August SPCC.

17 ROSTERING PROJECT

17.1 T**he Committee noted report was for information only.**

There being no further matters to discuss, the Private meeting closed at 1145 hrs.