

**NON CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES
MINUTES OF SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM HELD ON 20 MARCH 2024**

Present: Dawn Whittaker, Chief Fire Officer
 Dave Norris, Deputy Chief Fire Officer
 Mark Matthews, Assistant Chief Fire Officer
 Duncan Savage, Assistant Director of Resources/Treasurer
 Hannah Youldon, Assistant Director of Operational Support & Resilience
 Liz Ridley, Assistant Director of Planning & Improvement
 Julie King, Assistant Director of People Services
 Matt Lloyd, Assistant Director of Safer Communities
 George O'Reilly, T/Area Manager Protection
 Elizabeth Curtis, Communications & Marketing Manager
 Sue Walsh, Executive Assistant
 Vincent O'Neill, Observer

Apologies: None

		Action
37/24	<p>Minutes of the Meeting held 21 February 2024</p> <p>The non-confidential minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2024 were approved as an accurate record.</p>	
38/24	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>None.</p>	
39/24	<p>Action Points from Matrix</p> <p><u>201/22 Primary Authority Scheme</u> T/AM Protection would provide a written summary report for SLT in April. In the meantime, it was noted that the service was expecting to receive the funding required, with possibly also an additional income.</p> <p><u>10/23 Strategic Workforce Plan</u> ADoPS advised that this would be discussed in further detail under agenda item 19. Action complete.</p> <p><u>240/23 IT Outsource Re-tender Business Engagement Presentation</u> The ITG Manager would work towards presenting an initial summary of the planned re-tender to SLT in April. SLT held a short discussion over the available options and likely timeframes.</p>	<p>ADoSC Apr 24</p> <p>ADoR/T Apr 24</p>
40/24	<p>Revenue and Capital Budget 2023/24 and Capital Programme 2023/24 to 2026/27 Monitoring at Month 11</p> <p>ADoR/T provided a verbal update on the latest position and in particular Safer Communities.</p> <p>In summary, costs had shown a downward turn by £56,000 (net) in terms of forecast, due to on-call and FTC, meaning that the current overspend had now reduced down to £750,000. There had also been a small downward trend in Operational Support & Resilience and Engineering and there was an overall improvement in forecasts.</p> <p>ADoR/T stated that a number of government grants related to business rates have been received, which has released money totalling approx £160,000.</p>	

	<p>The base position at P10 was an underspend of £456,000, at P11, the figure was now closer to £700,000, noting this could potentially increase this further prior to year-end. This provided additional flexibility and further budgeted contingency going forwards and would help to manage corporate risk.</p> <p>ADoSC provided a verbal overview on the improved position in Safer Communities ahead of the quarterly action plan update due at next months' SLT. For the first time, it can be seen that there will be periods over the summer where there will be a deficient due to extraction figures, which we can plan now to manage in advance. Changes to centralised crewing had begun via a phased approach from 4 March 2024, which would also help to drive down overtime costs. The optimum position in time, would be for LCS to take on all of the centralised crewing arrangements.</p> <p>SLT held a general discussion over budgets, Service Delivery, further training and communications.</p> <p>SLT was reminded that bids could be made against the underspend either a) where activity funded from 2023/24 had slipped into 2024/25 but there was no budget or b) to fund new activity not identified through budget setting. SLT could take final decisions alongside the Provisional Outturn report in May or June. Although decisions could be made earlier than this, ACFO reinforced the importance and it was agreed that the priority should be to create a workable sustainable budget for the next financial year (2025/26).</p> <p>ADoR/T stated that there would be a written Revenue and Capital Budget monitoring report for SLT in April followed by a provisional outturn return report in May or June.</p>	ADoR/T May 24
41/24	<p>Call Over</p> <p>The following reports were not called over, and therefore all recommendations contained within them were agreed:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Productivity and Efficiency Plan 2024-25 - Annual Statement of Assurance 2023-24 - Assessment of the Corporate Framework and Annual Governance Statement for 2023-24 - Social Media report - Data Management 	
42/24	<p>Productivity and Efficiency Plan 2024-25</p> <p>ADoR/T referred to his email 18 March 2024 and requested that SLT provide any comments or updates by close of play on 25 March 2024 so that a revised version could be circulated in advance of the deadline of 31 March 2024.</p> <p>CFO and ADoR/T would need to formally sign it off with a proposal to take it to the next Fire Authority meeting for adoption, most likely to the Policy & Resources Panel on 16 May 2024.</p>	
43/24	<p>Internal Audit Strategy & Plan 2024-25</p> <p>Paul Fielding, Principal Auditor provided an Internal Audit Plan for East Sussex Fire Authority covering the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.</p>	

	<p>The primary reasons for expanding the plan from 70 to 90 days are the continued focus on the MBOS project which will replace the Service's existing SAP ERP system with Oracle Fusion and is currently undergoing a project reset and the emergence of concerns regarding controls over the claiming of Turnout & Attendance Allowances, Use of Vehicles and Overtime Claims.</p> <p>The daily rate for Internal Audit will increase on 1 April 2024 from £365 to £379 in line with the recently agreed national pay award for 2023/24. If the plan is agreed at 90 days this will increase the cost from £25,550 to £34,110 and additional funding of £8,560 will need to be approved from the 2024/25 contingency.</p> <p>Noting that the Service would shortly undergo its third round of HMICFRS Inspection in January 2025, ADoP&I commented on the scope of projects.</p> <p>ACFO felt it was a little too early to carry out the CRM Post Project Review and this should be considered in Quarter 1 2025/26 instead. This would allow ESFRS to carry out an internal review first and full embed the project. SLT agreed to remove this from the audit for the current year and instead, make mention of it within the potential future reviews section.</p> <p>It was confirmed that Overtime Arrangements would be audited across the whole service not just from an operational perspective and SLT reviewed the Discipline Process Arrangements scope.</p> <p>It was noted that some of the key contacts were mentioned a number of times across the planned reviews. Paul Fielding would ensure that there would be a balanced approach to timeframes in order to minimise any impact to individuals.</p> <p>SLT is recommended to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Review the proposed internal audit plan for 2024/25 ensuring that coverage is appropriate in the light of the risks the Authority faces; b) Approve the plan as amended for 82 days, prior to submission to Scrutiny & Audit Panel on 16 May 2024; c) Approve additional funding of £5,528 from the 2024/25 contingency; 	
44/24	<p>Annual Statement of Assurance 2023-24</p> <p>ADoOSR stated that the Annual Statement of Assurance 2023/24 provides a high-level and broad outline of the activities ESFA and ESFRS have undertaken over the last 12 months and wherever possible, it is aligned with statutory duties, expectations of HMICFRS and the Strategic Plans we set out to achieve last year.</p> <p>SLT approved the Annual Statement of Assurance and present to East Sussex Fire Authority to ratify for publication and agreed to send to the Home Office as required by the Fire and Rescue National Framework 2018.</p>	
45/24	<p>Assessment of the Corporate Framework and Annual Governance Statement for 2023-24</p> <p>DCFO stated that this report set out how the Fire Authority has assessed the effectiveness of its governance arrangements and to seek approval of the Annual Governance Statement in line with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.</p>	

	<p>The review has been carried out by the Assurance, Performance & Governance Group of senior officers in line with the Authority's Local Code of Corporate Governance which is consistent with the seven principles of good governance.</p> <p>As part of this review, we have not identified any gaps in assurance over key risks or significant governance issues. The Authority has, however, identified a range of improvements to its corporate governance framework. Action Plans are in place to address the necessary improvements and these will be monitored during the year.</p> <p>SLT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) confirmed that they are satisfied with the level of assurance provided to them through this report and the Authority's governance framework and processes; b) identified any significant governance issues that should be included in the Authority's Annual Governance Statement; and c) approved the Annual Governance Statement for consideration by Scrutiny & Audit Panel. 	
46/24	<p>Proof of Value mobilising</p> <p>As agreed at SLT in February 2023, Simpsons Associates undertook a scoping study that provided recommendations as to how the Service can work towards its ambitions to the become more data driven and intelligence led.</p> <p>The Data Management Steering Group has considered the report in full and agreed that the key next step is to deliver a Proof of Value (POV) of the concepts and under-pinning technology proposed by Simpson Associates in their final report.</p> <p>As the business case has developed and formal costings have been received from telent and Simpson Associates, this has brought additional clarity to the costs particularly in licences for the technology. A contingency of £33,000 has been included for the technical elements and a half-years licencing costs has been added £24,000 for the 2024/25 budget. The original cost was assumed to be £260,000 against a budget provision of £265,000 identified from the Improvement and Efficiency reserve. Therefore, an additional £52,000 is requested for 2024/25.</p> <p>SLT held a lengthy discussion around all aspects of this work including existing processes and current ways of working, the holistic use of data and impact of the Future Foundations report. It was noted that the work on retention schedules was separate and not data in this respect. A further report would be taken to the Strategic Change Board to outline progress and to discuss when to formally commence this work.</p> <p>SLT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) approved the additional funding of £52,000 to fully resource the project. ii) agreed that the funding should be from the 2023/24 underspend or should be allocated against the 2024/25 corporate contingency. iii) noted that there is an ongoing revenue pressure of £48,000 which would need to be picked up through Star Chamber. 	
47/24	Proposed Business Plan Activities 2024-25	

	<p>ADoP&I stated that this paper presents the draft directorate business plans for 2024/25. The plans are an outcome of the Service's strategic planning framework and contain the high-level activities for each department for the following year.</p> <p>ADoR/T noted that E-recruitment Phase 2 and Core Brief response both needed to go back into the plan for 2024/25 as were removed in error. Other Resourcing issues were also outlined which would likely result in the need for additional funding to the value of £35,000 for a temporary additional Assistant Finance Business Partner resource to support the high number of projects and strategies due for review. SLT also acknowledged and considered CRMP, Future Foundations and overall timelines.</p> <p>SLT:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. agreed the directorate business plan activities for 2024/25. 2. noted the strategy development timetable and that six strategies are due to be refreshed in 2024/25. 3. considered the strategy development timeline in Appendix A and inform of any changes. 4. agreed to an additional £35,000 funding for Finance from the 2024/25 Corporate Contingency. 	
48/24	<p>Introduction of a Work Experience Policy</p> <p>The Strategic Community Safety Manager asked SLT to consider introducing work experience opportunities within the Service.</p> <p>In order for ESFRS to be in a position to introduce work experience, which has been defined in the policy as work shadowing, work placements and visitor days, a small working group has met regularly and developed a draft policy, procedure and related documents.</p> <p>The policy has been developed after extensive research of others existing work experience policies and covers work experience guidelines, information about disclosure and barring, Health and Safety requirements, roles and responsibilities. Additionally, a procedure has been written and the relevant documentation has been developed and are contained as appendices in the policy.</p> <p>If SLT agree the principle of introducing work experience placements in the Service, the policy will undergo the consultation process. Once signed off a trial will be undertaken with a small number of placements offered to test the policy and arrangements. The trial will be a proof of concept and a report back to SLT with the findings will follow to enable a final decision to be made.</p> <p>The Youth Engagement Officer would be the point of contact, be continually evaluated and take place in tranches involving not only local authority schools, but also academies and home educated children. It was very much a child led process but also be offered outside of the traditional school programme. CFO shared her experiences from The Girls Network, particularly around the important of mentoring and requested that all work experience requests are responded to. The Strategic Community Safety Manager outlined the importance of the evaluation process and collation of feedback for the service and students. ADoP&I noted caution about the number of weeks that were offered throughout the year and the programme planning and impact to individual teams. ADoPS also suggested expanding on the gender question which needed broadening out</p>	

	<p>and refreshing.</p> <p>ADoP&I recommended getting the policy in place before starting the trial, which would then be followed by an evaluation. It was agreed that an interim report would be brought back to SLT in September.</p> <p>SLT:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. approved the introduction of work experience at ESFRS. 2. noted that if approved the draft manual note will undergo the Service's consultation process. 3. noted that if approved a trial will commence and a report will be brought back to SLT with the findings. 	<p>ADoP&I Sep 24</p>
49/24	<p>Gender Pay Gap</p> <p>ADoPS provided a verbal update and short presentation on the current position.</p> <p>ESFRS has 3 criteria to submit to meet our statutory obligation for Gender Pay Gap. The comparison quartile figures for ESFRS and FRS's were shared and ADoPS outlined the next steps. The mandatory data would be submitted via the Home Office portal prior to the deadline of 30 March 2024 then published on the internet and intranet, noting the full report would also be published in due course.</p> <p>Given the significant change in gap for both mean and medium figures, further analysis would be undertaken to hopefully provide a narrative to explain the movement. SLT agreed to this being shared at an Assistant Director's meeting in order for further scrutiny by the OD Business Partner,</p> <p>This would formally be brought back to SLT in April for sign off prior to being published.</p>	<p>ADoPS Apr 24</p>
50/24	<p>Social Media report</p> <p>CMM set out the current risks linked to the use of social media by ESFRS staff and volunteers both in and outside of work and confirm planned actions to mitigate these risks.</p> <p>This paper pulls together a brief assessment of newly emerged risks associated with social media, including but not limited to, Cyber Security, Human Resources and Health and Safety.</p> <p>SLT agreed the actions set out below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Carry out an annual audit on corporate social media accounts and activity in line with the National Cyber Security Centre's advice and Health and Safety regulations, including the use of TikTok. b) Design and implement options to identify and mitigate social media security risks as they emerge. This may include commissioning regular reports from external experts. c) Deliver a communications campaign for staff – covering phishing, imposter accounts and promoting NCSC good practice. 	

	<p>d) Ensure the new social media policy refers to cyber security risks, specific websites/social media, and an appropriate EIA assessment has taken place.</p> <p>e) Update social media training in line with the new policy.</p> <p>SLT considered whether there needed to be a review on the use of WhatsApp and other social medial platforms on devices provided by the service. DCFO would follow this up with the Information Security & Compliance Officer/CMM and the HR&OD Manager outside of the meeting in order to progress this area.</p>	
51/24	<p>Large Animal Rescue Team Provision</p> <p>ADoOSR requested that SLT review the Proposals outlined within the report and determine the future plan for the Animal Rescue Unit (ARU) at Crowborough.</p> <p>The new ARU arrived in Service in October 2022, with modifications required in order to meet the user specification. The total cost of the new vehicle was £120,000 for the chassis, plus conversions and modifications of approximately £100,000, bringing the total cost to around £250,000.</p> <p>However, the vehicle has remained off the run due to additional PPE being requested by Workplace Safety Reps (which has now been ordered and would arrive imminently) and the availability of crewing.</p> <p>The On-Call section at Crowborough was removed in October 2023, and the crewing model changed from 2 Watches of 6 to 1 Watch of 10, self-rostered into 2 groups of 5. The ARU requires a team consisting of a minimum of 4, therefore, there are occasions when there is not 4 qualified members of staff available within the group of 5.</p> <p>When the ARU is off the run due to crewing, Kent FRS mobilise their ARU from Faversham. Surrey Fire and Rescue are also utilised but less often. This increases response time significantly and incurs costs for mutual aid. The costs are difficult to specify, however, some financial assumptions have been detailed within the paper, which demonstrates that if Proposal 1 is approved, the cost to Kent will remain resulting in the possibility that this cost will be passed to ESFRS.</p> <p>ADoP&I raised some queries and questions which were clarified and it was noted this was being delivered as a bid. ADoR/T considered the financial impacts and historic position and there was a discussion around training and whether this could be funded within the existing training budget rather than by way an additional bid. CFO felt this report should have been discussed at the Response & Resilience Delivery Board in advance of SLT, in order to iron out the operational issues and provide additional clarity on the proposals.</p> <p>The preferred Proposals are 2 and 3 and 4 and SLT were asked to approve these as a collective phased introduction of improvements.</p> <p><u>Proposal 2</u> – Changes to response levels at Large Animal Rescues when the ARU is not available as a fully crewed asset. Could be provided at minimum cost with maximum benefit.</p> <p><u>Proposal 3</u> – Creation of LAR resilience staff at Forest Row to assist in</p>	

	<p>enhancing the availability of the ARU. This was the recommended option, noting that resilience is most critical factor.</p> <p><u>Proposal 4</u> – Increase qualification level of LAR trained staff at Crowborough, supporting maintenance of competency of LAR resilience staff and increase availability.</p> <p>SLT agreed, in principle, to Proposal 3 and requested that Proposals 2 and 4 be worked through Finance and Ops ensuring consideration is given to the forthcoming Specials Review and that a report would be provided back to the Resilience Strategic Board. Depending on the finally agreed recommendations, ADoOSR would advise if this also needed to come back to SLT.</p> <p>It was agreed that any funding for training would come from the External Training Budget and the cost of specialist PPE would be funded from existing budgets which had been increased through 2024/25 budget setting.</p> <p>Consultation timelines in terms of any policy decision would also be considered and further technical work needed in liaison with ADoOSR and ADoSC accordingly. Kent FRS have requested a copy of this report in order to mirror and develop collaboration opportunities going forwards. The existing MoU was also being reviewed and charging of LAR incidents was being reviewed.</p>	
52/24	<p>Data Management</p> <p>ADoP&I noted that in order to assess where the Service is in respect to the standard, a Data Management Scoping Study was commissioned and agreed by SLT in February 2023 and delivered by Simpson Associates between March and September that year.</p> <p>The Data Management Steering Group also considered the recommendations arising from the scoping study and agreed that the key next step was to deliver the Proof of Value (POV) recommendation made in the report (SLT agenda Item 11).</p> <p>Further work has been undertaken by the National Fire Chief's Council to support Services in their implementation of the fire standard. An entire Data Management Framework (DMF) was released in January of this year.</p> <p>The information provided by the NFCC, together with the programme of work identified in the Simpsons Associates report will positively help the Service improve its score against the Fire Standard and more importantly help it achieve its data ambitions.</p> <p>SLT noted the:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) work undertaken by the Service in relation to data management to date. b) findings of the data management scoping study undertaken by Simpsons Associates and the associated recommendations as detailed in section 2.4 of this report. 	
53/24	<p>Strategic Performance Report Quarter 3 2023-24</p> <p>ADoP&I outlined the Strategic Performance report for Quarter 3, noting that</p>	

	<p>the report is structured into four sections.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Performance at a glance summary. This is a high-level summary of all indicators grouped by those that are achieving their target, those near target, those that are needing improvement against the tolerances set by service managers 2. Service Priority Areas. All of the Fire Authority's priority areas are included with a deeper dive into performance that shows the last 12 month rolling monthly performance, the previous year's performance, the last five years quarterly data, the RAG rating and service owner commentary for indicators where performance needs improving. 3. Performance measures needing improvement. This is a deeper dive into performance or those measures that have been classified as needing improvement based on the quarterly performance that are not service priority areas. 4. Annual Performance Measures and those that are new. There are five performance measures that are reported annually and will be in the 4th quarter annual report. There are seven new performance measures and systems and processes are being developed and they will be brought on line throughout the year. <p>SLT considered the strategic performance report for Quarter 3 2023/24 and noted that additional commentary would be necessary when performance measures needed improvement (showing red), but that it was not so essential when were performance measures were near to their target (showing amber). ADoR/T would add in comments to his 5 areas which required improvement.</p>	
54/24	<p>Strategic Workforce Plan</p> <p>ADoPS provided a verbal update and short presentation on the background and current position.</p> <p>Across all of the departments there are 39 templates to be completed. 43% has been completed already which included critical role analysis and business plan objectives.</p> <p>Moving forward, it had been agreed to split the current workforce planning meetings into 2 parts. A <u>monitoring group</u> which will focus on imminent reactive moves and support vacancy management processes and a <u>strategic group</u> which will use an 'issues log' approach to dedicate time and the right people in finding solutions to long term workforce concerns and issues identified via departmental plans.</p> <p>Further workshops would be arranged, there was also an offer from the OD Business Partner to spend time with managers as required.</p>	
55/24	<p>SLT Forward Plan 2024 and FA/Members Seminar Forward Plan</p> <p>SLT noted the forward plans for 2024, which was a useful overview for the coming months.</p> <p>The topic for the Strategic Seminar on 25 March would be CRMP to include scope and objectives.</p> <p>SLT also reviewed the agenda for the forthcoming Members Seminar,</p>	

	<p>scheduled for 27 March 2024.</p> <p><u>Scrutiny & Audit Panel</u> – 16 May 2024 ADoR/T advised that there would be an additional item for External Auditors - Audit backlog and ACFO confirmed that Primary Authority Partnership would remain on the agenda as listed.</p> <p><u>Policy & Resources Panel</u> – 16 May 2024 Productivity & Efficiency Plan 2024/25 and Treasurer Management Annual Stewardship items would also be added to the agenda.</p>	
56/24	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p><u>FBU letter – Minimum Service Levels</u> As of today, a letter had not been received by ESFRS. CFO stated that is a matter for the Fire Authority as it was their statutory duty to review arrangements and take appropriate decisions at the time. DMO would be able to provide legal advice to Members on this matter as required. ADoSC would be attending a Home Office MSL Engagement Session on behalf of ESFRS on 21 March 2024 and would feedback accordingly. SLT had a general discussion around the minimum level of service on a strike day which is proposed as a relevant percentage (73%) of available appliances, vehicles and personnel.</p> <p><u>Mayfield Stakeholder Engagement</u> ACFO/ADoSC had held a pre-engagement event at HQ on 19 March 2024 which had gone well. Details would be shared with SLT shortly.</p> <p><u>Fort Road</u> ADoOSR provided a verbal update and noted that the planning pack would be ready by end of April 2024.</p>	
57/24	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The next meeting will be held on 25 April 2024</p>	