

Lancashire Combined Fire Authority

Resources Committee

Wednesday, 27 September 2023, at 10.00 am in the Main Conference Room, Service Headquarters, Fulwood.

Minutes

Present:	
Councillors	
R Woollam (Chair)	
D O'Toole (Vice-Chair)	
P Britcliffe	
H Khan (Substitute)	
J Mein	
M Pattison	
S Serridge	
B Yates	

Officers
S Healey, Deputy Chief Fire Officer (LFRS) S Brown, Director of Corporate Services (LFRS) B Warren, Director of People and Development (LFRS) E Sandiford, Head of Human Resources (LFRS) J Meadows, Head of Finance (LFRS) D Brooks, Principal Member Services Officer (LFRS)

13/23	Apologies for Absence
	The Chair welcomed County Councillor Peter Britcliffe to his first meeting of the Resources Committee. Apologies were received from County Councillors L Beavers and T Hurn and Councillor Baker.
14/23	Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests
	None received.
15/23	Minutes of the Previous Meeting
	Resolved: That the Minutes of the last meeting held on 12 July 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report

The Assistant Director / Head of Human Resources presented the report. As a public body there was a requirement to publish information which demonstrated compliance with the Equality Duty created under the Equality Act 2010. In the exercise of functions there was a requirement to: i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act; ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who shared a protected characteristic and those who did not; and iii) foster good relations between people who shared a protected characteristic and those who did not.

Regulations enabled by the Equality Act required public authorities to publish their equality objectives and information to demonstrate their compliance with the Equality Duty. The Annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion report was one of the ways in which the Service demonstrated this compliance.

Members considered the report (attached at appendix 1 now presented) which demonstrated performance in terms of meeting legal duties for the period 2022/23 and setting out plans for 2023/24. It was noted that this was part of a suite of delivery plans that supported the delivery of the People Strategy (which detailed areas of focus in terms of improved accessibility, training and development, recruitment and selection, engagement, consultation, performance management and in the development of policies and strategies).

Since last year, several cultural reviews in other Services had prompted His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to encourage Services to deliver on a number of tasks and to report on a number of areas; the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group also monitored progress in relation to these activities.

The report detailed some of the actions the Service was undertaking in response to HMICFRS March 2023 Values and Culture report recommendations and the subsequent National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) recommendations which related to: i) how members of staff could raise concerns; ii) appropriate background checks; iii) misconduct handling; iv) training and development; and v) the implementation of the Core Code of Ethics.

Core Code of Ethics

The code identified five primary ethical principles which reflected best practice principles and had been designed to underpin the way we serve our communities, carry out our role, and work together:

- i) Putting our communities first (putting the interest of the public, the community and service users first);
- ii) Integrity (acting with integrity including being open, honest and consistent in everything we do);
- iii) Dignity and respect (making decisions objectively based on evidence, without discrimination or bias);
- iv) Leadership (we are all positive role models, always demonstrating flexibility

- and resilient leadership. We are all accountable for everything we do and challenge all behaviour that falls short of the highest standards); and,
- v) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), (continually recognising and promoting the value of EDI both within the LFRS and the wider communities in which we serve. We stand against all forms of discrimination, create equal opportunities, promote equality, foster good relations and celebrate difference).

All employees and those working with or on behalf of the Service were required to behave in accordance with the Service values and to follow the Core Code.

Equality Objectives

Further to the review of risks within the communities of Lancashire, the Service had developed the following equality objectives in supporting:

Our Communities:

- Support local businesses to reduce the risk of fire and remain compliant within fire safety legislation.
- Reduce the number and impact of fire and other emergencies to our diverse communities across Lancashire.
- Develop and deliver a prevention service targeting our most vulnerable communities.

Our Workforce:

- Promote equality in our workforce policies and workforce practices.
- Develop our staff to ensure they can respond competently meeting the different needs of our diverse communities.

Protected Characteristics (or protected groups)

LFRS aimed to ensure that no one received less favourable treatment for reasons relating to all recognised protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010.

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) - Equality Analysis

Equality analysis within an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was an effective tool to demonstrate how the Service was meeting its legal requirements under the public sector equality duty, identifying the impact of policies and decisions on staff and communities ensuring that the impact was fully understood, and any negative impact was mitigated. EIAs were completed where there was an impact on people, or the community. The Service complied with the NFCC equality impact assessment tool kit. The Service had strengthened its approach to EIA, by incorporating an element of quality assurance to provide more scrutiny. Further to the review of fire cover delivered during 2022 an external company was utilised to undertake the EIA, this ensured that the EIA was robust and independent. The assessment process was also used as a learning opportunity for staff in undertaking equality analysis. Comprehensive training had previously been undertaken in relation to the completion of an EIA and this continued to be part of

the middle manager development programme. A peer review was planned as part of the external audit for 2023.

Commissioning and Procuring Services

LFRS would ensure that any partnership it was involved in operated in line with equality principles and associated equality duties. All contracts were required to agree to LFRS terms and conditions, which would include relevant clauses in relation to equalities. Additional scrutiny was incorporated within the procurement process where it was considered appropriate. For each procurement project, the lead stakeholder was responsible for completing an equality impact initial screen and subsequent assessment where required.

Where an assessment was required and undertaken, the internal customer / lead stakeholder must ensure this was done pre-procurement and any required changes made to their specification / requirements before any exercise progressed. The Head of Property was part of the NFCC National Fire Estates Group and one of its priorities was to support the development of dignified facilities / EDI standards and improvements.

Workforce Profile

Members considered annex A to the report which demonstrated the workforce equality profile as of 31 March 2023² in relation to all protected groups (apart from gender reassignment due to the sensitive confidential nature of the data).

Information was provided across:

- i) workforce demographics for the Service – demonstrated there had been a slight increase in the number of women employed (from 18% to 18.9%), a slight reduction in the number of people who were BME (from 3.7% to 3.2%), a slight reduction in the number of people employed who declared a disability (from 2.8% to 2.6%) and an increase in the number of people who identified as LGBT+ (from 3% to 3.7%);
- ii) prevention and protection (business fire safety staff, district community safety staff and headquarters prevention staff and Prince's Trust green book staff) – showed that diversity within prevention and protection was more positive. Although there had been a slight reduction in the number of women and people who were BME in the Prince's Trust, there had been an increase in men which had increased the diversity of the department;
- iii) response grey book operational staff - Wholetime firefighters including apprentices (there had been an increase in women employed and a slight reduction in the number of people who were BME and a slight reduction in the numbers of people who declared a disability), On-call (there had been a slight reduction in the number of women employed, the number of people who were BME continued to fluctuate slightly and there had been a slight increase in the number of people who declared a disability);
- iv) female firefighter operational staff – the total number of women had increased from 86 to 91 and female supervisory managers had increased from 21 to 23;
- v) business support green book staff – while the number of BME staff was increasing there was a slight reduction the previous year. The number of women

within support services was high and remained fairly static;

vi) turnover – there was a slight reduction in the number of women leaving the Service, there had been a slight increase in the number of people who declared a disability and who were BME; and

vii) age profile – there had been an increase in the total number of people employed aged under 34 years and 35-39 years and a reduction in the number of people aged 45 – 55 years. Within the on-call service the numbers of people progressing from the under 34 category was reflective of those who had moved into the aged 35-39 category.

Annex B to the report provided an analysis of recruitment which showed increased applications from underrepresented groups (female applicants had increased by 16% and BME applicants had increased by 30% when compared with a 28% increase the previous year, making over 12% of all applicants and there was 1 more disabled applicant, a rise of 1% of total applications). There was an increase of 26 more applicants from the LGBTQ+ community, an increase of 21% from the previous year. These figures showed that LFRS continued to make progress in becoming an employer of choice for under-represented groups. The report also showed the Service becoming more diverse from appointments made. 25% of new employees were women (an increase of 6% from the previous year); those employed from BME groups comprised 8% (an increase of 3.5%), with 5% coming from LGBTQ+ groups and 5% declaring themselves as having a disability.

Monitoring equality and diversity in the workforce enabled the Service to identify how employment policies were working and to identify areas where these may appear to be working disproportionately on certain groups of staff. It was noted that with effect from 2022, the Service reported on its workforce as part of its performance reporting arrangements

Detail of progress in relation to EDI was summarised in the completed action plan for 2022-23 as set out in annex D with the new Action Plan for 2023-24 considered at annex E.

Other areas of focus relating to EDI

The Head of Human Resources also highlighted that the report included broad activity undertaken (set out in section 7 of the report, pages 22 and 23 of the agenda pack). This included engagement through the corporate communications department who provided information in a variety of formats using multiple channels to best reach Lancashire's diverse communities. The department supported positive action campaigns, prevention and protection activity (through targeted campaigns), national campaigns and special events (ie: PRIDE events). Information was published in 26 other languages; videos were produced with subtitles and British Sign Language was used in fire safety videos. Guidance was provided and delivered to social media users on how to create accessible content. The department also applied measures from the Dyslexia Association Style Guide in both internal and external material to consider the visual stress experienced by some dyslexic people and to facilitate ease of reading.

Values and Culture

A review of the London Fire Brigade had identified several key areas of failing which contributed to its poor organisational culture. Further to the review several Services identified similar issues relating to misogyny, racism, and bullying. In response the HMICFRS produced a series of recommendations which Services were expected to report progress. LFRS had adopted all the recommendations and these were in the process of being implemented. The national Code of Ethics had been immediately adopted when it was launched and the Deputy Chief Fire Officer had been confirmed as the senior officer responsible. It was noted that development sessions had been delivered 407 employees and these would continue to be progressed.

In response to changes in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act the Service was now undertaking standard DBS checks for new grey book firefighters and existing firefighters, checks would also be rolled out to some categories of support staff, including community safety advisors.

Detail in relation to disciplinary, grievances and recruitment and selection was also included in the EDI Annual Report. It was noted that this was being provided to the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group thereby providing greater scrutiny and to ensure there was no negative impact on a particular minority group in terms of recruitment, progression and the application of the Services policy and processes.

Gender Pay Gap Information

On the snapshot date, 31 March 2023, LFRS employed 1313 people with a significantly higher proportion of men than women. The Service had a far larger volume of operational roles and currently those roles have traditionally been more commonly occupied by men, where turnover was low. However, women made up the larger proportion of staff in support roles.

The mean (average) Gender Pay Gap was calculated by adding together the hourly pay rates of all female employees and dividing by the total number of females to create a mean (average). This calculation was repeated for men and the difference in the two figures identified the Gender Pay Gap. Using this calculation methodology across LFRS, the mean Gender Pay Gap was significantly different than the national average which was 12.74% in favour of women who on average earned on average £1.76 per hour more than men.

To calculate the median Gender Pay Gap all women's earnings were ranked and all men's earnings were ranked, by their hourly pay, to establish the middle of the female pay range compared to the middle of the male pay range. The difference between the two was the median pay gap. The median Gender Pay Gap at LFRS equated to 6.38%. This meant that men on average earned £1.00 more than women. The inclusion of On-Call and dual contracted staff who were primarily male significantly skewed the mean and the median Gender Pay Gap on the basis of the way their earnings were accrued, resulting in a large number of men with lower earnings at the bottom of the ranking which accounted for the results.

An analysis of the quartile distribution by occupational group demonstrated that 84% of the employees in the lower quartile were On-Call staff. This group of staff equated to 21% of the employee population.

Most female part time support staff were found in the lower-middle quartile, with fewer in the upper middle and upper quartiles.

The proportion of women in the upper-middle and upper quartile was representative of the overall proportion of women within the LFRS workforce. The upper-middle quartile was predominantly male, but this was where most members of staff were undertaking the role of Firefighter. A high proportion of men undertook the role of Firefighter, so it was therefore unsurprising that this quartile was male dominated.

A high proportion of male employees employed on the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Service terms and conditions (known commonly as the 'Grey Book'), attracted additional allowances that were not available to staff conditioned to the NJC for Local Government Service ('Green Book') support staff, the majority of which were female. These additional allowances increased Grey Book average earnings and moved this staff group to the lower middle quartile, as demonstrated in the report.

It was recognised that women were significantly under-represented in the operational workforce and consequently LFRS was committed to increasing the number of female firefighters. This formed an important part of LFRS's approach to EDI within the Service. LFRS was now undertaking positive action initiatives aimed at encouraging people from under-represented groups to apply for positions in the organisation. Recruitment activity was locally monitored (including the levels of attraction and appointment) to identify problem areas to drive forward improvements.

In response to a question raised by CC Pattison, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that the DBS checks were funded by the Service.

CC O'Toole was pleased that the recruitment campaign in August 2022 attracted 577 valid applications and that applications from females and minority groups had increased.

In response to a question raised by CC H Khan regarding the availability of flexible working policies to attract more females into the Service, the Assistant Director / Head of Human Resources advised that last year the Service had invested in improving terms and conditions in relation to some policies which included: maternity pay provision, paternity pay, special leave and flexible working arrangements. It was also noted that it was powerful to have representatives within the Service from minority groups as role models. The Service had looked to introduce more flexible shifts as part of the Emergency Cover Review but this had not been supported by the FBU.

Colleagues leading positive action included firefighters and representatives from community fire safety. This positive action included visiting and talking to different community and faith groups and visiting sports clubs and schools to provide

information on the role of a firefighter, particularly the broader role however, this was resource intensive. CC Woollam was pleased with the targeted social media campaign to reach under-represented groups (as referenced on page 25 of the agenda pack) which had reached circa 1.2m people.

In response to a question raised by CC Mein regarding procedures for confidential concerns the Assistant Director / Head of HR advised that the anonymous reporting line 'Safe Call' had been launched in June and corporate communications colleagues had promoted this. Some reports had been received, although in small numbers, early indications were that they would not have been received through another route. This is reflective of the feedback given by Safecall.

Resolved: that the report be noted.

17/23

Financial Monitoring

The Director of Corporate Services advised that this report set out the current budget position in respect of the 2023/24 revenue and capital budgets.

Revenue Budget

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service's 2023/24 revenue budget had been set at £68.493m. The budget profiled to the end of July 2023 was £22.017m. Expenditure to the end of July 2023 was £22.295m, an overspend on the year-to-date budget of £0.176m. The overspend position was broken down between pay and non-pay budgets; an underspend of £0.014m on pay and a £0.190m overspend on non-pay activities.

The year-to-date positions within individual departments were set out in the report with major variances of note being shown separately in the table below:

Area £'m	Overspend/ (Under spend)	Reason
Pay	(0.014)	<p>The year-to-date position was broadly breaking even albeit there were some variances within the position to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Service had met its legal responsibilities in relation to the Bear Fulton legal case regarding holiday pay. This had resulted in a payment of £0.285m for backdated costs, that had largely been accrued for in previous years, and ongoing costs of £0.011m per month resulting in year-to-date pressure of £0.057m. There was a forecast pressure of £0.140m that would need to be included in the 2024/25 budget. • The Emergency Cover Review (ECR)

		<p>approved by the Authority resulted in an overall increase of 8 Wholetime Firefighter across the Service and ongoing efficiency savings. There was currently an in-year shortfall of £0.200m against the savings profile due to timing delays but overall, the ECR was on target.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through improvement in the management of overtime arrangements the service had seen a significant reduction in overtime costs in the period to date that was offsetting the above pressures.
Fleet and technical Services - Non Pay	0.052	The year-to-date position was a small overspend broadly consistent with reporting in May 23; with higher vehicle insurance premiums that were experienced across the market and higher than budgeted fuel costs.
Apprenticeship Levy Funding – Non Pay	0.100	Total Apprenticeship Levy income for the year was forecast to be lower than budgeted resulting in an annual pressure of approximately £0.300m; due to a reduction in the number of recruits meeting the eligibility criteria for funding. On call fire fighters and recruits with significant prior learning did not attract levy funding. This might require an adjustment to the income budget for 2024/25 if this trend was expected to continue.
Training Centre Courses – Non Pay	0.070	The Training Centre Courses overspend was mainly due to associate trainers and external training course providers. This pressure was partly offset by vacancies however, the Service was putting in place arrangements to try to increase the number of internal trainers.

Service Delivery / Heads of Service Delivery – Non Pay	(0.047)	<p>There was a (£0.160m) underspend on National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) due to rebates received for Eastern and Pennine stations resulting from surveyor revaluations.</p> <p>This saving was partly reduced by an overspend of £0.078m on protective equipment, including the roll out of wildfire kit and Urban Search And Rescue (USAR) kit.</p>
Fire Link Grant	0.025	<p>This Home Office grant which supported expenditure on data costs associated with using Airwave service radios was budgeted at (£0.200m). The Home Office had advised authorities that the grant was to decrease by 20% per annum, ending in 2026/27, resulting in a £0.025m year to date pressure, and full year pressure of £0.050m. This pressure would need to be included in the 2024/25 budget.</p>

Capital Budget

The Capital Programme for 2023/24 was £11.7m, after allowing for the year end slippage agreed at the last Resources Committee meeting. Spend to date was £2.5m predominantly on pumping appliances. The current year end forecasts had been reviewed and were currently anticipating an in year spend of £10.9m, leading to slippage of £0.9m. Details of capital projects are outlined in the table:

Area	Budgeted Items
<p>Operational Vehicles Budget £5.991m Forecast £5.795m Slippage £0.301m</p>	<p>The budget allowed for the remaining stage payments for 10 pumping appliances purchased in previous financial years.</p> <p>In addition, the budget allowed for the first stage payments of the 3 pumping appliances for the 2023/24 programme. It also included two climate change vehicles and three command units.</p> <p>All were on target in 2023/24, except for extended lead time of the smaller climate change vehicle.</p>
<p>Other vehicles Budget £1.03m Forecast £1.03m</p>	<p>This budget allowed for the replacement of various operational support vehicles. Delivery of all vehicles were expected in year.</p>

Operational Equipment Budget £1.47m Forecast £1.22m Slippage £0.25m	This budget allowed for equipment purchases including thermal imaging cameras and cutting and extrication equipment 2023/24. Slippage on Ballistic Vest and Helmet PPE would enable exploration and pilot of equipment.
Building Modifications Budget £1.6m Forecast £1.6m	This budget included the continuation of Drill Tower replacements and an upgrade to the Wylfa prop facility. Completion of works was on target.

IT systems Budget £1.7m Forecast £1.3m Slippage £0.3m	This budget included for the upgrade Firewalls and digitisation of fire appliances. The new Firewall (£0.235m) was expected to be completed in quarter four, therefore the WIFI (£0.1m) would slip to quarter 1 of 2024/25. The Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme (ESMCP) was a national project that had been paused to 2025 delaying slippage (£0.1m) from 2022/23 further.
--	---

Appendix 2, as now considered by Members set out the capital programme and the committed expenditure position against this, as reflected above. The committed costs to date would be met by revenue contributions and usage of capital reserves and capital receipts.

In response to a question raised by CC O'Toole regarding the potential for a sizeable increase to external audit fees, the Director of Corporate Services advised that the current fees were circa £44k which was relatively low when compared with others and reflected the work of an organisation that delivered on time with minor adjustments. An increase was estimated in the region of 100% of the total fee.

The Director of Corporate Services added that the standards and guidance for auditors were set against international audit standards which the sector felt were not suitable and confirmed that Treasurers had been lobbying for a risk-based model. He advised that the potential for increased fees had been expected for some time. It was recognised that the audit profession were under pressure which had led to delays in completing audits and that there were a very small number of auditors that wanted or could undertake the work. In addition, he advised that the Service was looking to attract Government support through 'new burdens funding' and that Public Sector Audit Appointments was currently undertaking a consultation on proposals for setting the fee scale for 2023/24 audits with responses due mid-October.

Resolved: that the committee noted and endorsed the financial position and approved slippage in the capital programme of £0.9m to 2024/25.

18/23	Date and Time of Next Meeting
	<p>The next meeting of the Committee would be held on Wednesday 29 November 2023 at 1000 hours in the Main Conference Room at Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Fulwood.</p> <p>Further meeting dates were noted for 27 March 2024 and 3 July 2024 and agreed for 25 September 2024.</p>
19/23	Exclusion of Press and Public
	<p>Resolved: that the press and members of the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that there would be a likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the appropriate paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, indicated under the heading to the item.</p>
20/23	Pensions Update (Standing Item)
	<p>(Paragraphs 4 and 5)</p> <p>Members considered a report that provided an update on the various issues which had arisen in respect of the changes to the pension schemes applying to the uniformed members of the Fire Sector.</p> <p>Resolved: that the report be noted.</p>
21/23	High Value Procurement Projects
	<p>(Paragraph 3)</p> <p>Members considered a report that provided an update on all contracts for one-off purchases valued in excess of £100,000 and high value procurement projects in excess of £100,000 including: new contract awards, progress of ongoing projects and details of new projects.</p> <p>Resolved: that the report be noted.</p>

M Nolan
Clerk to CFA

LFRS HQ
Fulwood