



SCOTTISH
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Working together for a safer Scotland

PUBLIC MEETING – PEOPLE COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 3 MARCH 2022 @ 1300 HOURS

BY CONFERENCE FACILITIES

PRESENT:

Mhairi Wylie (Chair) (MW)
Malcolm Payton (MP)
Paul Stollard (PSt)

Steve Barron (Deputy Chair) (SBa)
Fiona Thorburn (FT)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Liz Barnes (LBa)	Director of People and Organisational Development
John Dickie (JD)	Assistant Chief Officer, Director of Training, Safety and Assurance
Stuart Stevens (SS)	Assistant Chief Officer, Director of Service Delivery
Bruce Farquharson (BF)	Head of Training
Scott Semple (SSe)	Head of People and Organisational Development
Lyndsey Gaja (LG)	Head of People and Organisational Development
Julie Harkins (JHa)	Acting Head of Safety and Assurance
Jim Holden (JHo)	Deputy Head of Safety and Assurance
Ceri Dodd (CD)	Deputy Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
Kenneth Barbour (KB)	Area Commander, Training Delivery
Mary Corry (MC)	People and Organisational Development Business Manager
Desmond Donnelly (DD)	Group Commander, Chief Officer Business Support
Richie Hall (RH)	Continuous Improvement Project Manager
Anne Gordon (AG)	Leadership and Skills Development Manager
Kirsty Darwent (KD)	Chair of the Board
Nick Barr (NB)	Board Member
Alasdair Cameron (AC)	Group Commander, Board Support
Marion Lang (ML)	Corporate Business and Admin Manager
Pamela Nicol (PN)	Corporate Admin Assistant Team Leader / Minutes

1 CHAIR'S WELCOME

- 1.1 The Committee Chair opened the meeting, welcomed those present and wished to publicly acknowledge that the People Committee were meeting for the first time since the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine and hoped for an early and peaceful resolution to the situation, our thoughts were with the people of Ukraine and added that anyone within the Service affected by the conflict should seek help and support within the Service itself and to come forward without hesitation.
- 1.2 The Committee were reminded to keep their microphones on mute unless speaking and raise their hands, in accordance with the remote meeting protocol, should they wish to ask a question.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2.1 No formal apologies were received.

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

3.1 The Committee discussed and agreed that the Key Case Updates 2021/22 Q3 would be heard in private session due to the small number of individuals involved and confidentiality in line with Standing Orders (Item 9D). The draft minutes/verbal update of the Remuneration, Appointments and Nominations Sub Committee and the verbal update on the Employee Partnership Forum and Partnership Advisory Group would also be taken in private due to the confidential nature of business taken to these meetings.

3.2 No further items were identified.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

4.1 None.

5 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: THURSDAY 2 DECEMBER 2021

5.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2021 were approved as a true record of the meeting subject to the undernoted 4 points being amended as follows:

- 7.2.1 paragraph should read 'Training, Safety and Assurance Progress and Performance Quarter 2 Report 2021/22'.
- 7.2.1 bullet point 2 should read '50 Retained Volunteer Duty System (RVDS) Trainee Firefighters completed their Breathing Apparatus and Fire Behaviour training'.
- 7.2.1 bullet point 3 should read '11 Wholetime Trainee Firefighters commenced training at Newbridge Training Centre'.
- 7.2.1 bullet point 7 requires removal of acronym (TfOC) as recorded twice.

5.2 Matters Arising

5.2.1 None

6 ACTION LOG

6.1 The Committee considered the Action Log and noted the updates.

6.2 The Committee approved the removal of 2 actions noted as complete.

7 PERFORMANCE AND RISK REPORT QUARTER 3 2021/22

7.1 People and Organisational Development (POD)

7.1.1 SSe presented the POD Progress and Performance Report Quarter 3 2021/22 to the Committee. The following key areas were highlighted:

- Q3 saw an increase in absence levels primarily due to significant increase in COVID19 sickness absences, this being the highest level of COVID19 sickness absence of any quarter since the pandemic began due to highly transmissible Omicron variant
- Significant work was required to review and allocate resources within the Service as needed
- The COVID19 absence rate has subsequently been declining since the turn of the year and has now stabilised, this will be reflected in the next quarterly report
- The buoyant and competitive UK employment market is creating challenges in attraction and retention, particularly in support staff roles
- Overall vacancy rate of 14% is driven by RVDS vacancies (which forms part of the RVDS Improvement Programme scope)
- Support staff vacancy rate is 9% and Support staff turnover has also increased from 1.4% in Q1 to 2.6% in Q3
- Work is in hand to review how and where we recruit, as well as how we position our total reward offering to prospective and existing colleagues

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- Operations Control (OC) continues to experience a high and increasing absence rate (16.5% in Q3), influenced by the additional demands of COP26, bonfire night, the Command and Control Futures (CCF) Project and staff shortages
- OC recruitment and training is progressing to address staffing levels and cross functional work is underway to identify ways to support OC staff more effectively and improve colleague experience

7.1.2 The content of the report has been reviewed with the Business Intelligence (BI) team to improve the presentation of the report and a new streamlined version was introduced and shared. The Committee welcomed the executive summary.

7.1.3 The Committee asked whether future reports would show live data coming from a single source as they would like to view this in real time. SSe explained that they are working on getting information as up to date as possible without any time lag.

7.1.4 The Committee asked about comparable ratios with regards to musculoskeletal and psychological absences for Resource Based Crewing (RBC), Retained Duty System (RDS) and Detached Duty (DD). SSe explained that these areas are currently being explored and questioned at the National Safety Assurance Board to ensure that all staff and employee groups are being fully supported by most suited interventions and initiatives.

7.1.5 The Committee commended the service on keeping operational performance levels high despite working with 44% more sick days lost to COVID19 in Q3 and acknowledged the challenges faced along with the high vacancy rate. They enquired as to what impact this has had on staff morale, especially in Operations Control where absence rates are at 16.5%. SSe explained that SFRS are being more careful with their commitments at present and are acutely aware of morale in terms of not overstressing respective teams. POD have met to discuss how best to support OC in its unique environment and a comprehensive action plan is in place.

7.1.6 The Committee asked how the Service is trying to encourage recruitment and for details on the staff turnover rate of 2.5%. SSe explained that this is affected by competition in external markets and we are seeking to appeal to these markets. The Service continues to look at how best to improve practices and POD are trialling a quicker recruitment process from advert to interview through to start date, adding that we are competitive on salaries and conditions and are highlighting the SFRS brand.

7.1.7 The Committee indicated previously that they are keen to receive a spotlight update on RVDS in terms of recruitment and training and wish to seek assurances regarding this, also keeping an eye on talent attraction and retention issues across all sectors. They are keen to hear how this develops within SFRS going forward.

7.1.8 **The Committee scrutinised the report.**

7.2 Training, Safety and Assurance

7.2.1 BF presented the Training, Safety and Assurance Progress and Performance Q3 Report 2021/22 and highlighted the following key areas within Training relating to Risk Movement:

- Online delivery of Incident Command Level (ICL) 1, 2 and 3 courses (which were previously delivered in person at National Training Centre (NTC) Incident command suite) now being effectively delivered to Flexi Duty Officers (FDO's) virtually reducing the backlog and allows for flexibility in the future.
- A full Review of the Training for Operational Competence (TfOC) process has been undertaken and proposed improvements are now undergoing consultation within Service Delivery Areas (SDA's) and Directorates allowing for the harmonisation of training across the country

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- Trainee Course pilot is currently underway at National Training Centre with two Trainee Firefighter Foundation Programmes (TFFFP) running concurrently for a fourteen-week period. This is highlighted as a key success as this is the first time that the TFFFP has operated continuously for seven days per week within SFRS or previously within any of the eight legacy Services
- Specialist Rescue Competence statistics were discussed and clarified. KB added a more detailed explanation for the benefit of the Committee

7.2.2 The Committee welcomed bespoke online training available to Firefighters and asked if we are addressing the needs of the learner by ensuring they are both IT confident and competent. BF advised that delivery of these courses is tailored accordingly.

7.2.3 The Committee thanked BF and KB for the detailed report.

7.2.4 JHa presented the Training, Safety and Assurance Progress and Performance Q3 Report 2021/22 and highlighted the following key areas within Safety and Assurance:

- Increase in Risk Movement with regards to development of in house Health and Safety Management system due to resourcing issues within ICT however following discussions this is now being addressed.
- Health and Safety Improvement Plan has seen a 1% increase in absence levels during Q3, however, to have only achieved a 1% increase during these very challenging times was worthy of note.
- Key Performance Indicators (KPI) have shown a positive trend in all areas with the exception of COVID19 and Health and Safety Executive (HSE) targets in relation to RIDDOR.
- In Q3 there was one RIDDOR Reportable Accident / Injury compared to two during the same quarter in the previous reporting year. The RIDDOR Reportable Event was an over seven-day absence, which occurred during Refresher Training.
- In Q3 there were three COVID19 events that were deemed to be attributable to work related transmission and therefore reportable to the HSE.
- Steady increase in Acts of Violence (AOV), SFRS are engaging with other Blue Light responders to sign a pledge which focuses on tackling violence towards emergency services and will continue to work with local areas who are seeing an upward trend. JHa added that this increase may be due to the pandemic and hopes that as society returns to near normal levels, we will start to notice a decrease in these levels.

7.2.5. The Committee thanked JHa for the detailed report, acknowledging the hard work required to keep RIDDOR levels as low in an organisation of this size by the very nature of the job itself.

7.2.6 The Committee questioned if the rise in vehicle accidents had resulted in injury to persons. JHa explained that vehicle accidents normally comprise of clipped mirrors, bumps and avoidable incidents on station premises, noting trends in vehicle accidents are mainly relating to low speed manoeuvres, with the caveat of sending a large vehicle on less than suitable roads.

7.2.7 In relation to the Health and Safety Improvement Plan progress report, the Committee questioned the position at Q3. JHa advised of the requirement to catch-up although some actions may need to be deferred until next year. JD added that the report is fluid and fluctuations occur, examples given were the staffing situation and COP26. In response, the Committee noted that the challenges were understood.

7.2.8 The Committee asked for comment as there continues to be a significant number of events with no information available. JHa advised that this is followed up with business partners ensuring information is added to Think, Act, Stay Safe (TASS) and they are engaging with HR to discuss sourcing information by other means.

7.2.9 The Committee questioned the number of Vehicle Accidents (VA), highlighting the report figures of 51% of VA required Driving Assistants to be in position, however 55% were not used. In response JHa explained that this is promoted regularly through the National Safety and Assurance Board and in liaising with Training, we will be publishing a Low Speed Manoeuvre interactive module in the next quarter to be delivered within the station. Content will now include real life prosecution cases.

7.2.10 **The Committee scrutinised the report.**

8 INDEPENDENT AUDIT / INSPECTION ACTION PLAN UPDATE

8.1 Training of RDS Personnel

8.1.1 KB presented the HMFSI Report relating to the Training of RDS Personnel and gave an overview into the independent audit.

8.1.2 KB highlighted Appendix A of the report which gives an overview of the dashboard detailing the live plan of 37 actions and 22 recommendations. He highlighted that all actions are progressing steadily to timescale and one of these actions is drawing to completion one year ahead of schedule, commending the team for their hard work.

8.1.3 Work to rollout Broadband in all RVDS stations is nearing completion which will significantly help in the training of Firefighters.

8.1.4 KB asked the Committee to note the progress of all action plans as presented in the audit and inspection dashboard in Appendix A and to scrutinise the Training of RDS Personnel action plan in Appendix B.

8.1.5 The Committee praised the team for managing to complete an action one year ahead of schedule especially during the current climate.

8.1.6 The Committee questioned if items noted as deferred will be reviewed. KB explained that items have been deferred for varying different reasons, some with lengthy rationale and these will be revisited although some may continue to be deferred for a significant amount of time.

8.1.7 JD explained that some pieces of work are being captured elsewhere, for example within the Continuous Improvement Programme. Action plans will be reviewed through the Training, Safety and Assurance audit process ensuring that anything which has been deferred is still valid, either to remain deferred or to be brought forward in the future for further scrutiny by the Committee.

8.1.8 Committee thanked KB for delivering an excellent piece of work.

8.1.9 **The Committee scrutinised the report.**

9 SAFETY AND ASSURANCE STRATEGY

9.1 JHa presented the report which provides an overview of and seeks support for the progression to publication and implementation of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Safety and Assurance Strategy.

9.2 JHa acknowledged that there is no legal duty to develop a Safety and Assurance Strategy however, the strategy reinforces our commitment to safety and sets out key areas of focus over the next four years. This is designed to support SFRS values and our Strategic Plan through the progression of five key themes, identified as Compliance, Culture, Control, Communication and Engagement and Continuous Improvement.

9.3 By achieving these objectives SFRS will be in a strong position to meet the requirements of ISO 45001 – Health and Safety Management Systems accreditation.

9.4 The Committee thanked JD, JHa and JHo for their reports. The Committee endorsed and supported the report.

9.5 JD welcomed the endorsement, thanking the Committee for prior scrutiny of the report and valued input.

9.6 **The Committee scrutinised the report.**

10 COMMITTEE ALIGNED DIRECTORATE RISKS

10.1 LBa presented a report on the Committee Aligned Directorate Risks and highlighted the progress being made against planned mitigations, referring to Appendix 1C of the report. LBa also highlighted the challenges faced around RVDS recruitment but added that this is being targeted by every Directorate and the Improvement Group is now achieving positive movement.

10.2 The Committee asked about our processes and contingencies in place in relation to working with other agencies in the event of a contamination risk. LBa confirmed that the contaminants group runs pilots across different stations to review station behaviours and practical facilities to identify appropriate actions to reduce risk. The subgroup also considers behaviour at scene, decontaminating at scene and transportation of kit, all of which is backed by solid research which the Fire Brigades Union commissioned.

10.3 The Committee questioned if the target date of April 2023 on Risk ID TSA009 is correct in relation to SFRS not being able to demonstrate legislative compliance due to ongoing delays with the development of the SFRS bespoke Health and Safety Management System (HSMS), Think, Act, Stay Safe. JHa advised this is a phased approach, phase two has now concluded however reporting functionality issues have occurred, limiting the volume of information that can be drawn down from the system. ICT have appointed an external contactor to address this which will enable a staggered release of modules.

10.4 The Committee agreed that following the positive movements highlighted in the report, spotlight should be on RVDS recruitment which gives the Committee the opportunity to seek more clarity around the issues and to ensure that work is progressing successfully.

10.5 **The Committee scrutinised the report.**

11 PARTNERSHIP WORKING

11.1 Overview - Employee Partnership Forum (EPF)

11.1.1 SBa gave an update on the EPF forum which met on 17 February 2022 and took the form of a workshop rather than a formal meeting with the aim of inviting people to share their aspirations for collaborative working. Key areas of discussion were as follows-

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Wellbeing
- Skills retention
- Diversity in recruitment

11.1.2 **The Committee noted the verbal update.**

11.2 Overview - Partnership Advisory Group (PAG)

11.2.1 LBa explained that one Trade Union (Unison) attended the PAG meeting on 2 March 2022. Derek Jackson was complimentary about EPF meeting discussions. He highlighted a concern regarding a lapse in communication in relation to Policy emails being issued without giving advance notice to the Trade Union. LBa has noted this feedback.

11.3 **The Committee noted the verbal update.**

12 BUILDING THE FUTURE TOGETHER

12.1 CD presented the report for information and highlighted two key points for the Committee's attention.

- Significant progress has been made in commencing Senior Management Leadership Climate and Reflection exercise.
- Progress has also been made in Leadership Development Services Framework tender.

12.2 The Committee commended this great work.

12.3 The Committee noted the report.

13 LEARNING NEEDS ANALYSIS (LNA) 2021-2022

13.1 AG presented the report for information and highlighted two key points for the Committee's attention:

- Moving forward in working with learning partners to prioritise and deliver against training which has been identified as priority in the last quarter of the financial year.
- Successful meetings have taken place in terms of new approach on how LNA is taken forward in 2022-23 taking LNA from static document to a live document which guides and influences.

13.2 The Committee asked about difficulties faced during the pandemic. AG advised that the pandemic has affected the Service's ability to release staff and there is a requirement for flexibility within the plans.

13.3 The Committee asked to reconcile the statement detailing the Key Strategic Implications in relation to risk which states the centralised learning and development budget may not be able to support all Learning and Development activities required to support and enable Service 2021-22 priorities. AG explained that the initial LNA often exceeds the budget in the first quarter but through close working we have managed to deliver critical and priority development needs within budget.

13.4 The Committee noted the report.

14 LEARNING AGREEMENT

14.1 AG presented the report for information and informed the Committee of the Collective Learning Partnership (CLP) approach which looks to formalise and develop strong foundations of partnership working to support lifelong learning.

14.2 The Committee asked if the agreement covered Volunteer Duty System (VDS) staff. LG advised that VDS staff are classed as employees and are therefore included.

14.3 The Committee noted the report.

15 TRAINING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

15.1 RH presented the report for information and advised of progress to date. The Training function has undertaken a full review of Training delivery and development within SFRS. The review generated 56 recommendations, 11 of which are complete, 33 are currently in progress and 12 have been deferred. Overall progress for the programme sits at 52%.

15.2 The Committee was asked to note the progress that has been made within the Training CIP and imminent major improvements to the Training for Operational Competence (TfOC) Framework as described in the report.

15.3 The Committee asked how long the review of recommendations will take considering the current climate and if the outcomes will be delivered back to Committee. RH advised all recommendations are contained within the action log, highlighting that a number of these

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have been delivered through the pandemic as 'business as usual.' JD added that the review will follow normal governance routes and be delivered back for scrutiny.

15.4 The Committee noted the report.

16 MEASUREMENT OF ASBESTOS FIBRES DURING LIVE BURN

16.1 JHa presented the report for information. The purpose of the report is to ensure that arrangements in place were sufficient for Firefighters safety and to provide information on the level of risk which Firefighters may face if they attended an incident where asbestos containing material (ACM) was present. In summary ACM was banned in the UK in 1999 therefore, we still have a significant number of buildings with this material. The effects of inhalation of ACM are widely known and the Service was fortunate to engage world-renowned expert in the field, Professor Roger Willey and the University of Edinburgh. The findings of live burns and decontamination exercises showed that procedures are more than robust at this point in time.

16.2 The Committee highly praised this report, describing it as an excellent piece of work, worthy of publication in Edinburgh University's academic journal and being added to their formal scientific process.

16.3 JD added that the report is being sent to the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Health and Safety Group for consideration as an agenda item.

16.4 The Committee commended the report as a superb piece of work.

16.5 The Committee noted the report.

17 FORWARD PLANNING

17.1 POD Policy Review Schedule Update

17.1.1 The POD Policy Review Schedule Update report was presented to the Committee for information.

17.1.2 The Committee noted the report.

17.2 Health and Safety Policy and Management Arrangements

17.2.1 The Health and Safety Policy and Management Arrangements was presented to the Committee for information.

17.2.2 The Committee noted the report.

17.3 Committee Forward Plan Review

17.3.1 The Committee noted the Forward Plan and the proposed RVDS risk spotlight for the next meeting (June 2022).

17.4 Items for Consideration at Future IGF, Board and Strategy Meetings

17.4.1 The Committee suggested the report on Measurement of Asbestos Fibres During Live Burn be considered at a future Board meeting given the significance of it.

17.4.2 The Committee suggested the update provided on the Employee Partnership Forum (EPF) be shared with the wider Board for their information.

18 REVIEW OF ACTIONS

18.1 AC confirmed there were no formal actions raised during the meeting.

19 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 19.1 TBC - The next meeting is scheduled to take place on Thursday 2 June 2022. The Committee will seek an alternative date due to this being a public holiday to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.
- 19.2 The Committee Chair conveyed her very best wishes to JD and JHa on their imminent retirement and thanked them for their service, adding that we are losing a wealth of experience from their departure
- 19.3 There being no further matters to discuss, the public meeting closed at 1504 hours.

PRIVATE SESSION

20 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS PRIVATE MEETING: 2 DECEMBER 2021

- 20.1 The minutes of the private meeting held on 2 December 2021 were approved as a true record of the meeting.

21 REMUNERATION, APPOINTMENTS AND NOMINATIONS SUB COMMITTEE (RANSc) UPDATE

- 21.1 The draft minutes of the RANSc meeting on 2 December 2021 had been circulated to the Committee. The Committee noted the key issues discussed at the meeting of RANSc that was held earlier today (3 March 2022).
- 21.2 **The Committee noted the draft minutes and verbal update.**

22 PARTNERSHIP WORKING

22.1 Update from Employee Partnership Forum

- 22.1.1 Update provided within the public session.

22.2 Update from Partnership Advisory Group

- 22.2.1 Update provided within the public session.

23 KEY CASE UPDATES 2021/22 – QUARTER 3

- 23.1 LBa presented the report to the Committee providing an overview on employee relations cases which have resulted in claims to the Employment Tribunal.
- 23.2 **The Committee noted the report.**