

## Health and Safety Committee Meeting

6 May 2026

Meeting Room 1 SHQ / Teams

**Attendees:** Calum Bell (CB), Graham Britten (GB, Chair), Dave Howlett (DH), Marcus Hussey (MH), Stu Long (SL) (covering for FM), Jason Manders (JM), Katie Nellist (KN), Laura Power (LP), Rob Spearing (RS), Dave Tubbs (DT) and Councillor Robin Stuchbury (RSt)

**Online:** Phil Aiken (PA), Daniel Cadwell (DC), Oliver Reddick (OR),

**Meeting opened:** 10am **Meeting closed:** 12.45pm

Item	Details	Action
1.	<b>Introductions and welcome</b> – Everyone introduced themselves.	
2.	<b>Apologies:</b> Barrie Ackerlay (BA), Aaron Brinklow (AB), Faye Mansfield (FM), Paul Henderson (PH), Paul Scanes (PS), Charlie Turner (CT)	
3.	<b>Minutes from last meeting:</b> Minutes of last meeting approved.	
4.	<b>Matters Arising - Action Log</b> Previous actions reviewed.	
5.	<b>Property update</b> – LP advised that Infraspak was launched in April which was a new planned maintenance and defect reporting software, which allowed all staff to report issues on site, and track progress of issues. The long-term plan was to get the asset data added which would support forward planning.  Immediate planned works were as follows –  Buckingham Fire Station- Encapsulation of asbestos in appliance bay.  High Wycombe Fire Station – Testing for asbestos of appliance bay ceiling to better inform options for development.  Haddenham Fire Station – Heating upgrade.  West Ashland Fire Station – Installation of HVAC system to gym and installation of new roof to second floor balcony.  LP had been working with Health and Safety (H&S) looking at some areas that had historically been more difficult to track as they straddle facilities, estates and H&S. Training of maintenance staff; ensuring the air systems were supported with the decontamination work; and ensuring the filtration systems were sufficient. RS had been reviewing fire doors, looking at compartmentation and ensuring the investment made was supported.	

	<p>LP had been working with other teams looking at the decontamination plans, station zoning, on-station wash facilities, and part of the decontamination works. Horizon planning looking at safety and security and how Martyn’s Law impacted on both the estates and people and making headway with the High Wycombe development plans.</p> <p>RSt asked if there were going to be any comms going out regarding the move from High Wycombe Fire Station to another station while the refurbishment work was being undertaken.</p> <p>GB advised that there would be a paper going to the next Fire Authority meeting looking at plans including Westcott and High Wycombe.</p>	
6.	<p><b>Sickness Absence Data</b> – SL advised on workplace injury data, which showed some alignment with H&amp;S reporting for the period, but some incidents and absences were not always being recorded in the same way. The data was a 12-month view covering April 2025 – April 2026, bringing together two different data sets. HR absence data from Itrent and H&amp;S incident reporting. Where workplace injuries had resulted in absence, they were recorded on both systems. However, it also highlighted a number of differences.</p> <p>Looking at Q4 data, there were continued high levels of absence across all staff groups, long term sickness seemed to be the main driver, musculoskeletal (MSK) related conditions and sickness were dominant causes. Starting to emerge were short term patterns, repeat cases where individuals were returning to the workplace, experiencing similar issues, and going sick again.</p> <p>More work was needed to strengthen how officers support and manage the return-to-work process. This was ongoing and there was also now an Attendance Management Improvement Plan, focussing on strengthening work processes, tightening procedures and processes, and reinforcing some manager ownership responsibilities.</p> <p>In summary, absence levels remained reasonably high, particularly in long term MSK cases and this was reflected in national data, not just for this Service.</p> <p>GB asked who in HR was leading on the attendance management improvement plan.</p> <p>SL advised he was not sure but would find out, but he would be picking up case management. SL had also reached out to the FBU to participate in the Attendance Management Improvement Plan.</p> <p>MH advised from an insurance point of view, individuals have up to three years and four months to claim for any personal injuries. It was vital that an investigation takes place if it was a workplace injury, capturing</p>	Stu Long

	<p>everything on VISOR and investigated fully, this would help identify future claims against the Service.</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p><b>Health and Safety Audits / Fire Risk Assessments</b> - DC advised that during October 2025–March 2026 sites visited were - Stores, Beaconsfield, Gerrards Cross, Amersham, HQ, Workshops, High Wycombe, Olney, Newport Pagnell, Broughton, Buckingham, Princes Risborough and Marlow. The main trends and key issues picked up within the fire risk assessments and station audits were again inconsistencies or lack of testing, (fire alarms, emergency lighting, water flushing, fire drills). There had been some improvement, 8 stations out of 13 scored green and High Wycombe and Newport Pagnell achieved no non-conformities upon inspection.</p> <p>Station specific significant areas of concern raised:</p> <p>Buckingham - Issues with the appliance bay ceiling, appliance charging cable has been manually unplugged due to it causing a hazard if not hooked</p> <p>SHQ - ownership of the monthly flick tests.</p> <p>Newport Pagnell - mould in the shower.</p> <p>Olney – Uncomfortable temperatures in the summer reported.</p> <p>DC advised that having now gathered 12 months of data, H&amp;S would be going live with the revised ‘Risk Based’ audit programme from May 2026 and would no longer be auditing every site every 12 months. However, Station Commanders would still be required to complete the self-assessment within each 12-month period (1st April–31st March). The schedule for 2026/27 was based on the outcomes of the previous audits and covered DSEAR RA, FRA, as part of those processes.</p> <p>The frequency of visits would follow the previous year’s ratings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Red rating (25/26): site would be visited in 26/27.</li> <li>• Amber rating (25/26): site would be visited in 27/28.</li> <li>• Green rating (25/26): site would be visited in 28/29.</li> </ul> <p>There would be no change to who takes part in the audits, H&amp;S, Station Commander, Facilities and the FBU Representative.</p> <p>Also, if there was a change in management, they would be inspected as well to ensure things were maintained and also any themes that had come out such as safety events or anything identified as a cause for concern, so it was more risk based and aligned to ISO 45001.</p>	

8.

**Contaminants – update** – DT advised he had now taken over from Aaron Brinklow as Group Commander Technical. A letter had been received from the Health and Safety Executive regarding exposure of staff to products of combustion from firefighting and ancillary tasks. The submission had to be returned by no later than 5 May. There would be a series of follow up inspections carried out across all fire and rescue services. There was no schedule for this yet.

To enable all the data to be submitted, the Contaminants Group had met weekly. Also, 11 new risk assessments were brought in around fire contaminants that covered everything from firefighters on scene to the workshop team working on vehicles. The frequency of meetings of the contaminants group would reduce, but there would be various communications to staff highlighting all the policies, procedures and guidance for this area, so that everyone was achieving and adhering to it.

DT had asked the Operational Learning Assurance Team to update the feedback and monitoring forms, and to undertake any active monitoring.

All zoning was carried out at stations. This would now be reviewed to ensure Station Commanders/site managers were owning it and to ensure it was expanded to area such as workshops. After initially looking at front line crews, and fire appliances, they would now be looking at officers and their vehicles.

Face fit testing for staff for PPE was being improved. Last time this was carried out was in 2022. All staff would be done by the time five years was up, which was the limit HSE deemed good practice. A programme of works was looking to be introduced and no staff would go over two years without having a face fit test on every single item of PPE they wear.

There was a review of BA and whether it sits in or out of cabs or appliances or in lockers.

Air monitoring at sites continued and it was being looked at to see whether it could be expanded to vehicles and to do some surface sampling in vehicles and station to see what comes up.

The welfare vehicle had been confirmed, and this would bring welfare out to incidents, it would be approximately eight weeks before the vehicle was in service. This would mean with regards to contaminants, staff at incidents would have somewhere to wash, use toilet facilities etc.

An ops bulletin had been put out around washing machines and dryers on stations and service premises, ahead of a full procedure being consulted and going through governance.

	<p>DT now sat on the Westcott Planning team to look at the contaminant side of it.</p> <p>DT would be creating an Action Plan for the Contaminants Group. The work around exposure forms had stalled. Work continued in the Thames Valley and Southeast Regional around contaminants and nationally to identify good practice and learns.</p> <p>DT advised the area to escalate would be the future investment that would be required to fully improve service facilities and estates. A clear plan about what would need to be introduced and changes that would need to be made. It would require investment, and this would be discussed within the Contaminants Group and whether any additional growth bids would be required.</p>	
<p>9.</p>	<p><b>Health and Safety KPIs progress report</b> – JM advised that with regard to Toolbox Talks, the target had been to conduct these to all teams within five years. Predominantly the focus had been on operational groups, but a couple of support teams had now received them. The team had seen 19 watches and 111 firefighters.</p> <p>The target was to complete all risk assessments within 21 days of it being sent through to the team which had been achieved. Also, all H&amp;S Audits had been completed within the financial year.</p> <p>Workplace injuries 2024/25 - there were 39 injuries, including 16 moderate and 1 major. In 2025/26 there was a reduction to 29 injuries with 10 moderate and no majors. Overall, the direction of travel was positive, and the focus was continuing to reduce to moderate injuries through learning points, although supervision was still the main area of concern.</p> <p>RIDDOR reportable injuries, in 2024/25 - 12 were reported, which reduced to 7 in 2025/26, which suggested fewer higher-severity incidents. The team would continue to focus on early intervention, prompt reporting, and robust investigations, so learnings were captured quickly and repeat events prevented.</p> <p>Physical Attacks on Members of Staff - in 2024/25 one physical attack was recorded, in 2025/26 there were zero. The People Delivery Group had agreed that de-escalation training would be provided to all employees, which would further support prevention and staff confidence in management challenging situations.</p> <p>Verbal Attacks on Members of Staff - in 2024/25 zero were recorded, in 2025/26, there were four. Although these were not physical, they still impact staff wellbeing. The key message was to report every incident.</p>	

	<p>Near Misses - in 2024/25 there were 26 near misses including 15 moderate and no majors. In 2025/26 there were again 26 near misses, 8 moderate and 3 majors, all were fully investigated and clear actions taken.</p> <p>Hazard Reports - in 2024/25 there were 18 reported, in 2025/26 that increased significantly to 46. The main driver for the increase was hazard reporting was moved onto VISOR making it easier to submit and process reports. Also, engagement in the toolbox talks focused on raising awareness and encouraging reporting. The increase was positive, better visibility and earlier intervention.</p> <p>Vehicle incidents - in 2024/25 there were 38, 5 moderate and 1 major, in 2025/26 there was 47, 9 moderate and 1 major. Vehicle-related events remained a key risk area, and the main theme needing to be addressed was slow-speed manoeuvring. There had also been slow-speed incidents even when pilots had been used. While these events often happen at low speed, the potential consequences could still be serious. The focus was on practical prevention, effective use of pilots, good situational awareness and safe systems for manoeuvring.</p> <p>JM advised that some small changes had been made to the H&amp;S KPI's for this year. The KPI currently titled H&amp;S RIDDOR Reportable Injuries would be amended to RIDDOR Reportable Events. This change recognised that reportable injuries were only one element of RIDDOR, and the revised title more accurately reflected the full scope of reportable events. The open investigations KPI had been removed, to reduce this from three down to two; and an amendment to near miss KPI reporting had been made removing the numerical target. These changes also aimed to reduce misaligned reporting, remove duplication, and ensure KPIs better reflected meaningful performance information for the Service.</p> <p>GB asked about managing road risk, CB advised that there had been a lot of discussion, and proposed solutions and it had been flagged at the Service Delivery Group and other areas, that it was an area the Service needed to improve upon. There was an increasing number of safety events predominantly at slow speed, but there was not at present a solution. GB would raise at SLT.</p>	<p>Graham Britten</p>
<p>10</p>	<p><b>South East Health and Safety and Peer Review Update</b> – CB advised that the Peer Review had been postponed by the Peer Review team following receipt of a letter from the HSE on the data request. There was a very short time frame to collate the information on where the Service was on contaminate risk management. Two other dates had been offered to reschedule.</p> <p>CB advised that the number of safety events when somebody was injured at work while under supervision, was picked up in the annual report by a</p>	

	<p>member at the Fire Authority meeting in December. The Service committed to looking at this, and it was covered at the most recent Southeast meeting and was identified as area that required further work for many services. Oxfordshire FRS had asked to collaborate on progressing a solution with this Service.</p>	
<b>11.</b>	<b>Papers update</b> – None	
<b>12.</b>	<p><b>Proactive Safety:</b></p> <p><b>Hazard reports</b> – JM advised there were five hazard reports in Q3, covering a mix of welfare, operational equipment issues, and station environment risks. In Q4 there were 31 hazard reports, 15 closed, 3 still open and 13 pending actions. The three hazard reports that remained open were:</p> <p>Service wide (PPE): Rescue gloves sent back to Bristol due to stitching failure; Training Location – Wide Area Flooding, used hypodermic needles identified on a riverbank during training; Station Gym/Turnout System – Firefighters in the gym at West Ashland didn't hear the turnout system causing a delay to mobilisation.</p> <p>DT would look at what the Service's contractual arrangements were with Bristol around the supply of the rescue gloves.</p>	Dave Tubbs
<b>13.</b>	<p><b>Reactive Safety</b> – DC advised that in Q3 there were six vehicle events - one damage and five collisions. In terms of injuries there were five, three from wholetime staff, one on-call and one support staff. There were two property damage events and seven near misses.</p> <p>Safety events by activity type - in Q3 routine was the highest causation, the highest activity was six followed by operational training.</p> <p>Driving safety event data Q3, there were five driving incidents, none of which were at slow speed, one was on blue light, and there were no incidents where pilots were used.</p> <p>Q3 trends - there were five driving incidents, and two incidents were vehicle damage. Two underlying causes were highlighted as either inattention or misjudgement by the individual.</p> <p>Personal injuries - there were three minor, two moderate. Three were as a result of routine activities and one sustained from operational activities. Two out of the five were as a result of existing medical conditions or injuries.</p> <p>Q3 RIDDOR Incidents - there were two, one was an injury and the other was a dangerous occurrence. In terms of near misses, there were seven, two minor and five moderate. In terms of severity of incidents, 13 were minor and seven were moderate.</p>	

	<p>Q4 there was quite an increase in events, there were 13 vehicle incidents, eight were collisions and five were damage. There were ten injuries, five wholetime, one apprentice, one on-call and three support staff and three property damage incidents. There were eight near misses compared to six the year before. In terms of activity events these were mainly routine and second was operational training.</p> <p>Driving incidents - out of eight, two were moderate and six were minor. Two were on blue light and half of these incidents were slow speed manoeuvres, none of them were when pilots were being used. There were no third party at fault for driving incidents. Out of the four slow speed manoeuvres, one was support staff and the other three were operational staff with appliances. Seven out of the eight underlying causes were highlighted as either inattention or misjudgement.</p> <p>In terms of injuries two were moderate and eight were minor. The majority were as a result of routine activities. There was one RIDDOR an over a seven day injury which was a MSK injury sustained on a 10.5m ladder drill. The individual involved already had a pre-existing injury.</p> <p>Near misses- there were seven moderate and one minor. Of the 36 incidents, 30 were minor, six were moderate.</p> <p>As of today, there were 6 L1 investigations overdue, and no L2.</p> <p>A discussion was held on slow speed manoeuvres and using pilots/banksmen, and whether fitting radio pilots in new build vehicles would be cost effective against the cost of repairs for damage. More information needed to be gathered. DH to speak to Driving School before a decision was made.</p>	<p>Dave Howlett</p>
<p>14.</p>	<p><b>Safety Representatives – update</b> – OR advised that the Health and Social Care Secretary had announced plans to improve health, safety and wellbeing checks and bring in health and wellbeing checks for firefighters, essentially to improve prevention, early diagnosis and any sort of support that firefighters need both whilst they were in the service and in retirement. It was proposed to start in early 2027, the areas to be covered were mental health, MSK health, cancer screening and also cardiovascular diseases. Also, firefighting was going to be put on as an occupation on NHS records, hopefully local GP’s and doctors could then make informed decisions about what care people may need to receive going forward.</p> <p>OR would speak to other brigades within this region regarding exposure forms to see what they had got, or not got, and hopefully information could be shared.</p> <p>OR asked about air monitoring, did the monitors in the bays pick up any sort of diesel particulates or anything along those lines?</p>	

	<p>DT advised yes, but they do not analyse the contents of the matter.</p> <p>OR asked about the 10.5m ladder mentioned earlier and the investigation around it, there was another method of doing the ladder pitch, it had not got an official name, but was known as the Newport method. Should this be looked into to, there was less twisting and more of a natural way of putting up a ladder.</p> <p>DC advised that it had brought to their attention during the toolbox talks and had been advised that Bedfordshire FRS use the Newport method. From the investigation there was an action to review the manual handling practice which went to training. An issue had been raised, but it needed to be looked into a bit more and potentially look at as a consideration in terms of improving manual handling practices.</p> <p>OR would try and speak to colleagues in Bedfordshire FRS and see if they had anything written down that this Service could adopt.</p> <p>OR also suggested that from the information at the Health and Safety Summit regarding wellbeing checks, he felt that between the Service and the FBU, some sort of joint statement should come out to make staff aware of it.</p> <p>GB advised that the level of knowledge about the Health and Social Care Secretary announcement was not consistent, he would speak to SLT to see if they would be agreeable to doing a joint statement on the intranet.</p>	<p>Oli Reddick</p> <p>Graham Britten</p>
<p><b>15.</b></p>	<p><b>Safety event costings:</b></p> <p>JM advised that Q3 costings were quite low this quarter, Vehicle costs were £1,366.02, and property costs were currently missing data due to the system change. The Q3 total recorded at present was £1,366.02.</p> <p>Q4 vehicle costs were £4,885.35 and again the property data was missing, so the current recorded total for Q4 was £4,885.35.</p> <p>Even where costs look relatively small quarter-to-quarter, each event still consumed investigation time, repair capacity, and staff resource, which was why prevention remained the priority.</p> <p>The full year costings for 2025/26 were vehicle £41,000.34 and Property £641, giving a gross total of £41,641.34. For comparison, 2024/25 full-year gross costings were £36,477.68, so there was an increase year-on-year. This was why reporting, trend analysis, and practical controls, especially around driving and damage-only events were so important: reducing incident frequency and severity directly reduces financial impact as well as harm risk.</p>	
<p><b>16.</b></p>	<p><b>Insurance:</b> MH gave a summary of all the closed claims during the last financial year, of the 11 open claims, four related to personal injury claims,</p>	

	<p>these claims should be captured on VISOR because it helps with investigation. After discussions with the Director of Legal and Governance and the Director of Finance and Assets, the Service had accepted full or part liability based on the investigation that was carried out for three of the claims. There were also a few vehicle accidents outstanding and a litigation claim which had been struck out of court but was still open for now until it was fully closed.</p> <p>All personal injuries that happen in Service and were work related, were reported to the insurers. People had three years and four months to actually put in a claim, some of those were closed from the insurers point of view, but reopened again because there was a claim come in.</p> <p>Outstanding costs for insurers £183,423, one claim alone was approximately £90,000 for a personal injury that could be paid out if they were successful in terms of the value of their claim.</p>	
<p><b>17.</b></p>	<p><b>Legionella:</b> CB advised that LP had identified as part of the H&amp;S Audits, routine areas that were falling short of requirements and one of these was water flushing for the prevention of Legionella. Some sites had water dispensers which were not subject to the level of testing and flushing they should be. This area needed to be reviewed, and action taken.</p> <p>LP advised that there was a need for a Water Management Plan. The water coolers needed to be flushed in the same way all the other outlets were. Some stations were not using them and they should be either removed or used in a better way. A plan would need to be put in place and a meeting to discuss the Water Management Plan.</p> <p>CB advised that his recommendation was an action for the Response and Resilience (R&amp;R) as part of the Legionella sampling, to send out a communication to all sites with water coolers, that they must include water coolers as part of the weekly flushing effective immediately.</p> <p>GB to raise with the Assistant Chief Fire Officer.</p> <p>PA would action with the R&amp;R Group for sites to add water coolers to their weekly flushing regimes.</p>	<p>Calum Bell</p> <p>Graham Britten</p> <p>Phil Aitken</p>
<p><b>18.</b></p>	<p><b>Any other business:</b></p> <p>GB advised that at a recent Leadership Away Day the Head of Service Improvement gave a presentation looking at governance arrangements. One of the questions asked was 'to what extent do you agree the Health and Safety Committee achieve its purpose'. The feeling was there was a lack of awareness about the Health and Safety Committee. The minutes and action plan were published, but please could all members think of anything else that could be done.</p>	

	<p>DC advised that when undertaking the toolbox talks, H&amp;S do cover the H&amp;S Committee minutes.</p> <p>DC advised that H&amp;S were currently looking at their packages on HEAT and what would be put on PDR Pro. In terms of manual handling, the aim was to make it live for practical manual handling training. Practical manual handling would be undertaken by teams and signed off by the manager and potentially PTI's would do sampling to ensure that the techniques undertaken were correct.</p> <p>Contaminants training was currently only available to operational staff, but H&amp;S believe it should be made available to all staff. It would be made live and available to all support staff and would be mandatory.</p> <p>LP also asked if a version of this could also be given to contractors.</p>	
<p><b>19.</b></p>	<p><b>Date of next meeting:</b> Friday 17 July 2026</p>	

UNAPPROVED