



## **Appendix B:**

# **Building Strong and Sustainable Foundations**

**March 2017**

## Building Strong and Sustainable Foundations

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. In 2015, following a number of significant events, Essex Fire Authority commissioned an independent cultural review of Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (ECFRS). Conducted by Irene Lucas, CBE, former Acting Permanent Secretary at the Department for Communities and Local Government and Local Authority Chief Executive, the report of the findings of the review was presented to Essex Fire Authority (EFA) in September 2015. The findings were profound and described an organisational culture that was failing at every level.
- 1.2 At the same time as the review was commissioned, the Authority and ECFRS had commenced the process of preparing planned changes to the organisational structure and delivery model of the Service to deliver an enhanced prevention and protection strategy alongside its well-established and highly effective response model. In addition, this work would encompass the development of a revised Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), a new Strategy for the Service for the period 2016 to 2020 and to make cost efficiencies in order to deliver a balanced budget in 2020 against a backdrop of reductions in funding from Central Government.
- 1.3 The Lucas Report made 35 recommendations with the intent of improving the culture of ECFRS. Essex Fire Authority accepted all of these recommendations in October 2015 demonstrating an uncompromising and aligned commitment by the Political and Professional leadership of Essex County Fire and Rescue Service to achieving fundamental transformation of the Service.
- 1.4 The first of a number of key recommendations was the appointment of an Expert Advisory Panel to assist the Fire Authority, senior officers and staff representatives by providing strategic advice on the leadership and change required.
- 1.5 We welcomed the review undertaken by Sir Ken Knight in July 2016 who recorded that the Authority and Service were making positive progress. However we appreciate that there is absolutely no room for complacency as a great deal of work is still to be done in the months and years ahead.
- 1.6 Following the progress review, which was reported in September, the Expert Advisory Panel took a step back allowing the organisation to continue to make progress against the plans that had already been established. Six months on, we welcome the return of the Expert Advisory Panel to undertake a progress review, which will help inform the next stage of our transformation journey.
- 1.7 In support of the progress review, this brief paper is a self-assessment, prepared for the Expert Advisory Panel, designed firstly to highlight the progress made to date against the recommendations of the independent review but also to capture any actions and outcomes more widely as they relate specifically to cultural change. More importantly however, this paper also seeks to capture those things that have yet to be achieved and

serve to frustrate our ability to deliver the scale of changes required, when they are required and at the pace that they are required.

1.8 The Lucas Report on the culture of the Service focused upon a number of themes, namely:

- The vision, values, strategies and plans of ECFRS.
- Governance and leadership: how well led is this organisation?
- Relationships, roles and responsibilities.
- Valuing people and challenging poor performance and behaviour.
- Learning, development and promotion.
- Communication and engagement.

1.9. While in part this self-assessment will focus on what the Authority and Service have done to seek to address the recommendations set out against each heading within the Lucas Review it is important to recognise there are a number of vehicles through which cultural change can actually be demonstrated which include:

- The development of Essex Fire Authority's 'Integrated Risk Management Plan'.
- The development of Essex Fire Authority's 'Options for Change'.
- The development of Essex Fire Authority's 'Strategy for the Service'.
- The development of proposals for a change in 'Governance of the Fire and Rescue Service in Essex'.
- The development of opportunities for collaboration with Essex Police and the East of England Ambulance Service.
- The approach taken by the Service to engage with Representative Bodies.
- The approach taken by the Service to engage with staff.
- The approach by the Service to address Diversity and Inclusion.

1.10. As a result this self-assessment also captures those activities that go beyond the 35 recommendations set out in the Lucas report. In this way, we are able to present a more rounded picture of what has changed and what is still to be done.

## **2. VISION, VALUES, STRATEGIES AND PLANS OF ECFRS**

2.1. The recommendations contained within the Lucas Report in this area were:

R2	A cross section of staff should be involved and engaged in the development of the vision, values, strategies and plans to bring a whole organisation perspective to the processes and to engender a sense of ownership.
R3	Ensure that all staff understand their role in delivering the strategy by making the strategy simpler with a concise summary that can be prominently displayed.

## **What we have done**

- 2.2. A new leadership team was created from the former strategic and tactical management teams (formerly Strategic Management Board and Strategic Delivery Board). This streamlined team, following the first phase of a management review based on guidance from the Expert Advisory Panel (EAP), considered the findings of the report and the change plan being driven from the wider public consultation. This Service Leadership Team agreed and committed to a first draft of a strategy describing:
- A Vision Statement
  - Priorities for the Service
  - A new set of headline Service values
  - Key delivery themes
  - A defining purpose
- 2.3. The draft strategy was then taken 'on the road' in workshops across a range of locations including Fire Stations (wholetime and On-Call). These were led by the Acting Chief Fire Officer and other members of the Service Leadership Team who were present at every event. Feedback from each event was captured, shared with all other workshops and the draft strategy developed accordingly.
- 2.4. At the conclusion of this work, the values were further developed by a cross-section of volunteers drawn from across ECFRS and EFA.
- 2.5. Essex Fire Authority formerly approved their Strategy for the Service 2016 to 2020 in September 2016. This has been published along with a 'Strategy at a Glance' document. A personal copy of both documents has been given to all Service managers and copies given to fire stations, watches and teams.
- 2.6. The Strategy has been used within the business planning process for the development of Departmental and team plans. In addition a new format and structure of fire station plans has been developed to ensure that the Authority's priorities for the Service are reflected locally.

## **Why we did it and outcomes expected**

- 2.7. The intention was to involve and engage the expertise, experience and energy of all employees and the Authority in developing a document that defined the next four years of work for the Service. The outcome expected was that employees would see their involvement and contribution to the future of the Service from both a strategic and personal perspective.
- 2.8. The Strategy for the Service was designed as a document that provides a clear narrative on the operating context for our Service, the drivers for change, some clear priorities for the Service and a strategy and a plan to achieve those priorities. In this way, it provides a very clear picture of why we are planning to take the actions set out in our strategy and 'why' teams are being asked to do 'what' they have been asked to do.

### **What actually happened on the ground and any difference to that intended**

- 2.9. In ECFRS, involvement of this nature is new, the historical management culture is one of 'Command and Control' and such an inclusive approach was seen as unusual. There was a degree of scepticism regarding the extent to which all could be involved. The building of trust remains work in progress. Because the changes to the operational delivery model formed part of this process, and reduction in front line resources is never popular, this tended to qualify and reduce the acceptance of the wider change agenda. One area that was successful in assuaging these doubts was the production of the statements underpinning the Values. This was carried out by a cross section of volunteers from across the Service (with no sub-set selection) and the output from this group became the underpinning statements, accepted in their entirety by management – written by our people, for our people. This work being completed without steer by either managers or representative bodies is a new concept and was well received by the workforce. In retrospect however, more effort should have been made to explain this rationale to the Representative Bodies.
- 2.10. The Strategy document was produced and in addition, the 'Strategy at a Glance' – in which so many were involved, has been printed and published. This summary document has been well received and is appearing on walls of workplaces across the Service.

### **What we intend to do now and why**

- 2.11. Ongoing consultation and dialogue with all employees.
- 2.12. Manager briefings conducted centrally and across other sites and on fire stations on a regular basis. Representative Bodies engaged within the development of all change plans with consultation meetings being held weekly.

## **3. GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP**

- 3.1. The recommendations contained within the Lucas Report in this area were:

R4	Ensure that the position in relation to the Chief Fire Officer is clarified as quickly as possible.
R5	The role of the elected members on the FRA must be more widely understood and more visible to staff, stakeholders and the public through publication of summary updates on the intranet and in Parade News.
R6	FRA meetings need to be focused on strategic solutions to ECFRS' most pressing challenges.
R7	Ensure that FRA reports address a wider range of cultural and industrial relations subjects and not just operational, financial and risk issues.

R8	Ensure that there are planned meetings with representatives of the FRA to meet around key issues with representatives of the workforce and trades union colleagues.
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### What we have done

- 3.2. The Authority has been progressing the situation with the Chief Fire Officer since before the publication of the Lucas Report. This remains a confidential matter and as such little more can be reported in this self-assessment except to say that the Expert Advisory Panel are aware of the situation and that a resolution is expected shortly.
- 3.3. It would be fair to say that over the last 24 months the focus of Essex Fire Authority has indeed been strategic in nature with significant decisions taken in relation to the following:
- The review of the culture of the Service and approval of subsequent action plans for cultural transformation.
  - The revision of the Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan.
  - The development and approval of the Authority's 'Options for Change' for the Service.
  - The revision of the Authority's Strategy for the Service.
  - Support for proposals for a change in the governance of the fire and rescue service in Essex.
- 3.4. All agendas and papers for meetings of the Essex Fire Authority are communicated internally ahead of each meeting and published on the Service's Intranet. Meetings of Essex Fire Authority have been video-streamed live for the last 18 months so that all staff can watch either live or via recording later. Updates are published via Acting Chief Fire Officer weekly blog plus, at Manager's briefings and using the On-Call 60 second briefings.
- 3.5. At each meeting of Essex Fire Authority, Members are provided with updates on cultural and workforce issues.
- 3.6. A cultural review Sub-Group of the Principal Officers Human Resources Committee was formed and meets, when necessary, to consider progress against the cultural review.
- 3.7. A programme of development delivered by SOLACE has been rolled out with a mixed uptake from EFA Members.
- 3.8. Working groups have been established for all change processes with a presence from Members of Essex Fire Authority.
- 3.9. Your Voice staff forum attended by Members of Essex Fire Authority.

- 3.10. The 2020 Transformation Programme has established an 'Advisory Panel' with representatives from the Essex Fire Authority and all Representative Bodies invited and attending. (This is however currently under review as it is not meeting the needs of all stakeholders).

#### **Why we did it and outcomes expected**

- 3.11. Our intention was to ensure that as many opportunities as possible were available for employees, their representatives and Members of Essex Fire authority to interact in order that better understanding of roles and responsibilities was made possible.
- 3.12. Given the challenges facing the fire service both locally and nationally there was a very clear intent to move the focus of Essex fire Authority to consider the strategic solutions to those challenges. In this way providing a very clear separation between the Political and managerial leadership of the service.

#### **What actually happened on the ground and any difference to that intended**

- 3.13. Other pressures have meant actual attendance by Members of Essex Fire Authority has been limited on occasion. However, value has been realised from these events in particular where attendance at non-HQ locations has been made possible.
- 3.14. Live video streaming of meetings of Essex Fire Authority has been well received with considerable uptake across workforce.

#### **What we intend to do now and why**

- 3.15. Management briefing will be attended by the Police and Crime Commissioner who will present on the potential change of governance. This is in follow-up to presentation at EFA meeting which was live streamed. This is intended to continue building the relationship with the existing governing body and potential new body.
- 3.16. Continue to support the Emergency Service Collaboration Strategic Governance Board to direct and shape the programme of collaboration between ECFRS and Essex Police. Furthermore to continue to support the work on the Police and Crime Commissioner's Local Business Case and if the case is made and accepted by the Home secretary, to support the transition in governance in line with the agreed timetable.

### **4. RELATIONSHIPS, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 4.1. The recommendations contained within the Lucas Report in this area were:

R13	The mixed crewing model that has now been implemented in Essex at Great Dunmow, with the station staffed by both wholetime and retained – this needs to be adopted across the county, sensitively and with the involvement of all trades unions.
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R14	Make it clear at every level that everyone is personally responsible for removing barriers between wholetime and retained.
R15	Do more to recruit leaders from other sectors, bringing fresh perspectives and learning from the wider public sector and beyond.
R16	Reserve the wearing of rank markings for operational staff, fire control incidents, public events, partnership meetings and ceremonial occasions only. Either adopt civilian attire in head office or, learning from Staffordshire FRS, introduce a new 'team strip' that is worn by both firefighters and support staff.
R17	The Expert Panel to invite a representative of the Essex Police to advise on the seriousness of any reported behaviours.
R18	Refer any intimidatory behaviour against individuals, equipment or property for immediate consideration by the Expert Panel who will consider criminal proceedings.

### **What we have done**

- 4.2. As part of the Trade Dispute Resolution agreement, a way forward on 'Mixed Crewing' and Additional Shift Working has been reached with the Fire Brigade Union (FBU).
- 4.3. It has been challenging to arrange joint working parties due to both working hours and a national position from the FBU that they cannot negotiate jointly.
- 4.4. A Director of Transformation and Assistant Director of Human Resources have been recruited with wider public and commercial sector experience.
- 4.5. Staff working at headquarters have raised no issue with the wearing of uniform by Grey Book staff and it has been optional. Grey Book staff attend meetings both in civilian and uniform attire.
- 4.6. Since the publication of the Lucas Report, no current serious behavioural breaches have been reported.

### **Why we did it and outcomes expected**

- 4.7. The dispute resolution represents a fresh approach in terms of both that which has been agreed, and the approach to discussions. With advice from the Expert Advisory Panel and Joint Secretaries, a phased introduction to Mixed Crewing has been agreed.
- 4.8. The new external appointees have brought a different perspective and different approaches to issues in particular the approach to industrial relations and grievance and discipline.



### **What actually happened on the ground and any difference to that intended**

- 4.9. The new value of 'we work as one team' has been challenged by Representative Bodies other than the FBU due to the inability to currently jointly negotiate.
- 4.10. The constraining nature of how Grey Book and Green Book terms and conditions are interpreted and applied makes innovative practice challenging. The fact ECFRS is frequently out of step with the wider Fire and Rescue Service sector (e.g. Rank to Role) and the legacy of unresolved issues, case work and temporary placements/promotion has caused some areas of work, in particular around roles and responsibilities to move much more slowly than might normally have been expected.

### **What we intend to do now and why**

- 4.11. With the Trade Dispute hopefully to be resolved shortly, with the Joint Negotiation and Consultations Committee now re-established, a spirit of 'no surprises' and continuous dialogue must be maintained. The role of the Expert Advisory Panel as critical friend needs to be sustained over the closing part of the 24 month period.
- 4.12. Foster a new relationship with the National Joint Council, Joint Secretaries, to support the maturing of the industrial relations environment in the post Expert Advisory Panel period.

## **5. VALUING PEOPLE AND CHALLENGING POOR PERFORMANCE AND BEHAVIOUR**

- 5.1. The recommendations contained within the Lucas Report in this area were:

R19	To address the perceived inconsistency and unfairness all disciplinary action should be overseen by a sub group of the expert panel (subject to statutory constraints) over the next 24 months. Any intimidatory behaviour against individuals, equipment or property needs to be considered by the Expert Panel taking advice from representatives of Essex Police. The sub-group will have a specific role in ensuring elected members are aware of matters without cutting across the existing process. This approach to take effect in respect of all new cases.
R20	Create a clearing house for dealing with the unnecessary number of vexatious and low grade grievances that are submitted.
R21	Clarify and simplify arrangements for whistleblowing and the escalation of incidents of this nature directly to the independent Expert Panel.
R22	Consider the use of a rapid mediation service as has been adopted by Staffordshire FRS.
R23	Create more opportunities to recognise outstanding performance and actively promote nominations for an annual awards ceremony.

R24	Consult with BAME, LGBT, female and disabled colleagues regarding the reforming of appropriate groups to look at the ways in which the Service could proactively progress the issues raised and proactively use the different perspective that diversity can bring to the organisation.
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### **What we have done**

- 5.2. The Advisory, Conciliation and Advisory Service (ACAS) have been carrying out a review of discipline and grievance procedures within ECFRS and are due to report to the Expert Advisory Panel. The Service Leadership Team met with ACAS to provide a strategic input to this work. ACAS have also met with all Representative Bodies collectively and separately.
- 5.3. Efforts are continuing to address the ongoing default to grievance behaviour that prevails. This has included the use of mediation by external services with some success. However, revision of some policies to alleviate seemingly groundless or vexatious grievance claims still needs further development.
- 5.4. Discussions with staff across the Service and work by the newly established Leadership Forum is progressing a range of reward and recognition processes that will enable the considerable excellent work being undertaken to be recognised. This will include an annual awards ceremony currently in outline planning for November this year.
- 5.5. The Service Leadership Team have agreed Terms of Reference and a Code of Conduct. These have been published and used to brief managers and the 'Leadership Forum'.
- 5.6. Review of all Support Staff (Green Book) roles including market benchmarking being completed.
- 5.7. Rank to Role is being completed for Operational (Grey Book) staff.
- 5.8. Assessment of Grey Book/Green Book roles underway.
- 5.9. A new Inclusion and Diversity lead has been appointed and is coordinating the Service approach to maximising the value of a diverse workforce and promoting inclusion.
- 5.10. The new work on assessment for promotion will incorporate unconscious bias training for assessors ahead of a wider rollout across the Service.

### **Why we did it and outcomes expected**

- 5.11. It was recognised that more effort was needed to promote a diverse workforce and to celebrate the excellent work being carried out across the Service. The impact of the Lucas Review on employees, against a background of wider change, has affected morale across the workforce and a concerted effort to talk about "what good looks like" in ECFRS is needed.

### **What actually happened on the ground and any difference to that intended**

- 5.12. The fact that a more balanced dialogue is underway, and with conversations **‘for’** the organisation rather than just **‘about it’** is a subtle change and is often not immediately appreciated as a positive change. The reduction in firefighters and fire engines, the associated moves and political flux have had a destabilising influence that deflect attention from the generally positive direction of travel. Substantial and sustained improvements to the working conditions of minority groups are required to provide meaningful evidence of change.
- 5.13. There is a concern that any reward and recognition process needs to be fair, equitable and meaningful.

### **What we intend to do now and why**

- 5.14. The Inclusion and Diversity lead brings a wealth of experience from the Police Service who are a considerable way ahead of the Fire and Rescue Service in areas of inclusion and equality. There is universal accord across management, unions and staff for changes in this area. We will be progressing at pace on a variety of change processes including documentation, facilities, and positive action on recruitment and promotion.
- 5.15. The breakdown of results and analysis from the 2016 staff engagement survey will be available shortly (week commencing 27<sup>th</sup> March) and we will use the outputs to take positive and visible actions based on the inputs from employees.
- 5.16. The recently published Service Leadership Team Code of Conduct and Terms of Reference have been published on our Intranet and briefed to managers and the ‘Leadership Forum’. This demonstrates our commitment to leading by example and being prepared to be measured against our standards.

## **6. LEARNING, DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION**

- 6.1. The recommendations contained within the Lucas Report in this area were:

R25	Revise future training programmes to ensure that they are focused, and are limited to those showing talent, potential and have a desire to progress. It should focus on a smaller number of future leaders.
R26	Promotion should only be open to those who have completed and successfully graduated from the programme.
R27	Change the emphasis from operational to more inclusive leadership training, learning from Kent FRS that has introduced Level 5 coaching qualifications, including back-office staff, to improve the management skills of middle managers.
R28	Make promotion to managerial positions more transparent and involve the Expert Panel in overseeing all appointments for the next 24 months.

R29	Ensure that leadership and coaching skills and qualifications are considered as much as technical competencies in all appraisals.
R30	Set clear and consistent expectations that annual appraisals need to be completed by all managers across the Service and introduce an audit to ensure that the quality of the appraisal meetings and paperwork is actually delivering a satisfying process that will take the Service forward.
R31	Review of existing management and delivery mechanisms to provide implementation ability with clear oversight of progress in implementing change and, most importantly, embedding change.

### **What we have done**

- 6.2. We have designed an assessment and development centre process that will serve to both act as a promotion mechanism and, provide a talent pool for future promotion processes.
- 6.3. Candidates will be provided with a range of mechanisms to join the talent pool, which are designed to enable individuals to demonstrate their abilities and potential across a range of skills and behaviours.
- 6.4. Once in the talent pool, members will have access to a portfolio of development opportunities including coaching, mentoring, secondments, temporary placements, project work, training courses and other development material. This will include accredited and marketable qualifications wherever possible and will serve to provide a source of capability for succession and business continuity.
- 6.5. Candidates from within the talent pool will be the principal source for promotion processes.
- 6.6. Clear expectations of managers at all levels are being defined as part of job descriptions work within the People Structure project.
- 6.7. ECFRS has developed and qualified a cadre of Institute of Leadership and Management Level 5 qualified coaches.
- 6.8. The Expert Advisory panel oversaw the appointment of the Director for Transformation.
- 6.9. The competency framework and appraisal process has been simplified to make it more applicable to all staff and provide a more workable and useful mechanism.

### **Why we did it and outcomes expected**

- 6.10. The existing programme of development in leadership and management was comprehensive but had been applied using a blanket approach. The result was a culture of training compliance rather than competence. The new approach is based on providing a meritocracy that still provides opportunities rather than barriers.

- 6.11. The coaching cadre are already having a positive impact in delivering a more positive style of management – involving rather than directive.

**What actually happened on the ground and any difference to that intended**

- 6.12. The talent pool will pilot for the first time in May this year, initially connected to resolving the large number of temporary promotions in existence. In the autumn, it will run again for all staff as a mechanism for commencing a new approach to development of managers and leaders.
- 6.13. There is a degree of apprehension as well as some disappointment that those in long-term temporary positions have no advantage in process terms.

**What we intend to do now and why**

- 6.14. Promote the new appraisal process. Draft sample objectives for appraisals.
- 6.15. Run experience, taster events for the talent pool process to allow people time and information to prepare.

**7. COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

- 7.1. The recommendations contained within the Lucas Report in this area were:

R32	Engage the Communications team at Essex County Council to improve the range and credibility of the information communicated to stakeholders, and establish a staff reference group to better understand what messages are important to the Service as a whole.
R33	Ensure that the agendas and papers of every meeting of the FRA and SMB are posted on the intranet so that staff can see what is being discussed. A summary of decisions should be published after each meeting.
R34	Develop a style guide for corporate communications to ensure consistency and protocols for sign off by at least one member of SMB and bring in some measurement to evaluate positive and negative coverage of the Service.

**What we have done**

- 7.2. Appointed a new Head of Corporate Communications and Marketing who works closely with the Essex County Council communications team.
- 7.3. Agendas and Papers for meetings of Essex Fire Authority and Service Leadership Team are published in accordance with recommendation. Also a working group has been established for the People Structures project involving all Representative Bodies.
- 7.4. A 2020 Programme planning advisory workshop and meetings established including all Representative Bodies and Members of Essex Fire Authority.

- 7.5. Corporate communications are all passed through the Communications Department with a Service Leadership Team approval process embedded.

#### **Why we did it and outcomes expected**

- 7.6. A commitment to our value of 'being open, honest and trustworthy' an expectation that we will be measures by what we do and not just what we say.

#### **What actually happened on the ground and any difference to that intended**

- 7.7. Early signs are promising but it is too soon to have evidence that our actions are seen as transparent and genuine. Internal Communications 2016 survey – 72% of responses indicated they are very and somewhat satisfied with our internal communications. Feedback comment from the survey: ““I think the improvements in communications, particularly internal, over the past year has had a significant positive impact on the organisation.”

#### **What we intend to do now and why**

- 7.8. Sustain the commitment; be prepared to be held to account. Accept that we cannot get it right all the time and be prepared to discuss and modify communication that is clumsy or misfires.
- 7.9. The Service Leadership Team needs to role model the values, make contributions that promote better engagement and sustain cultural change that is in its early stages.
- 7.10. Undertake a review of our Corporate Communication processes to ensure that they are achieving what we expect them to achieve.

### **8. BEYOND THE LUCAS REVIEW**

- 8.1. This section refers to assessment of areas of work not highlighted directly by the Lucas Cultural Review recommendations but which have served to address underlying areas of concern from the report.

#### **Governance**

- 8.2. The Service has developed with the help of the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) a comprehensive induction process for all incoming Fire Authority Members. This includes presentations for Officers and a comprehensive question and answer session. One returning Member of Essex Fire Authority commented that he had found this process illuminating, a “quantum step forward” from his previous experience with ECFRS and better than anything he encounters on other bodies in which he served.
- 8.3. The SOLACE training was well attended by some Members but not others. For those who have made time to attend it has been extremely beneficial.

- 8.4. Members have been involved in a range of initiatives and workshops that have promoted interaction with staff from across the Service and which have gained inputs to improve the quality and content of reporting by the Service.

### **Leadership**

- 8.5. The Service Leadership Team has taken the monthly meeting 'on the road' with arranged opportunities to meet staff at those locations. Additionally members have individually been visiting fire stations in and out of normal office hours.
- 8.6. The ongoing absence of the Chief Fire Officer has continued to cause issues both in the form of uncertainty in staff and the inability (for legitimate reasons) to communicate effectively of progress. This undermines our ability to be open and transparent with our staff.
- 8.7. The continued presence of Service Leadership Team members at meetings with managers and other staff is creating more dialogue. One consequence is that as people feel empowered to speak up, more issues are uncovered, this is a positive in that what can be seen can be addressed.
- 8.8. In addition, more employees at various levels feel able to make contributions on how things can be reinforced, developed or improved and are able to see actions in its early stages.

### **Middle and front line management**

- 8.9. The 'Leadership Forum', has been formed to build the alliance between middle and senior management. The aims of this forum have been to:
- Break down barriers between senior management and the wider organisation.
  - Provide a platform where this influential cadre can raise the topics that effect the Service from their perspective and challenge the issues of concern.
  - Unlock innovation and talent by including and involving in initiatives at both local and organisational level.
  - Provide development in a collegiate atmosphere building both knowledge and commonality of purpose.
  - Harness the cumulative knowledge of the group to work in partnership with senior management on specific topics deemed to have greatest impact, these have included:
    - Vision, Values and Strategy.
    - Tackling challenging behaviour.
    - Managing change.
    - Reward and recognition.
  - Develop a support network for both coaching and Peer-to-Peer.
  - Building acknowledgement and acceptance of accountability across all those who lead.

- 8.10. This is a developing forum and key challenges have been the perceived detachment of strategy from what is 'doable' in the workplace. This has led to challenge from managers over their concerns that they carry the burden of delivery without having had the benefits of sufficient input. The fear is that they become responsible for the success or failure of initiatives with an expectation that senior management will claim success and failure passed down.
- 8.11. Another significant challenge is the 'Command and Control' culture ingrained by both the hierarchical structure and decades of reinforcing behaviour. By their presence alone, senior managers exert considerable influence that can inhibit dialogue or create the impression of disengagement. When senior managers contribute, these are often interpreted as direction. This has been a learning process for all involved with modifying of style and building of trust critical components for all involved. This is taking time.

### **Human Resources Department**

- 8.12. In the year following the publication of the Lucas Report, the Human Resources Department (HR) saw an 82% turnover in staff including the departure of the entire management team (the first three tiers) down to and including two of the four business partners. This has presented both challenges and opportunities.
- 8.13. Challenges - The loss of business knowledge was considerable as was the impact on a loyal and committed team of professionals. In addition, recruitment proved problematic and the workload such that the stress on the Human Resources department has been huge.
- 8.14. Opportunities - A new team is now in place bringing a sense of purpose as well as the introduction of a different ethos to that reported by Lucas. The move to a pull strategy rather than a push strategy has already reaped benefits in that the hostility towards the Human Resources department and, the apprehension of HR staff has greatly diminished. However much work is needed on establishing less directive and more supportive policies, this is underway in consultation with Representative Bodies.

### **Relationships Roles and Responsibilities**

- 8.15. Relationships continue to be an area where the greatest challenge exists. The introduction of management briefings that are mixed and are more 'dialogue' and less lecture in style has progressively eroded traditional barriers. The uniform/non uniform divide is also receding with considerable effort by managers and others to spend time in other areas of work and build relationships. Examples are firefighters spending a day in Human Resources, or the Performance Management section, various HQ staff spending time on fire stations. The division between On-Call and wholtime firefighters is localised rather than general and the use of mediation and local development plans are being trialed in these areas.



## **Industrial Relations**

- 8.16. There has been considerable progress in seeking to change 'Industrial Relations' but the benefits of this changing approach have not been universally successful. Some relationships have deteriorated. Regular Joint Negotiation and Consultation Committee meetings have been reinstated and the considerable work conducted over the last nine months has brought the Service to the brink of resolution over a long running dispute with the Fire Brigades Union.
- 8.17. Also of significance is the work done to resolve historical behavioural cases which were a product of a culture prevalent in the past but from which the Service has moved on. Key to moving forward is the need to address residual challenges over what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, in a multi representative body working environment. National and local protocols have inhibited getting all parties into the same room at the same time. This continues to cause disharmony. Work on a new Dignity/Respect at Work policy is nearing some accord however and this will form the vehicle for addressing better behaviour.

## **People**

- 8.18. A key component of changing behaviours is bringing the new Service values to life. These were designed and written with input from across the Service, in particular the value descriptor statements. These have met with wide approval but also legitimate challenge – the “how do these get turned from aspirational to reality?” question.
- 8.19. Within ECFRS, the innate hierarchical 'Command and Control' structure always pushes this question uphill – how will management make this work. The target for the coming months on this matter is continue the inclusion and involvement of all employees in recognising that this is the responsibility of everybody and can only be achieved through a supportive and joined up approach.

## **Engagement**

- 8.20. The latest survey of ECFRS staff shows encouraging trends but also that considerable work lies ahead in working with all employees to make the Service an employer of choice.
- 8.21. The overall engagement score is up 5% to 68%.
- 8.22. There are many areas to address and full analysis has not yet taken place. However, change management, employee involvement and learning and development are priorities.

## **Reward and Value**

- 8.23. There has been a wide dialogue on how to recognise and reward behaviours and work that adds value to the Service. The 'Leadership Forum' is engaged and initial arrangements have been put in place for an annual awards event in November.
- 8.24. There has been considerable input from fire stations and business units across the Service and a proposal on structure will form a component of the People Strategic

Plan in the next few weeks. An important component of this will be the capability for 'peer-to-peer' recognition.

## **Learning and Development**

8.25. This is a critical area for success and one that is dominated by demand for safety critical training, rightly but sometimes excessively. In broader terms, the desire to develop management skills led to an implementation strategy that, with the intent of lifting the Service to a common platform, manifested itself (from a customer perspective) as a forced 'sheep dip' approach. In addition, there has historically been a failure to provide marketable qualifications except as part of ad-hoc individual procurement. The work in development is to replace this with a more structured approach that addresses the needs of all staff and which will have as key components:

- A Service wide technical training strategy which will provide training hubs that maximise the estate available for Learning and Development.
- Delivery of the Core Hours project which will address the 'safe to ride' principle of the Thomas review and facilitate a more flexible and inclusive approach to technical training.
- Assessment and Development Centres – designed to populate a talent pool for supervisory, middle and strategic managers. The development component of this will be aligned to the national agenda and will include access to external opportunities (training, secondments, coaching etc.) that are both broadening and collaborative in design.
- Management development that has a mandatory component for all new line managers and a development opportunity for all – both linked to a marketable qualification.
- Wider people skills development through a blended approach that will promote engagement and inclusion as priorities and specifically address issues such as unconscious bias.
- Specific campaigns to address improving the working environment.

8.26. The groundwork is in place to evaluate ECFRS against the criteria that provide evidence of, and support a Learning Organisation. This process will also engage all employees and seek to:

- Learn lessons effectively.
- Capture the knowledge and skills of our people (intellectual capital).
- Improve capability for proactive development to meet change as opposed to the current largely reactive mode.

## **People Structures**

8.27. This project within the 2020 Programme will have a significant impact on our work to transform the Service's culture and will deliver a number of work streams that are listed in the next few paragraphs.

- 8.28. **Rank to Role** - Bringing ECFRS in to line with the rest of the UK. In addition, this will enable a flatter less hierarchical structure moving operational Grey Book staff to a seven role hierarchy.
- 8.29. **Management Review Phase 2** - Streamlining the management overhead and aligning management structure with the Authority's Strategy for the Service. ECFRS management structure is in the second phase of review with a rationalisation and reduction of the senior management structure having been carried out in Phase 1. This is already revealing that the expectations of managers are at times poorly defined and in many areas there is a lack of a useful job description available. The work to remedy this as well as a simplification of our appraisal system will serve to focus attention on the areas for improvement, where good work is under resourced and where we have delivery misaligned to the current strategy.
- 8.30. **Grey Book/Green Book** - Defining which jobs must be operational staff on Grey Book conditions and building rationale for how other roles are filled that address business need and equality.
- 8.31. **Green Book Pay Review** - To address pay equality issues and market pressures. Delivering on an outstanding commitment from the Fire Authority.
- 8.32. **Talent Pool** - As described above, the first iteration of this will also resolve long standing temporary promotions and vacancies. In the future, it will provide a cadre of talented staff from all disciplines delivering capability, resilience, continuity and succession capacity.
- 8.33. **Core Hours** – This will address the 'safe to ride' principle of the Thomas review and facilitate a more flexible and inclusive approach to technical training. It will also enable and contribute to mixed training and mixed crewing.
- 8.34. **Flexi Duty Rota** - Benchmarked against other Fire and Rescue Services with the aim to maintain operational cover in line with the Integrated Risk Management Plan and cost effectiveness.

## Performance

- 8.35. ECFRS has in place an appraisal system which, while it reflects best practice, is complex, labour intensive, and as a result not embraced.
- 8.36. Work is being finalised that will deliver a simpler, practical solution that addresses development of people to maintain and improve performance as well as broadening knowledge, skills and behaviours. The competency framework for the Service has also been reconciled to align with national personal qualities and attributes thereby producing a common set of behavioural skills for all employees.
- 8.37. Work has been conducted with the Fire Authority to produce more sophisticated metrics and key performance indicators that better reflect the Authority's Strategy for the Service. The Authority has supported this although attendance at design workshops was disappointing.

## **Inclusion, Equality and Diversity**

8.38. The appointment of an Inclusion and Diversity lead is greatly aiding the work to ensure that our people processes and work environment creates a place of employment that people:

- Want to work in.
- Enjoy working in.
- Are motivated.
- Are stimulated.
- Are accepted.
- Feel safe.

8.39. This will ensure that we have an evidence-based approach to guide our approach to recruitment, training, developing and managing as well as seeking to ensure that our infrastructure embraces and promotes our diverse workforce and reflects the communities we serve.

## **9. What do we believe are the things that are holding the Service back or the things that are frustrating progress?**

9.1. In the previous sections we have set out the progress that has been made across a number of areas in recent months however there remain a number of things that we believe are holding the Service back or frustrating the progress that can or should be made in transforming the culture of the Service. This section will explore these in more detail.

## **Industrial Relations**

9.2. The maturity of relationships with Representative Bodies in Essex remains a concern. While we believe that great strides have been made to change the nature of engagement with staff and their representatives in the process of change, more work is necessary to build more constructive and trusting relationships.

9.3. The relationship with the Fire Brigades Union is maturing but slowly. Significant progress has been made during 2016 and into 2017 in developing an open and honest dialogue however trust in the political and managerial leadership of the Service remains an issue.

9.4. Reaching agreement with the Fire Brigades Union on key issues can still take a long time. Work is required to understand why this is the case and whether Service management can do more to facilitate a speedier conclusion to matters of consultation and negotiation.

9.5. The relationship with the Fire Officers Association (FOA) has been a deteriorating one for some time. Trust in the political and managerial leadership of the Service

remains a real issue. In part, this is a direct result of a number of discipline cases which involve FOA members.

- 9.6. As a result of the concern for the deteriorating relationship the Acting Chief Fire Officer met with the Chief Executive of the Fire officers Association in November when an open and frank exchange of views was had.
- 9.7. The Fire Officers Association have recently reaffirmed their commitment to joint problem solving which is welcomed.
- 9.8. The Fire Officers Association are also currently restructuring their local representative to aid more effective local engagement which is also welcomed.
- 9.9. Within the membership of the Retained Firefighters Union there is a growing sense of frustration about the pace of change. The Retained Firefighters Union has, over many years, been both patient and supportive about the changes necessary in Essex however, that patience has run out. There is a growing sense of inequality and that little if anything has actually changed in the relationships on fire stations, in fact, in some areas they would describe a deteriorating relationship.
- 9.10. Arrangements for Joint Negotiation and Consultation Committee meetings that do not include all Representative Bodies would be held up as an example where the management of the Service are not living the recently revised values of the Service, 'We work as one Team' and 'We value the contribution of all'.
- 9.11. The relationship with Unison is a reasonably stable and mature one.
- 9.12. The industrial relations environment and the maturity of relationships with all Representative Bodies in Essex does affect the speed with which decisions can be reached and subsequently implemented.

### **Inclusion, Equality and Diversity**

- 9.13. The Service's approach to Inclusion, Equality and Diversity is an evolving one in which resources have been recently invested however it is too slow and too timid. We need to be bolder, while at the same time ensuring that we use evidence to support changes to our approach, particularly in recruitment.
- 9.14. The development of the Authority's Equality Statement and Dignity at Work Policy have taken too much time to develop and implement.
- 9.15. We remain concerned that not enough work has been done to ensure that the Service has workplaces that can be described as 'Inclusive'. If asked whether a female, Black or Asian, or an On-Call firefighter could work on any fire station in Essex, without the prospect of being treated inappropriately, the honest answer would have to be 'not yet'.
- 9.16. Another area of concern raised in the cultural review was the potential for certain, often long serving, team members to have a significant and detrimental influence on

the behaviours, and what are seen as acceptable behaviour, within their team. We have not yet fully identified and addressed this.

- 9.17. In both these respects, we would expect firefighters on fire stations to say that very little has changed since the publication of the Lucas Report.
- 9.18. The Local Government Association Memorandum of Understanding on “equality, diversity, behaviours and organisational culture in the Fire Service” will be a valuable tool in upholding and promoting inclusivity and cultural change in the next 12 months. To achieve this, however, all Representative Bodies in ECFRS have a very clear role not only in promoting the principles it contains but demonstrating clear leadership in both delivering on the commitment within it and taking specific actions within the agreed time table.
- 9.19. Of equal importance will be the need for Managers at all levels to understand that part of their role and responsibilities is to support the development of an inclusive culture within the teams that they manage.

#### **Senior, Middle and front line management**

- 9.19. The development of Service Leadership Team. The revised structure was implemented early in 2016. The time taken for the team to really start to perform as a team has been slow. Investment in team development has been patchy and not yet coherent.
- 9.20. It is still evidence that some managers, particularly supervisory, watch and team managers see their role as protecting their team from the managers above rather than delivering the priorities of the Service and Authority.
- 9.21. Managers of Supervisory and Middle management levels still do not recognise their role in building and maintaining inclusive workplaces. There remain far too many examples where team, watches and some fire stations seem to exclude those who are different whether on the basis of sex, race, sexuality, trade union membership or that they just don't fit their perception of team membership.
- 9.22. Management development – we need to be clear about the role of managers within ECFRS in the years ahead. This needs to progress now at pace.

#### **Political Leadership and Engagement**

- 9.23. This is a mixed picture where, on the one hand, there is very clear evidence of Essex Fire Authority setting direction for the Service and taking, where necessary, difficult but none the less important decisions about future priorities and options for change.
- 9.24. The support offered by SOLACE has highlighted some limitations and weaknesses in the current political leadership model. The views of SOLACE have been reported elsewhere, however we think it would be fair to say that a number of EFA Members invested heavily in the recent development of opportunities afforded to them by SOLACE however a more significant proportion did not.

- 9.25. There are a number of significant factors that contributed to this not least of which are; the proposed future change of governance under the Police and Crime Commissioner and the fact that a number of EFA Members from Essex County Council are not standing for re-election in May.
- 9.26. The appointment and induction of EFA Members in June will be the next key milestone in the development of the Political Leadership of the Fire Authority.
- 9.27. Looking slightly further ahead, October 2017 will be the next significant milestone in the development of the Political Leadership of the Service as this is the earliest opportunity for a change of governance to be affected. It is too early to predict the implications of this governance change on our work on culture change however; it has and will affect the pace of change.
- 9.28. As a result of all of the above, the full benefits of the EFA Member development programme through 2016 and into 2017 will not be fully realised.

### **Policy Environment**

- 9.28. The pace at which old, outdated and anachronistic policies are updated, simplified or simply removed is frustratingly slow.
- 9.29. We need to be clearer about the policy environment that we need to support a more mature, open and inclusive culture and then just get on with the job of doing the work necessary to ensure that we remove unnecessary barriers that prevent people doing their job effectively.

### **The management of discipline cases**

- 9.30. The time it takes to resolve cases of discipline. In our attempt to be demonstrably fair, we unnecessarily make the time from start to finish protracted. In addition, the work being conducted by ACAS on behalf of the Expert Advisory Panel has been slow to conclude.

### **Employee Engagement**

- 9.31. We do not yet have a coherent plan of employee engagement. It is fair to say that our approach to corporate communications is improving and employee engagement is also improving but more work needs to be done.
- 9.32. Our face-to-face briefings with managers is a good start however, this type of face-to-face engagement with all of our teams has been slow to evolve. In the next 12 months, this needs formalising and embedding in our approach to employee engagement.

## **10. NEXT STEPS**

10.1. The next few months must focus on the implementation of all the steps above but with a key driver to:

- Use the Dignity at Work policy and wider work on unconscious bias, diversity and inclusion to build workplaces where bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation cannot exist.
- In conjunction with the above, commit to a joint statement from Service management and all Representative Bodies on the completely unacceptable nature of such behaviour.
- Bring the Service values to life through meaningful and joined up dialogue with Representative Bodies and all staff.
- Implement a 'Reward and Recognition' Plan that both recognises performance and has a tangible link to contribution to the Service values.
- Continue the improving dialogue with Representative Bodies with a focus on collaborating and the building of sustainable relationships and developing work on the themes of Prevention, Protection and Response.
- Empower leadership in managers at all levels and build a development and support network.
- Involve employees in innovation and change.
- Build the Talent Pool and support this with a clear and focused learning and development strategy including the assurance of operational skills and integrity.
- Implement a revised, simplified and practical appraisal system with a review in 12 months to ensure validity and effectiveness.
- Support the change of governance for the fire and rescue service in Essex if the case is made and supported by the Home Secretary.
- Re-evaluate the Service's approach to the management of discipline cases to ensure that we reduce the time taken to resolve them.
- Develop a cogent plan to complete the revision of the Service's policy framework.
- Work with the National Joint Council, Joint Secretaries to support a maturing of the industrial relations environment in Essex.