

ESSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

Essex County Fire & Rescue Service



MEETING

AGENDA ITEM

**Essex Fire Authority – Policy and Strategy
Committee**

8

MEETING DATE

REPORT NUMBER

21 September 2016

EFA/111/16

SUBJECT

**Progressing the Lucas Review Recommendations for Essex Fire Authority Members;
specifically in relation to the outcomes of facilitated workshops held February-March
2016 – Update Report**

REPORT BY

Hannah Cleary, Seconded Member Support

PRESENTED BY

Hannah Cleary , Seconded Member Support

SUMMARY

At its meeting of 22 June 2016 the Policy and Strategy Committee received a report sharing details of the Action Plan developed following Member and Officer workshop sessions facilitated by the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) during February and March 2016 (EFA/086/16/Minute No. 7). The report additionally sought to agree a Member-led approach to take forward activities in the four key areas identified:

1. Clarification of the roles and responsibilities of Members and Officers;
2. Developing the role of Members in providing appropriate challenge;
3. Member Induction and ongoing development programme
4. Communications and engagement

Members' consideration of this report resulted in the following resolutions:

1. That the SOLACE action plan as set out at Appendix 1 be noted;
2. That at least one working group be established from the Membership of the Fire Authority to progress the outcomes from facilitated workshops in relation to the below four areas:
 - i) Clarification of the roles and responsibilities of Members and Officers;

- ii) Developing the role of Members in providing appropriate challenge (scrutiny);
 - iii) Member induction and ongoing development programme; and,
 - iv) Communications and engagement.
3. That the initial scope for the four areas of review as set out in the report be agreed, subject to the potential for expansion of the initial scopes and subsequent identification of further topics as work progresses in the future;
 4. That the working group/s will be fully supported by the seconded Member Support Officer. The seconded Member Support Officer will initially seek expressions of interest from Members wishing to participate in the working group/s and will also ensure that the full Fire Authority are kept apprised of ongoing progress ;
 5. That any findings and recommendations made by any working group/s are brought to a future meeting of the full Fire Authority for agreement.

Whilst a 'working group' approach was previously agreed and a number of Members expressed an interest in participating; it was felt beneficial for the Policy and Strategy Committee to undertake and oversee the required work to progress these activities. Members that expressed an interest have been invited to attend Policy and Strategy Committee meetings to contribute to these items.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to:

1. note the supporting activity undertaken since the meeting of 22 June 2016 in relation to webcasting and publication of Member profiles;
2. agree to engage SOLACE for a further 3 sessions during autumn 2016 and spring 2017 in respect of the following:
 - i. Roles and Responsibilities
 - ii. Scrutiny and appropriate challenge
 - iii. Reflection and future steps
3. agree that a further report in respect of the 'Member Induction/Ongoing Development' and 'Communications and Engagement' strands be brought to the next meeting of the Policy and Strategy Committee for progression.

BACKGROUND

The workshops facilitated by the Society for Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) in February and March 2016 identified four key areas for future improvement all linked to the recommendations in the Lucas Review.

Clarification of the roles and responsibilities of Members and Officers
Recommendations 5, 6, 7

- i. Develop a role definitions and skills framework that can be sent to all Members and Officers when they are appointed to the EFA or ECFRS; as well as to constituent authorities to support them when making EFA nominations so they are fully aware of the time and workload involved with the roles. The framework should also include details of the statutory responsibilities of the Fire Authority as well as the scheme of delegation. Senior Officers will contribute definitions of their roles and responsibilities to the framework.
- ii. Review the current Member Champion roles to clearly define their purpose and develop terms of reference for each role. This review will include the identification of any new Member Champion roles that may be appropriate, e.g. Safeguarding Champion.

Developing the role of Members in providing appropriate challenge
Recommendations 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

- i. Develop methods to improve Members' understanding of their strategic and business planning role;
- ii. Develop methods to improve Members' knowledge of areas for appropriate challenge;
- iii. Develop a set of standard questions to support Members at meetings when undertaking their assurance role;
- iv. Review the regular and standing reports that are presented to Fire Authority meetings and Committees with a view to improving the presentation of performance information against the strategic aims of the Essex County Fire And Rescue Service, using data from comparable authorities where appropriate.

Member Induction and ongoing development programme
Recommendations 5, 7, 10

- i. Undertake a review and refresh of the current induction programme to inform the induction for new Members from 2017;
- ii. Define and develop a high quality and relevant ongoing programme of training and development for all Fire Authority Members as well as development of a networking programme including visits to other Fire Authorities. This programme should include establishing regular, joint Officer and Member workshops;
- iii. Develop methods to improve and encourage attendance at training and development sessions including the publication of an annual report setting out training and development attendance for each Member;

Communications and engagement
Recommendations 5, 6, 7, 8

- i. Develop a protocol for visiting fire stations;
- ii. Develop methods for regularly briefing EFA Members on current and planned activities, both via e-briefings and face to face meetings with ECFRS officers;
- iii. Develop a Member communications protocol, i.e. when Members should be invited to take part in community and media events;
- iv. Develop a Member-Staff engagement protocol.

CURRENT PROGRESS AGAINST THE IDENTIFIED KEY THEMES

Since the meeting of 22 June 2016, the following initiatives have been progressed:

Webcasting of all Essex Fire Authority meetings

As Members will be aware, the Fire Authority meetings of 8 June 2016 and 7 September 2016 were webcast to provide both staff members and members of the public with the opportunity to view the meeting as it took place. Given the success of this exercise, it has been agreed that all future Fire Authority meetings are similarly webcast. This speaks to a number of the Lucas Review recommendations, pertaining specifically to Members of the Fire Authority; notably raising Members' profiles within the organisation; providing context and clarity of roles; and also improving openness and transparency.

Member profiles available on ECFRS Intranet

Work is almost complete on the provision of Member profiles on the ECFRS Intranet. This will assist in raising Members' profiles and supports the "Communications and engagement" work stream of the SOLACE action plan.

ONWARD PROGRESS AGAINST THE IDENTIFIED KEY THEMES

The resolution made at the meeting of 22 June 2016 specified the establishment of at least one working group from the Membership of the Fire Authority to progress the outcomes from facilitated workshops. Accordingly, all Members were twice contacted by the seconded Member Support Officer to seek expressions of interest with regard to joining such a group, and as a result of these approaches five Members had indicated that they would wish to participate. It was felt, pragmatically, that this was not a sufficient number to make a stand alone working group or groups viable, and therefore it has been agreed that the Policy and Strategy Committee will act as the working group to take ideas forward and make appropriate recommendations to the full Fire Authority.

ADDITIONAL SOLACE WORKSHOPS

It is proposed that the elements of the "Clarification of the roles and responsibilities of Members and Officers" and the "Developing the role of Members in providing appropriate challenge" work streams are progressed during further workshops, facilitated by SOLACE, during autumn 2016 and spring 2017. These would comprise a session for each work stream, and a third session to consolidate the outcomes and agree conclusions and onward work.

CONCLUSIONS

It has been agreed that the preferred approach to progressing the work streams identified by the SOLACE workshops was the establishment of a working group or groups to do so. It has subsequently been agreed that Members of the Policy and Strategy Committee will act as this working group, and there is a clear benefit in work commencing as promptly as possible. Members are asked to approve the approach as specified in the report, or alternatively propose an alternative method to progress the identified work streams.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Failure to effectively address the issues identified within the Independent Review of Culture present significant risk to the Service and the Essex Fire Authority not least as the report suggests that without significant change our employees and the communities they serve may be at risk.

The information set out in this report supports the delivery of the work programme required to improve the culture within ECFRS.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There would be a cost in relation to commissioning externally facilitated sessions, if this option is taken forward by the Authority. The cost of the previous SOLACE sessions was around £8k; although this was for potentially more sessions than would be arranged for this second phase. Other costs would be covered in those already estimated for the ongoing cultural review work; estimated to total £400k between 2015-2017 (this includes the Expert Advisory Panel costs). Around £200k of this is expected to fall in the current financial year.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The information set out in this report sets out the progress made in the delivery of the work programme required to improve the culture within ECFRS and therefore serve to lessen any potential litigation presented by the risks identified within the Independent Review of Culture.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

Failure to implement the Independent Review Action Plan and address the associated recommendations could result in the Service failing to meet its obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985
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There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

List of appendices attached to this paper: None

List of background documents (not attached):

Independent Cultural Review of Essex County Fire and Rescue Service
EFA/086/16 – Policy and Strategy Committee Report – 22 June 2016
Policy and Strategy Committee 22 June 2016 Minutes

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