

ESSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

Essex County Fire & Rescue Service



MEETING

AGENDA ITEM

PO HR Committee Cultural Sub-Group

5

MEETING DATE

REPORT NUMBER

13 March 2017

EFA/043/17

SUBJECT

Progressing the Lucas Review Recommendations for Essex Fire Authority Members; specifically in relation to the outcomes of facilitated SOLACE workshops

REPORT BY

Acting Chief Fire Officer Adam Eckley

PRESENTED BY

Acting Chief Fire Officer Adam Eckley

SUMMARY

The publication of the Lucas Review in September 2015 contained a number of recommendations with some specifically pertaining to Essex Fire Authority Members. In order to explore ideas to address some of these recommendations, the Society for Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) were commissioned to provide a series of workshops for Members and Officers in two phases.

The purpose of this paper is to share a report completed by SOLACE which outlines the activities and outputs from the two phases of Member and Officer development which were facilitated by SOLACE. The SOLACE report is attached as **Appendix 1** to this paper.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the PO HR Committee are asked to:

1. Note the SOLACE report set out as Appendix 1.
2. Consider how the SOLACE report should now be utilised.

BACKGROUND

The extracts of the following Lucas Review recommendations (from the report published in September 2015 and subsequent Independent Review Action Plan) pertain specifically to Fire Authority Members:

Independent Review Recommendation	Report Context	Actions to be taken
<p>R5: The role of elected Member on the Fire Authority must be more widely understood and more visible to staff, stakeholders and the public</p>	<p>Important that Members are aware of the distinction between executive and their non-executive role.</p> <p>Fire Authority need to deliver leadership the Service needs and deserves.</p>	<p>Work with the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Group spokespersons of EFA to establish a Member development programme to encompass:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understanding of Essex FRS context. 2. Architecture of FRS nationally. 3. Visits to other FRS. 4. Provision of a Member support pack. <p>Develop a communications and engagement strategy to improve understanding of the Elected Members role within the organisation ownership of the EFA's strategic direction</p>
<p>R6: Fire Authority meetings need to be focused on strategic solutions to ECFRS's most pressing challenges</p>	<p>Encouraging evidence that Members have started to address the Service's strategic priorities, recent FRA meeting there were new members trying to hold the Service to account.</p> <p>Clear historic imbalance between operational, financial and risk matters, little time spent by FRA Members on scrutinising culture of the organisation Programme 2020 is focused on the Service's future financial sustainability and little on values of ECFRS that need to change.</p>	<p>Use the Member and Officer development processes to identify any necessary governance changes</p> <p>Establish a programme of regular management and EFA Member workshops</p> <p>Establish a programme of regular informal briefings for the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Group spokespersons of EFA.</p>

<p>R7: Ensure that Fire Authority reports address a wider range of cultural and industrial relations subjects and not just operational, financial and risk issues</p>	<p>Induction session - all is well, not told anything about historic, money and personnel issues.</p> <p>Members not just to be told these are the only options when there could be others</p>	<p>Use the Member and Officer development processes to identify any necessary governance changes.</p> <p>Work with the Clerk to the Authority to review the constitution of the Fire Authority.</p>
<p>R8: Ensure that there are planned meetings with representatives of the Essex Fire Authority to meet around key issues with representatives of the workforce and Trade Union colleagues</p>	<p>Need for Members to take ownership of direction, particularly in these financially challenging times when difficult decisions needs to be made.</p>	<p>The creation of the 'Your Voice' Employee Forum will offer members access to a representative group of employees. The forum will be asked to include a regular meeting with Members in their terms of reference and consider how else they may wish to interact with Members. Consider how to incorporate this interaction within the review of JNCC arrangements for all Trade Unions</p>
<p>R9: More work should be done to ensure the accuracy of reports that are presented to the Fire Authority with the service's Performance Manager signing off all reports containing data to the Fire Authority in future</p>	<p>Plans are superficial and reporting on them disingenuous.</p>	<p>Establish a process to ensure that all Fire Authority reports that require a decision and that include data in support of the decision will be signed off by the Finance Director & Treasurer and the Clerk to the Authority.</p> <p>An assessment of current Planning and Performance Framework arrangements will be incorporated as part of the Management review. The aim of this element of the review is to identify areas where the Service can strengthen and provide greater capacity and capability to deliver change and drive performance.</p>
<p>R10: A review of the framework of how the Fire Authority operates should be commissioned to ensure</p>	<p>Members to provide 'level of scrutiny their communities expect', hold CFO to account,</p>	<p>The Service will commission a review of how the Authority's governance arrangements</p>

effective governance and accountability of ECFRS	ensure own decisions are open to scrutiny. The role of elected members on the FRA is critical. Knight Review -members need greater support and knowledge to provide strong leadership to drive efficiency, must ensure local people understand service and encourage informed debate about change, Greater sector leadership needed to drive through culture of learning from good practice and challenging services to rise to the level of the best, and ensure clear understanding that FA is accountable for a quality, value for money, appropriate FRS for their area and that FRS is a body they commission to help discharge that duty.	and mechanisms operate. The Terms of Reference (ToR) will be explicitly targeted at revealing any shortcomings of the Authority's ability to effectively provide governance and accountability of ECFRS. The Authority or its nominated representative will seek to engage and benchmark with similar sized fire authorities, combined under the Fire and Rescue Services Act, to identify potential improvements to governance and accountability arrangements. The Clerk will make recommendations to the EFA having had regard to the findings of 1 & 2 above.
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During 2016, Essex Fire Authority made a commitment to support a number of phases of Member and Officer development workshops facilitated by SOLACE.

These workshops were designed, in part, to address the actions set out in the table above.

The second phase of the SOLACE workshops has now concluded and a full report of the SOLACE facilitated sessions and the emerging themes is attached as Appendix 1.

CONCLUSIONS

The sessions facilitated by SOLACE provided a valuable opportunity for both Members and Officers to develop joint ideas and solutions to progress the Lucas Review recommendations specifically pertaining to the Fire Authority and it is important that Members are able to build on the enthusiasm and commitment attendees demonstrated to creating and implementing improvements for the future.

Members are asked to consider how the SOLACE report should now be utilised.

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 and in **Appendix 1** 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 further externally facilitated sessions, if this option is considered necessary by the Authority. 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

There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985	
List of appendices attached to this paper: Appendix 1 – SOLACE Action plan	
List of background documents (not attached): Independent Cultural Review of Essex County Fire and Rescue Service	
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