

ESSEX FIRE AUTHORITY
Essex County Fire & Rescue Service



**Cultural Review Sub-Group
of the Principal Officers Human Resources Committee**

| | | |
|--------------|----------------------------------|--|
| 13:15 | Monday, 13 March 2017 | ECFRS Headquarters, Kelvedon Park, Rivenhall, Witham, CM8 3HB |
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***Please note: This Committee will commence at the time shown above, or on the rise of the Principal Officers Human Resources Committee meeting to be held at 1.00pm, whichever is the later.**

Quorum: 3

Membership:

Councillor Ann Holland
Councillor Barry Aspinell
Councillor Alan Bayley
Councillor Carlo Guglielmi
Councillor Cathy Kent

Chairman

**For information about the meeting please ask for:
Judith Dignum (Committee Services Manager, Essex County Council)
03330134579 / judith.dignum@essex.gov.uk**

Essex Fire Authority and Committees Information

Meetings of the Authority and its committees are open to the press and public, although they can be excluded if confidential information is likely to be considered.

Meetings are held at Essex County Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Kelvedon Park, Rivenhall, Witham, CM8 3HB. A map can be found on the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service's website (www.essex-fire.gov.uk); from the Home Page, click on 'Contact Us'.

There is ramped access to the building for wheelchair users and people with mobility disabilities.

Please report to Reception when you arrive. The meeting rooms are located on the ground and first floors of the building and are accessible by lift where required.

If you have a need for documents in an alternative format, in alternative languages or in easy read please contact the Committee Services Manager (contact details on the front page) before the meeting takes place. If you have specific access requirements please inform the Committee Services Manager before the meeting takes place.

The agenda is also available on the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service website, (www.essex-fire.gov.uk). From the Home Page, click on 'Essex Fire Authority', then scroll down the page and select the relevant documents.

Part 1

(During consideration of these items the meeting is likely to be open to the press and public)

| | | Pages |
|----------|---|----------------|
| 1 | Apologies for Absence | |
| 2 | Minutes: 5 April 2016 To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 5 April 2016 | 5 - 8 |
| 3 | Declarations of Interest To note any declarations of interest to be made by Members in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct | |
| 4 | Essex Fire Authority - Member Induction Proposal To consider the report of the Acting Chief Fire Officer (EFA/042/17) | 9 - 16 |
| 5 | Progressing the Lucas Review Recommendations for Essex Fire Authority Members specifically in relation to the outcomes of facilitated SOLACE workshops To consider the report of the Acting Chief Fire Officer (EFA/043/17) | 17 - 32 |
| 6 | Urgent Business To consider any matter which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered in public by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency. | |

Exempt Items

(During consideration of these items the meeting is not likely to be open to the press and public)

To consider whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of an agenda item on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as specified in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 or it being confidential for the purposes of Section 100A(2) of that Act.

In each case, Members are asked to decide whether, in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption (and discussing the matter in private) outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

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Urgent Exempt Business

To consider in private any other matter which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.



**Minutes of a Meeting of the Cultural Review Sub-Group of the Principal Officers
Human Resources Committee held on Tuesday 5 April 2016 at 10.00 am**

Present:

| | |
|------------------------|----------|
| Councillor A Holland | Chairman |
| Councillor B Aspinell | |
| Councillor A Erskine | |
| Councillor C Guglielmi | |
| Councillor C Kent | |

The following Officers were present in support throughout the meeting:

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|-----------------|---|
| Adam Eckley | Acting Chief Fire Officer |
| Mike Clayton | Finance Director and Treasurer |
| Shirley Jarlett | Deputy Clerk and Monitoring Officer to Essex Fire Authority |
| Hannah Cleary | Member Support Officer to the Expert Advisory Panel |
| Fiona Lancaster | Committee Officer |

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. Progress Report on the delivery of the work programme required to improve the culture of Essex County Fire and Rescue Service

The Sub-Group received two tabled reports (EFA/048/16) from the Acting Chief Fire Officer which provided progress updates on action taken since the last meeting towards the delivery of the work programme required to improve the culture within Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (ECFRS).

The Acting Chief Fire Officer reported on his work priorities which included supporting the management review programme and undertaking one-to-one consultations with senior staff at risk of redundancy. Following the departure of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Safer and Resilient Communities, and the Director of Human Resources, a

selection process had been undertaken to identify a suitable candidate for the post of Transformation Director within the interim management structure. A series of Officer and Member workshops had been held and an action plan was being prepared. Members noted that Roy Carter, Service Solicitor, was revising the Authority's Constitution and Scheme of Delegation in the light of having reviewed other combined Fire Authorities' governance arrangements.

The following points arose from consideration of the report:

- The Sub-Group noted that senior Officers were developing a revised value set to cover all staff, and that Members would have the opportunity to review this at their April workshop.
- It was intended that the framework for the new Corporate Strategy would include a vision, value set, and five strategic themes. Detailed action plans, which would sit behind the framework, were currently being developed. Some Members expressed the view that they would like to be more involved with the development work, and the Acting Chief Fire Officer indicated that the draft framework would also be available to test at the April workshop.
- The Clerk undertook to check and confirm how the revised Constitution and Scheme of Delegation would be progressed through committees before being submitted to the Fire Authority. Members acknowledged that if committee scrutiny was needed the revised documents were likely to be delayed and submitted to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in June 2017.
- Some concern was expressed in relation to Members' differing commitment to attending meetings, briefings and training sessions. The Sub-Group was reminded that a report on Members' attendance at meetings would be provided at the forthcoming AGM, and that this could be extended to include briefings and training attendance.
- The different ways in which Members may be encouraged to attend briefings and training sessions was discussed, as well as their initial Induction, and the possibility of developing a Members' protocol. It was felt that online training for Inductions would not offer an opportunity for new Members to fully engage with Officers and increase their understanding of the Authority.
- Members noted that more work was needed around reward and recognition schemes.
- There had been an excellent response rate to the Programme 2020 public consultation. More than three thousand online responses had been received and the Authority was on track to receive in excess of ten thousand responses by the deadline. The detailed analysis of the responses would be undertaken by ORH at the close of the consultation. Members noted that additional exhibitions in shopping centres were taking place across the County to provide an additional channel for residents to learn more about the Service's plans for the future.

- Internal communications were being developed with regular briefings provided on the intranet, including the Acting Chief Fire Officer's 'week ahead' news, and senior officer face-to-face meetings. At least 32 fire stations had been visited to enable firefighters to hear about the 2020 Programme from senior officers. Members were particularly interested to know how information on new initiatives was cascaded to fire stations.
- Members expressed their appreciation for the ongoing work being undertaken by senior officers to visit fire stations and to help improve communication channels across the Authority.
- The Acting Chief Fire Officer confirmed that he would provide a written covering report to the April Fire Authority meeting to accompany the two tabled documents the Sub-Group had received at its meeting. The report by the Chairman of the Expert Advisory Panel would be amended to ensure that "Programme 2020" was used consistently throughout the document.
- Members indicated that they would like to increase their visibility and supported the suggestion to do this by video on the website, and perhaps with the broadcasting of meetings. The Secretary to the Sub-Group was asked to investigate whether the "mod.gov app" could be used by Essex Fire Authority to help improve Member visibility.
- Members noted the progress being made to deliver on action plans, despite the complexity and number of ongoing projects. The Acting Chief Fire Officer commented that he hoped to see positive signs of improvement in the next staff survey.

The reports were otherwise **noted**.

4. Future Meetings

The Committee considered the merits of holding further Sub-Group meetings when the only item of business was to receive a progress report.

Members **agreed** that it would be helpful to hold a Sub-Group meeting ahead of each Fire Authority meeting, ideally two to three weeks ahead of these, so that there was an opportunity for their comments and views to be taken into account.

The meeting closed at 11.00 am.

Signed.....

Chairman

ESSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

Essex County Fire & Rescue Service



MEETING

AGENDA ITEM

PO HR Committee Cultural Sub-Group

4

MEETING DATE

REPORT NUMBER

13 March 2017

EFA/042/17

SUBJECT

Essex Fire Authority – Member Induction Proposal

REPORT BY

Acting Chief Fire Officer Adam Eckley

PRESENTED BY

Acting Chief Fire Officer Adam Eckley

SUMMARY

This paper presents a proposal from the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) for an Induction Programme for Members of Essex Fire Authority. In doing so, Members of the PO HR Cultural Sub-Group are asked to consider its contents and determine the next steps.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the PO HR Cultural Sub-Group are asked to consider the Essex Fire Authority Induction Programme Proposal attached as Appendix A to this paper and determine the next steps.

BACKGROUND

Elsewhere on today's agenda, Members of the PO HR Cultural Sub-Group are considering the activities and outputs from the various phases of Member and Officer workshops facilitated by SOLACE.

One of the key themes that arose through those workshops was the way in which Members are inducted into their role on Essex Fire Authority and the way in which they are subsequently developed following induction. SOLACE were therefore asked to prepare a proposal for the Authority to consider which might address the induction and development needs of EFA Members.

Attached as Appendix A is a proposal for an Induction Programme for Essex Fire Authority which members of the PO HR Cultural Sub-Group are asked to consider and determine the next steps.

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.

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|--|--|
| 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 | |
| Proper Officer: | Acting Chief Fire Officer, Adam Eckley |
| Contact Officer: | Acting Chief Fire Officer, Adam Eckley Essex County Fire & Rescue Service, Kelvedon Park, London Road, Rivenhall, Witham CM8 3HB Tel: 01376 576000 E-mail: adam.eckley@essex-fire.gov.uk |



Essex Fire Authority

Induction Programme Proposal

Report Produced February 2017

Proposals for an Induction Programme for new members and further Development Programme for all members

1. General

For personal development to be effective, programmes should take into account the difference in individual's learning styles. These can be identified by use of a pre-existing questionnaire based on Kolb's Theory of Learning available under license. Individual learning plans can then be produced. This is a feature of the Member Development Charter.

When it comes to Induction, best practice is to offer learning opportunities using different approaches e.g. theoretical, activity-based, reflective, on-the job.

From the workshops, some guiding principles arose:

- Secure engagement of members by emphasizing the benefits of induction and development in boosting transferable skills and knowledge that can be used in other spheres.
- Align with Induction and Development programmes on offer through other Essex authorities, especially the County Council following the 2017 Elections e.g. on Scrutiny training.
- Inform members in advance of the detailed content and purpose of programme elements.

There was also discussion about whether there should be a Lead Member role for Member Development and/or a Member Development Panel.

The Programme elements and approaches below are those arising from the Phase 2 workshops.

2. Programme

2.1 Content

2.1.1 Induction - for new members only

| TOPIC | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Roles and Responsibilities | Using material produced for the workshops, to include roles of post-holders |
| ECFRS | How the Service operates – core business activity and the operating model |
| Committees | Specific introduction to each committee |
| Member Duties | What is expected of a member and how this is measured including the role of peer-to-peer evaluation/review |

2.1.2 Development – for all members

| TOPIC | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Performance and Risk Monitoring | Including how to measure outcomes, process for evaluating success, following up on recommendations and informing the planning for next steps |
| Holding to Account | |
| The Top 5 | Time-to-time briefings on the Top 5 Issues and the Top 5 Risks |
| Unconscious bias | Intended to support meeting equality and diversity requirements and improvements |

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| Briefings | Continuous briefing system on significant strategic issues in advance of formal consideration at committees and Authority meetings. |
| Political Leadership | See below |

2.2 Approach

Bitesize – short events to provide essentials, potentially linked to attending other meetings or events.

Briefings on Fire Authority and Service issues – see above: Top 5 Issues and Risks, continuous briefing system.

Buddying – member to member to draw on the knowledge of experienced members and possibly also officer to member. Prior training for the mentors would help ensure effectiveness and consistency.

Handbook - including Who's Who (photos and synopsis), FAQs, glossary and acronyms, code of conduct, visit protocols. As development sessions are delivered, notes of each can be added. The handbook should be in both hard copy and online format.

Visits – go and see visits including to Fire Stations for officer briefings, also to activities such as the Fire Breaks scheme.

Relevant Expertise – harnessing the experience and existing skills of members identified through pen portraits and/or a skills audit so that these can be applied most effectively in serving on appropriate committees, task and finish groups or in specific roles.

Members' resource area online – from the essentials to current activities, media releases etc Use of the Political Skills Framework as adapted for the Fire Authority and included in the Handbook.

Political Leadership development - identify what Learning and Support is required to carry out specific leadership roles, produce individual development plans with reference to a range of options, e.g. attendance at LGA Leadership Academy, mentoring and coaching, external visits and attendance at conferences.

3. Handbook

The Outline Content is as below:

- What is the Fire Authority and what does it do?
- The role of the Essex Fire Authority Member
- The Role of the Chairman
- The Role of the Vice-Chairman
- The Role of Committee Chairman
- The Role of Lead Members
- The Role of Group Spokespersons
- The Role of Member Champions
- Essex Fire Authority member Skills Framework
- Essex Fire Authority Statutory Responsibilities
- Essex Fire Authority Governance and Probity
- Roles and Responsibilities of Senior Essex Fire and Rescue Officers
- ECFRS Structure Chart
- Member-Officer Relations, including Staff Engagement Protocol
- Member Communications Protocol
- Member Visits to Fire Stations Protocol

4. Calendar

It is suggested that the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Group Spokesperson supported by appropriate officers meet to draw up a timetable and calendar once the programme proposals are agreed.

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> |

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| 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>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> |
| 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>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> |
| 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>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> |
| R10: A review of the framework of how the Fire Authority operates should be commissioned to ensure | <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> |

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| 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

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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 | |
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Essex Fire Authority

The Development Journey

Report produced February 2017

This is a report on the programme to develop political leadership within Essex Fire Authority. It is accompanied by a paper proposing an induction and development programme in 2017.

1. Context

In response to recommendations in the Lucas Report, Essex Fire Authority commissioned Solace (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives) to provide a programme of activity to address the following

- Improving the effectiveness, accountability and relationships of the Fire Authority members and the Service Senior Management team.
- Developing the Authority's members enabling them to give effective strategic leadership to the Authority and Service through a period of significant change.
- Improving the Fire Service Managers' understanding of how to work effectively with Authority members and developing their ability to work across the political – managerial interface.

There was also the prospect of supporting work on light-touch revisions of EFA Constitution and Governance arrangements as a way of helping ensure that effective accountability and scrutiny arrangements are in place. This work was not taken forward by SOLACE as it was assigned to the Clerk and Deputy Clerk to the Fire Authority.

During the 15 months since the programme was commissioned, the Policing and Crime Act 2017 has received Royal Assent and with it the possibility of Essex becoming the first area in England where governance of Fire and Rescue would move to the Police and Crime Commissioner. This change could occur as early as October 2017.

2. Programme

The commissioned activities were delivered through a programme of workshops in February-March 2016 (Phase 1) and November-February 2016-17 (Phase 2). They took the form of the following:

Phase 1 – Member/Officer workshop: Improving Effectiveness, Accountability and Relationships; Member workshop: Developing Members' Roles in Improvement; Officer workshop: Working Effectively across the Political-Managerial Interface; Member/Officer workshop: Review and Planning.

Phase 2 – Member Workshops: Roles and Responsibilities; Scrutiny and Appropriate Challenge; Reflections and Next Steps; Officer Workshops: Political Awareness.

Each of the Phase 1 workshops ran once. For Phase 2, each of the member workshops was offered on three separate dates and members of the Police and Crime Panel were also invited to attend.

Concepts and approaches covered were: Fire and Rescue Legislation; Respective Roles and Responsibilities, Motivations and Behaviours of Members and Officers; Contested Space; Nature of Strategic Challenges; Kolb's Theory of Learning; Local Authority/Fire Authority Comparisons; Systems of Holding to Account: Check and Balance, Assurance, Audit, Performance Monitoring; the Scrutiny Cycle; examples of other Combined Authorities' scrutiny arrangements.

Phase 1 was developmental in terms of exploring what might be done and resulted in an action plan. This was reported to the Policy and Strategy Committee in June 2016. Phase 2 was a means of delivering part of the action plan and also resulted in a range of ideas for induction of new members as well as for the future.

3. Points and Issues emerging through these activities

Member leadership

The intention was for the work to be member-led. This was demonstrated in a number of ways. The initial scoping was undertaken with a group consisting of the Chairman and the Group spokespersons. Phase 1 concluded in the creation of an Action Plan formulated by members and senior officers working together. The report on Phase 1 to the Policy and Resources Committee produced a decision on what Phase 2 should include. Phase 2 included a continuing element of engagement with members to shape plans for the future.

The leading members were clear from the outset that, whatever was to happen in the future, the challenges in the Lucas Report should be responded to positively. Much had happened and was happening to demonstrate achievement. If the Fire Authority underwent radical change then they were committed to ensuring a positive legacy.

Member and officer relations

Throughout the workshops, the concept of contested space was one often referenced subsequent to it having been introduced as a useful theoretical description of political and managerial relationships. It became clear that, in Essex, the space between members and officers has had changing occupancy, the shifts being often complex because they are either unstated or unacknowledged. At its simplest, the officer perception has been of a need for them to fill most of the space.

Contested or uncontested space is a shorthand description covering questions of leadership, role definition, communication and clarity of responsibilities especially when these are shared. It is also pertinent when it comes to questions of boundaries or territory. An example of differing officer and member views on what it is reasonable for members to do is that of visits to Fire Stations where some members wish to have free access in order to carry out what is seen as a community leadership responsibility. The workshops produced a way forward which is for a protocol to be drawn up thereby ensuring clarity of purpose and consistency of approach.

A positive aspect of member-to-member and member-officer relations is that of the Chair and group spokespeople liaising cross-party and being briefed by the Acting Chief Fire Officer. This appears to be a relationship of mutual respect. On the other hand, views were expressed that some leading officers are disdainful of the ability of members.

Roles and Responsibilities

This topic is one which figured large in the programme. It was clear that members were searching for greater understanding and the workshops went some way to achieving this. Particularly useful was the production of an analysis of the difference between member and officer responsibilities – the Whats and Hows.

Members spoke of their interest in the Service not least because that is what is delivered to the communities which elected councillors represent. Both in the Fire Authority and in local government one of the challenges is to balance strategic decision-making with the need to understand the services as they affect people in localities without crossing into operational management.

The Constitution sets out terms of reference and collective responsibilities but has less on roles except for that of the Chairman. Members were looking for a clearly understandable and comprehensive approach to what is expected of them. There was reiterated concern about the need for clarity on specific roles of which Champions featured strongly. Member support officers seconded from Basildon Council began work on a Member Handbook which contains relevant material to form the background guidance for new members' induction.

Culture

The nature of the culture within the organisation was a major issue within the Lucas Review. It was not a feature intended to be covered in the workshops but it was touched on by some attendees.

Early in the Phase 1 workshops, members articulated views about a feature of officer culture which is the wearing of uniform in almost all areas of activity beyond the operational.

Discussions also revealed clearly the unique aspects of promotion within the Fire and Rescue Service, i.e. based on rank. These are symbolic of a certain culture for which Command and Control is a shorthand description.

While there are Command and Control cultures in some councils and/or political groups; that form of leadership is not universal in local government. Difference is not necessarily an impediment when there is understanding of what that represents and how it can be used productively. In this programme, the officer workshops were designed to support such a development. Discussion in those workshops also led to some reflection on progress with implementation of the Lucas Review recommendations such as communications, equalities and leadership.

Delegation

Queries arose in the workshops about the extent of delegation to officers. There was also some lack of understanding about what had been delegated. This is an issue that can be approached in a number of ways: publication of the scheme of delegation (referenced in the Constitution but only available separately and not easily so); as part of Roles and Responsibilities in the induction programme; reviewed as part of revising the Constitution; publication of designated officer decisions.

Compare and Contrast

Workshop discussions on the similarities and differences between the Fire Authority and local authorities identified significantly dissimilar approaches to governance. Those councillors who had previously experienced the committee system prior to the Local Government Act 2001 saw similarities with the Fire Authority. The introduction of the requirement for Forward Plans was one of the main developments viewed as helpful for the Fire Authority to adopt. Councillors also highlighted the need for dedicated member support in the Fire Authority in a comparable way to how the committee support system operates in councils, i.e. in an advisory as well as administrative capacity.

Holding to Account

Flowing from the Compare and Contrast discussions, members had varying views about the effectiveness of arrangements for holding to account both officers and the Authority's own decision-makers (who are, in fact, themselves). The governance structure in local government relies, in the Leader and Cabinet model, on a Check and Balance system in which Scrutiny plays a major part. In public sector governance without such a clear designation of responsibilities, it is possible for there to be a lack of clarity so other systems are used, e.g. risk-management and assurance frameworks. Where lay and non-executive directors are board members, the challenge role is essential. Although the second workshop in Phase 2 was intended to include a role play of a scrutiny activity, attendance was too low for this to be carried out. Instead the opportunity to plan such a meeting was useful in helping develop strategic thinking.

Other Fire Authorities

As part of designing the workshops, SOLACE drew on practice in other Fire Authorities especially on Holding to Account. This was in terms of alternative Scrutiny arrangements and on work undertaken, eg on readiness for a Terrorism Incident. The Acting Chief Fire Officer has encouraged member attendance at relevant conferences which has resulted in some useful cascading back. Interest has been expressed by some members in attending the LGA Leadership Academy for Fire Authority Members following on from the Chairman and Vice-Chairman having done so previously.

Communications

Internal and External Communications were debated in the Phase 1 workshops with many practical proposals arising and being captured in the Action Plan produced. Members rely on the Chair and Group Spokespersons disseminating information and stressed the need for support to ensure this is timely as well as for a protocol with the Communications Team to include what is copied to members and when. A further consideration is effective reporting to the constituent member authorities: Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock.

Member Engagement

Attendance at the workshops is recorded in Appendix 1. (Names have been excluded at the request of attendees as they were hesitant to name and shame non attendees) The picture is of serious commitment from a group of members, total lack of engagement from some and spasmodic involvement of others plus attendance from members of the Police and Crime Panel with some attending all sessions. Those who did attend demonstrated a high level of debate and positive engagement.

The Future

With all-out elections for Essex County Council this May and some members standing down, it is evident that there will be change in the membership of the Fire Authority. With the Police and Crime Commissioner's Local Business Case for changed governance of Fire and Rescue currently under public consultation, there is a need to continue development of the Fire Authority while ensuring preparedness for any changes. When it comes to the latter, matters forming part of the SOLACE programme will be pertinent, e.g. Holding to Account, Political Awareness for Officers.

4. Next Steps

Outputs from the development programme have been captured as practical recommendations in the form of the Action Plan from Phase 1 and the proposals for induction of new members and development activity in 2017. The Action Plan is attached as Appendix 2. Proposals for Induction of New Members and a Development Programme for 2017/18 are set out in a separate paper.

Feedback and outcomes for individuals are currently being reviewed by way of circulation of a questionnaire to members and officers involved in the workshops.

APPENDIX 1

SOLACE WORKSHOPS 2016/17

| | SESSION 1 | SESSION 2 | SESSION 3 |
|------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| FIRE AUTHORITY | Roles and Responsibilities | Scrutiny and Appropriate Challenge | Reflections and Next Steps |
| | Attended | Attended | Attended |
| | Attended | Attended | Attended |
| | Attended | | |
| | Attended | Attended | Attended |
| | Attended | | |
| | Attended | Attended | Attended |
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| | Attended | Attended | Attended |
| | Did Not Attend Any | | |
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| | Did Not Attend Any | | |
| | Attended | | |
| | Attended | | Attended |
| | Attended | | Attended |
| POLICE AND CRIME PANEL | | | |
| | | Attended | Attended |
| | Attended | Attended | Attended |
| | Attended | Attended | Attended |
| | Attended | | |
| | | | Attended |
| | | | Attended |
| | | | Attended |
| | Did Not Attend Any | | |
| | | Attended | Attended |
| | | | Attended |

Appendix 2

SOLACE Workshops Action Plan Checklist

| Theme & Issues | Ideas | What needs to happen? |
|---|---|---|
| 1.Role Need to understand role – as regards the authority, in representing areas, in relation to the service Clarity on who does what and scheme of delegation | Be clear to constituent authorities on the role and workload for FRA members when nominations are to be made. Will help bring about stronger commitment. Provide members with current list of what has been delegated. <i>+Also to form part of Member development and training</i> | Introduce one page job description for FRA members, which outlines commitment. |
| | | Supply to constituent authorities (Leader and relevant officers) to use when considering which members to appoint to FRA. |
| | | Review scheme of delegation and report annually on how these delegations have been carried out |
| | | Review EFA Constitution as needed. |
| 2.Leadership Need clarity on leadership roles of members and officers, distinctly and jointly | Align roles of FRA lead members, new SLT and extended leadership forum – develop clarity on responsibilities, metrics, reporting and linkages to other parts of the governance system <i>+Also to form part of Member and Officer development and training</i> | Annual or twice-yearly leadership workshop (members and managers) |
| | | Provide development support for leading members, e.g. mentoring |
| 3. Holding to account Clarify how Audit, Performance Monitoring and Scrutiny relate | Governance structure changes, e.g. fewer members on audit, task group approach to scrutiny. Review what assurance members need – revisit performance metrics, reporting to | Review Governance arrangements – right members with right skills |

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| <p>Clarify what sort of information and evidence is most useful</p> <p>Report performance against strategic priorities</p> <p>Members would like to see more pre decision scrutiny</p> | <p>cover all aspects of Authority's statutory role and members' effectiveness in governance roles.</p> <p>Need to link Business Planning, with Performance reporting, and members need to be more engaged in this. It needs to happen asap.</p> <p>-Link to statutory obligations. Focus on achievement against strategic direction. If operational matters need to be discussed then do so at workshops</p> <p><i>+Also to form part of Member development and training</i></p> | <p>Introduce Quarterly Performance Report - ensure it is simple and easy to read. Introduce when new AD Performance post is filled.</p> |
| | | <p>Train officers in report-writing and responding to challenge questions, prepare reports differently, draft recommendations to encourage review of implementation of plans and impact.</p> |
| <p>4. Development and Training</p> <p>Induction and afterward, needs to be ongoing.</p> <p>Briefings needed.</p> <p>For officers also</p> | <p>Improve member induction – members should not be able to vote unless they have completed this training.</p> <p>Chair & Vice Chair to take overview of attendance at training sessions.</p> <p>Bring in planned (diarised) annual training programme</p> <p>Tie % of allowances to attendance at meetings and training sessions?</p> <p>For officers, training needs to be tailored to link to roles on EFA or roles within governance.</p> | <p>Provide a document that sits behind the induction of members which covers what the role of a member is and what the core service offer is.</p> |
| | | <p>Develop forward programme of development opportunities.</p> |
| | | <p>Introduce a system for logging and publically reporting attendance at meetings, briefings and mandatory training.</p> |
| | | <p>Investigate introduction of mandatory requirement for essential training – link to allowances and job description.</p> |
| | | <p>Officer training to include roles of members and statutory responsibilities</p> |
| <p>5. Member, Officer and Staff Relations</p> <p>Needs to go beyond 'Your Voice'</p> <p>Build on joint member-officer work</p> | <p>JNCC involvement, how?</p> <p>A champion for industrial relations?</p> <p>More contact between FRA members and middle managers (part of assurance)</p> | <p>Protocol for Fire Station Visits based on approach of councillors' visits to care homes</p> |

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| Need to know how to manage lobbying | | |
| <p>6. Member Involvement</p> <p>Recognise different levels of time and commitment members can offer</p> <p>Champions felt they could offer more support e.g. meet with Service Officers more regularly.</p> | <p>What is the role of a Champion? Should this continue? Needs better defining.</p> <p>Review which themes should be covered.</p> <p>Consider opportunities for members to be involved in events.</p> | <p>If Champions are to continue and more appointed, agree role description and responsibilities, including reporting back to FRA; also review which themes should be continued.</p> |
| <p>7. Information and Communication – Internal</p> <p>How the information to lead members is cascaded</p> <p>Communications need to be timely (monthly at least), particularly in a period of change.</p> <p>Improvement would support the engagement and participation of all EFA Members who would feel more informed and able to contribute appropriately</p> | <p>More structured approach to communication from officers to Lead Members to all EFA Members.</p> <p>Information taking too long to get through via Group Spokespersons to backbenchers.</p> <p>Briefings for members.</p> <p>Monthly meeting between Senior Leadership team and lead members – monthly members’ briefing from this.</p> | <p>Communications to be sent to all FRA members not just through group spokespersons, otherwise it takes too long to get info through to back benchers.</p> |
| | | <p>Monthly briefings to be organised to allow members to raise questions at FRA meetings about issues in briefings.</p> |
| | | <p>Briefing should enable Chair, Vice Chair, Lead members and Champions to report their activities regularly. Include all member engagements past and planned –for others to ask questions or for issues to be raised. Include it on member part of website.</p> |
| | | <p>Briefings to cover key strategic issues – both reporting on what has happened & highlighting issues that are coming up in next month. They should Include reporting on failure to meet response standards</p> |
| <p>8. Communication – External</p> <p>With member councils and</p> | <p>Improve FRA reporting to constituent authorities. At the moment it is only the Chair who does a report, could use</p> | <p>Introduce in May, with first report to constituent authorities from June</p> |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>councillors</p> <p>Role of FRA members in external communication and representation</p> <p>Need to explicitly set out what we want to say to public and communities.</p> <p>Need to focus on how to improve communications with public.</p> <p>Need to improve relationship with media.</p> | <p>monthly briefings to produce a quarterly report to constituent authorities.</p> <p>Make more use of social media, currently using Twitter and Facebook.</p> | Physically invite local media to a briefing prior to quarterly FRA meetings |
| | | Members to receive copies of all press releases from Communications team |
| <p>9.FRA</p> <p>Greater visibility</p> <p>Establish what good looks like</p> <p>Greater clarity on strategic direction and outcomes desired in order to inform the development of options which are then presented for decision.</p> | <p>Useful to compare EFA with how other FRAs are performing and operating.</p> <p>Members would like to look at similar FRAs (county plus unitaries) and want to talk to other FRA members.</p> | Build member awareness of other FRAs and links to other FRA members |
| | | Organise visits to other authorities |
| 10.Lucas Review/Culture | Members want to hold officers to account on ensuring that equality, diversity and respect underpin all activity of ERA. | Cultural Review should be a standing item on FRA agenda, and councillors should formally challenge if progress is not happening |
| 11.Networking | Members don't think this is really encouraged, but would like to see more of this | |