

Essex Fire Authority

[Internal Audit Report \(3.14/15\)](#)

FINAL

Communications

16 January 2015

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		Distribution	Glenn McGuinness- Deputy Finance Director Christine Conner - Head of Corporate Communications

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1 Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

An audit of Communications was undertaken as part of the approved internal audit periodic plan for 2014/15.

The scope of this review was agreed by Senior Management to give the Fire Authority assurance on the control framework in place for Communications, and that risks in relation to both internal and external communications are appropriately managed.

The Head of Communications had prepared a document illustrating three strategic options for the direction of the Fire Service in relation to Corporate Communications. These options were: additional resource and restructure, a co-sourced communications function or a continued reactive function. Supporting these documents were a list of current services provided by the Communications Department and a proposed governance structure for the Corporate Communications function following the recruitment of additional management personnel. The proposal document also identified three work streams for the Communications Department: Corporate Public Relations, Community Safety and Employee Engagement. Each section had proposed outcomes for 2014/15 and/or 2014/16.

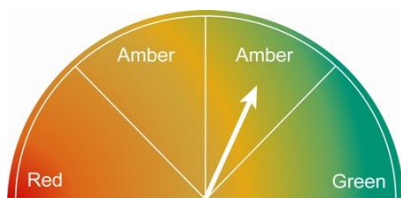
Whilst the document had no formal approval, a confirmation email from the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development demonstrated approval of a workforce planning business case for additional staffing resources. This included the recruiting of an additional two management positions for Corporate Communications. This approval aligns further development to the first option within the proposal document drafted by the Head of Corporate Communications.

Stakeholders have been mapped, using levels of influences and interest, for four different scenarios; Day-to-day, Major Incident, Reduction of Services and Industrial Action. The internal and external communication channels have been identified within the 'Corporate Communications, Media and Marketing' training material produced by the Communications Department. Additionally, feedback channels have been established to ensure the Service receive opinions from both staff and the public on varying issues. Training materials have been developed for Corporate Communications, Media and Marketing and Social Media. These provide key information to staff to ensure channels of communication are managed appropriately.

The audit was designed to assess the controls in place to manage the following objectives:

Objective	To ensure the positive image of the service
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1.2 Conclusion



Taking account of the issues identified, the Authority can take reasonable assurance that the controls upon which the organisation relies to manage this risk are suitably designed, consistently applied and effective.

Controls designed and operating effectively

- Essex Fire Authority has a Corporate Communications work plan. This document set out the role of the Service and Corporate Communications Department, the purpose and alignment of the work plan. This included the vision and mission for the Service, and the 2014/15 objectives and an action plan.
- Project Communication guidance is available to Service personnel via the Service intranet. The guidance states that internal and external stakeholder communications should be recorded and a communications schedule should be put in place. When each project is initiated within the Service, a communications plan is prepared to ensure key information is communicated to stakeholders throughout the lifecycle of the project.
- Stakeholder Mapping has been implemented by the Fire Service for four different states, as follows:
 - Day to Day;
 - During a Major Incident;
 - During Industrial Action; and
 - Reduction of Service.

The stakeholder maps identify the key stakeholders in each of the four scenarios. The exercise has followed established procedures, identifying stakeholders by level of interest and influence.

- The Fire Service has identified their mechanisms for internal communication. The primary internal routes are identified as follows:

- Intranet, including access to the Strategic Management Board meeting minutes, current news and a Corporate Communications section for documented procedures. This section had the process for developing a project communications plan, acceptable uses for twitter and a complaints/ compliments process;
 - Parade News containing key messages were provided to staff, including the current financial situation, recent incidents, fundraising and service events;
 - People Management and Development Bulletin, the bi-monthly training and development bulletin detailing issues around working hours, dress code, starters, leavers, annual leave and policy updates;
 - Posters provided information on key Fire Service topics;
 - Direct communications to staff, such as Postcards to Firefighters regarding additional remit in community focussed services;
 - Special publications, such as the document produced by Communications that quoted facts and fiction from Acting Chief Fire Officer regarding the messages staff were receiving from the Fire Brigades' Union.
- There are various channels identified within the Fire Service for receiving feedback from Service Personnel and the public, including:
 - Informal station visits, implemented by the Fire Authority Chair, Acting Deputy Fire Officer and Assistant Chief Fire Officers;
 - Managers' Meetings, where senior management invite attendance from Service Personnel to discuss issues captured within a meeting agenda sent in advance;
 - Consultations, where the Service are in direct consultation with the public, and the development of an additional feature that will allow Service Personnel to comment on consultations published on the Service intranet;
 - Provision of a feedback channel within the Service Integrated Risk Management document;
 - A documented process for compliments and complaints; and
 - Surveys for both Staff and Public to identify significant trends in opinion.

Issues identified with the design of control framework

We identified four weaknesses with the design of control framework, as follows:

- There was no formally documented Communications Strategy within the organisation. Whilst the strategic direction for Corporate Communications has been proposed by the Head of Communications, formal implementation plans have not been established. There is a risk that the expected outcomes will not be achieved, as the actions required to achieving them have not been devised. **Medium**
- Similarly, the governance arrangements for the three work streams of the Corporate Communications department have not been formalised. Therefore the accountability, reporting and monitoring formats, meeting frequency or committee structures have not been identified. Without governance arrangements in place to actively govern the implementation of actions and monitor ongoing performance, there is a risk that the expected outcomes will not be appropriately managed and/or governed and therefore not achieved. **Medium**
- From our review of a sample of 3 projects we found that Project Communications Plans are not formally approved prior to the commencement of the project, or reviewed throughout the lifecycle of the project, and there was no process for reporting progress and exceptions. Without evidence to demonstrate that a communications plan is prepared, approved and monitored for each project, there is a potential significant reputational risk to the fire service. **Medium.**
- Through testing, we found the Fire and Rescue Service did not have comprehensive policies and procedures for all the channels of external communication utilised. Without acceptable uses being prescribed within a procedure or protocol for each form of external communication, the implication is a member of Service personnel may communicate sensitive information externally, or communicate externally in an inappropriate manner, resulting in a reputational risk for the Fire Service and/or Fire Authority. **Medium**

We also identified two low priority issues, and have provided recommendations within the Action Plan in Section 2.

Issues identified with the application of and compliance with control framework

We did not identify any significant weaknesses with the application of and compliance with control framework.

1.3 Scope of the review

To evaluate the adequacy of risk management and control within the system and the extent to which controls have been applied, with a view to providing an opinion. Control activities are put in place to ensure that risks to the achievement of the organisation's objectives are managed effectively. When planning the audit, the following limitations were agreed:

Limitations to the scope of the audit:

- We did not give an opinion that all potential stakeholders have been identified, only that an exercise has been conducted to map stakeholders to methods of communication.
- Testing was conducted on a sample basis only.
- In addition, our work did not provide any guarantee against material errors, loss or fraud or provide an absolute assurance that material error, loss or fraud does not exist. It should not, therefore, be considered as a comprehensive review of all aspects of non-compliance that may exist now or in the future.

The approach taken for this audit was a Systems-Based Audit.

1.4 Recommendations Summary

The following tables highlight the number and categories of recommendations made. The Action Plan in Section 2 details the specific recommendations made as well as agreed management actions to implement them.

Recommendations made during this audit:

Our recommendations address the design and application of the control framework as follows:

	Priority		
	High	Medium	Low
Design of control framework	0	4	2
Application of control framework	0	0	0
Total	0	4	2

1.5 Additional Feedback

We have made five suggestions that Essex Fire Authority may wish to consider:

Suggestions Made During the Audit
<p>We did not identify formal approval of the proposed strategic direction for Corporate Communications. However, we did receive an email demonstrating approval of the workforce planning business case.</p> <p>To protect the future strategic planning for Communications, and ensure best practice is achieved, the following suggestion has been provided:</p> <p>At the next Strategic Management Board Meeting, the forum could formally confirm their approval of option 1 of the Head of Corporate Communications strategic proposal, demonstrating commitment to the restructure of Corporate Communications.</p>
<p>We reviewed the project communications plans, and noted that compliance against the agreed plan is not in place. Alongside a recommendation for approval and monitoring, we have provided the following suggestion:</p> <p>Effective monitoring could be implemented by the Head of Corporate Communications ensuring variations against the Communications Plan are identified and actions agreed. This could be recorded in an issues or action log.</p>
<p>Through discussion, we noted that station visits are implemented by the Fire Authority Chair, Acting Chief Fire Officer and Assistant Chief Fire Officers on an informal basis. We identified some good practice at another Fire and Rescue Service which Essex Fire could adopt:</p> <p>The Head of Communications could devise a standard template for Station Visits to ensure consistent areas are reviewed.</p>

Suggestions Made During the Audit

Through review, we noted that the Fire and Rescue Service were disseminated a Staff Survey in November 2014, but had not completed a Public Opinion survey since 2010/11. We have provided the following suggestion:

The Service should consider a Public Opinion Survey in 2014/15 or 2015/16 to identify any changes from 2010/11 in public views of the Fire Service.

We noted that due to the embryonic stage of the Communications long term strategy, there were no performance measures agreed to monitor effectiveness. We have provided a recommendation in control 1 of the Findings and Recommendations in Section 3, but have also provided a supplementary suggestion to ensure a mechanism for measuring the effectiveness of Corporate Communications is identified, as follows:

Following the development of the three implementation plans for work streams: Corporate Communication, Employee Engagement and Community Safety, the Head of Communications could develop key performance indicators to allow effectiveness to be reviewed.

Benchmarking

We are undertaking this audit at other Fire Authorities and once completed we will provide some comparison and benchmarking data/information, including where appropriate examples of good practice.

2 Action Plan

The priority of the recommendations made is as follows:

Priority	Description
High	Recommendations are prioritised to reflect our assessment of risk associated with the control weaknesses.
Medium	
Low	

Ref	Recommendation	Categorisation	Accepted (Y/N)	Management Comment	Implementation Date	Manager Responsible
1.1a	<p>The Head of Communication should devise three separate strategies and implementation plans, demonstrating outcomes and performance measures for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Public Relations; • Employee Engagement; and • Community Safety. <p>These documents should be approved at the Strategic Management Board, and then disseminated to staff via the Service intranet.</p>	Medium	Y	A restructure to give the Head of Corporate Communications strategic lead on these activities and professionalise the department with resources to deliver these three key strands of activity have been agreed and recruitment process is under way with funding from April 2014/15. Work to develop these strategies to support strategic ambitions of the Service is already under way.	April 2015	Head of Corporate Communications/
1.1b	<p>The Communications governance structure needs to be established for each of the three work streams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Public Relations; • Employee Engagement; and • Community Safety. <p>This structured needs to demonstrate the relationship between each individual and group.</p>	Medium	Y	<p>This proposal was put forward by the Head of Corporate Communications to introduce wider governance from within the SMB team with the benefit of ensuring more cohesive communications activities with consistent messages delivered to all stakeholders and all three strategies working together.</p> <p>Expanding reporting lines will also assist SMB in presenting a collective narrative. CFO to</p>	April 2015	Head of Corporate Communications/

Ref	Recommendation	Categorisation	Accepted (Y/N)	Management Comment	Implementation Date	Manager Responsible
				maintain line management for Corporate PR, Director HR & OD for Employee Engagement and Director Safer and Resilient Communities for Community Safety marketing		
1.2	<p>The Fire Service should ensure there is an appropriate process for managing the Communications Plans for each project implemented. This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An approval process, during project initiation, from the Head of Corporate Communications for each Project; and • Monitoring of the Communications Plan of the project. 	Medium	Y	This process is in place for major programme boards but a number of projects undertake communications activities beyond the oversight of the professional Corporate Communications team. This approach will ensure corporate scrutiny and provide more corporate context and alignment, maximising opportunities to share corporate lines. Will require buy in, particularly from operational side of the organisation. First step to consider communication implications in meeting papers and as part of all project planning. Additional resources will allow introduction of greater governance around communications activity.	Dec 2015	Head of Corporate Communications
1.3	<p>The Fire Service need to ensure that it has appropriate policies, procedures and/or protocols in place governing the key channels of external communications, such as the media, press releases, 'images as incidents' and acceptable uses for all social media platforms. These should be approved, dated and assigned an annual review date to ensure they remain fit for purpose.</p>	Medium	Y	<p>These policies, procedures and protocols exist in practice but need to be formalised. Additional resources will allow introduction of greater governance around communications activity. In January, the Service procured a social media management system and is currently training</p>	Jan 2015-May 2015	Head of Corporate Communications

Ref	Recommendation	Categorisation	Accepted (Y/N)	Management Comment	Implementation Date	Manager Responsible
	Following this, the documents should be made available to all staff via the Service intranet.			official service users to operate via a single, formal channel. This allows oversight of activity and encourages sharing of current messages and campaigns through a single portal. A programme of training supports new users and will allow expansion of official social media participants without some of the significant associated risk.		
1.5	The Head of Corporate Communications should implement a training needs analysis, identifying which service personnel require communications training, and a training log, to effectively monitor training completion. Additionally, the Service could incorporate a training incentive scheme with the new social media software purchased by the Head of Corporate Communications.	Low	Y	Corporate Communications offers in house Media, Social Media and internal communications skills training, primarily to uniformed staff to give them the skills they need to present the Service in a professional way, limiting risks to ECFRS image. Currently delivered on request, there is some urgency now to train more station managers to be able to deliver information to the media, particularly at incidents. This recommendation supports the delivery of a more formal programme of training and development that is recorded and recognised. Rather than incentive, it is proposed to implement a proficiency standard before individuals can represent the Service to the media.	July 2015	Head of Corporate Communications

Ref	Recommendation	Categorisation	Accepted (Y/N)	Management Comment	Implementation Date	Manager Responsible
1.6	The Fire Service should ensure a guidance document or procedure is developed for processing Freedom of Information requests, to ensure the process is implemented consistently.	Low	Y	This will be reviewed when management of the Fol process moves in to Corporate Communications. This work will be completed once additional resources are in place.	September 2015	Head of Corporate Communications

3 Findings and Recommendations

This report has been prepared by exception. Therefore, we have included in this section, only those areas of weakness in control or examples of lapses in control identified from our testing and not the outcome of all audit testing undertaken.

	Controls (actual and/or missing)	Adequate Design (yes/no)	Test Result / Implications	Recommendation	Categorisation
1.1	<p>It was recognised by management that there is currently no formally documented Communications Strategy within the organisation.</p> <p>To address this, the Head of Corporate Communications implemented a review of Communications. Following this, a document was drafted to identify three possible options for future development of communications within the Fire and Rescue Service.</p> <p>The document expands on and provides detail and information around the three key communication work streams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Public Relations; • Community Safety; and • Employee Engagement. <p>These three work streams have been identified as the way forward for the service. Additionally, the strategy identified three options that required a decision from the Strategic Management Board.</p>	No	<p>We reviewed the draft document detailing the three options proposal in relation to future developments in Communications, prepared by the Head of Communication.</p> <p>We noted that the document recognised outcomes that need to be achieved for the Fire Service. We noted that the document identified three options that required a decision from the Strategic Management Board.</p> <p>At the time of the review we were unable to verify that the options had been formally considered and a decision reached. However through discussion with the Head of Corporate Communications and the Acting Chief Fire Officer it has become apparent that option one is the desired way forward and indeed we have obtained e-mail confirmation from the Head of Human Resources that the additional resource within option one has been approved.</p> <p>Given this information we do not consider that a formal recommendation around the approval of option one is warranted, however for completeness we would suggest that at the next meeting of Strategic Management Board this matter is documented.</p> <p>The document details the three key communications strands the service wishes to develop and in discussion with the Acting Chief Fire Officer we were advised that the Strategic Management Board have confirmed this approach. The document</p>	<p>At the next Strategic Management Board Meeting, the forum could formally confirm their approval of option 1 of the Head of Corporate Communications strategic proposal, demonstrating commitment to the restructure of Corporate Communications.</p>	Suggestion
				<p>The Head of Communication should devise three separate strategies and implementation plans, demonstrating outcomes and performance measures for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Public Relations; • Employee Engagement; and • Community Safety. <p>These documents should</p>	Medium

	Controls (actual and/or missing)	Adequate Design (yes/no)	Test Result / Implications	Recommendation	Categorisation
	<p>This document had not been formally approved and associated implementation plans developed.</p> <p>The Head of Corporate Communications has drafted a Workforce Planning business case for two additional management roles within the Communications department, and a restructure to allow the effective delivery of the outcomes identified for 2014/15 and onward.</p> <p>Additional governance documents were prepared demonstrating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The services provided by the Communications team; • The revised Communications team structure; and • The Essex Fire and Rescue Service management structure. 		<p>includes possible details, outcomes and actions for each of the three key strands however these have not been formally translated into separate strategies.</p> <p>We confirmed through discussion with the Head of Corporate Communications that the governance arrangement for the three communications work streams have not been identified. Additional document was provided as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of updated services of the Communications Departments; • Workforce Planning Communications Restructure business case; • Proposed Communications Structure and Service Management Structure; and • Email approval of the new communications structure and staff from the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development. <p>However, from review of this documentation we could not identify a prescribed governance structure for the Communications function, in line with the three work streams identified within the strategy proposal document.</p> <p>Without an implementation plan and governance structure in place to manage this, there is a risk to the Fire Authority that the objectives and outcomes of the Communications proposal document will not be achieved.</p>	<p>be approved at the Strategic Management Board, and then disseminated to staff via the Service intranet.</p> <p>The Communications governance structure needs to be established for each of the three work streams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Public Relations; • Employee Engagement; and • Community Safety. <p>This structured needs to demonstrate the relationship between each individual and group.</p>	Medium
1.2	Project Communication guidance is available to Service personnel via the Service intranet. The guidance indicates that stakeholders and forms of internal and external communications	No	We reviewed the Project Communications guidance provided on the Service intranet. We noted that stakeholders and forms of internal and external communications were detailed. This also detailed the requirement for a communications schedule. We selected three projects from the April 2014 minutes	The Fire Service should ensure there is an appropriate process for managing the Communications Plans for each Project	Medium

	Controls (actual and/or missing)	Adequate Design (yes/no)	Test Result / Implications	Recommendation	Categorisation
	<p>should be recorded and a communications schedule should be put in place.</p> <p>When each project is initiated within the Service, a communications plan is prepared to ensure key information is communicated to stakeholders throughout the lifecycle of the project.</p> <p>The Service has not identified a process for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal approval of a project from a Communications perspective; or A monitoring process of the communications plan. 		<p>of the Fleet and Equipment Services Transformation Board, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivering Fleet & Equipment Efficiency Recommendations; Resolving the Property Challenge; and Managing and Meeting the expectations of our Staff. <p>At the time of the review, we were not provided the project communications plans for each of the selected projects. We identified that the project working group meetings are not formally minuted, therefore we could not identify that the communications plan was discussed. Additionally, we could not identify commentary within the Programme Board minutes from April to August 2014 that demonstrated the communication plan had been appropriately monitored for each project.</p> <p>We discussed the monitoring process for Project Communications Plans with the Head of Corporate Communications, who informed us that the Project Communications Plans are not formally approved prior to the commencement of the project, or reviewed throughout the lifecycle of the project, and there is not a process for reporting progress and exceptions.</p> <p>Without evidence to demonstrate that there are communications plans in place for each project that have approved by the Head of Communications and routinely monitored and progress reported, there is a reputational risk to the organisation, that internal and external communication is not appropriately managed for each of the Services projects.</p>	<p>implemented.</p> <p>This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An approval process, during project initiation, from the Head of Corporate Communications for each Project; and Monitoring of the Communications Plan of the Project. 	
				<p>Effective monitoring could be implemented by the Head of Corporate Communications ensuring variations against the Communications Plan are identified and actions agreed. This could be recorded in an issues or action log.</p>	Suggestion
1.3	The Fire Service has identified their mechanisms of External Communication, detailed within the Corporate Communications,	Yes	We noted through discussion with the Head of Corporate Communications that the Fire and Rescue Service had policies in place for managing consultations, images as incidents, media and	The Fire Service need to ensure that it has in place appropriate policies, procedures and/or	Medium

	Controls (actual and/or missing)	Adequate Design (yes/no)	Test Result / Implications	Recommendation	Categorisation
	<p>Media and Marketing presentation.</p> <p>The external routes are identified as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incident Log recording all incidents within the Essex Fire and Rescue Service geographical area; 24 Hour press line; Website to providing easily accessible, updated information to the general public; Seasonal media campaigns; Press releases to give formal statements on incidents or issues; Service publications to provide information on a range of issues; Managing social networks to provide real time updates on incidents and issues within the Service; Consultations; and Posters and leaflets aligned to the national agenda on public awareness. 		<p>social media. We were provided with a Consultation Policy. We were not provided with the remaining documents.</p> <p>There is a reputational risk to the Fire Authority, that the acceptable procedure for managing external communication is not implemented as expected.</p> <p>Managing Social Media Platforms</p> <p>We confirmed through discussion with the Communications Department, that the Service currently uses both Facebook and Twitter to communicate externally. We confirmed an operating procedure has been identified for using Twitter, but we were not provided a procedure for Facebook.</p> <p>The implication is that where the acceptable uses for social media have not been identified, inappropriate comments or images may be uploaded, resulting in a reputational risk.</p> <p>Additionally, the website demonstrated that the both Instagram and Vine may be used to communicate externally.</p> <p>Consultations</p> <p>We confirmed that consultations are held for key issues, a record of consultations was available via the intranet.</p> <p>Posters and Leaflets</p> <p>We confirmed the Service provide leaflets to the public in line with the national fire service advertisement schedule.</p>	<p>protocols governing the key channels of External Communications, such as the Media, Press Releases, Images are Incidents and Acceptable uses for all Social Media platforms.</p> <p>These should be approved, dated and assigned an annual review date to ensure they remain fit for purpose.</p> <p>Following this, the documents should be made available to all staff via the Service intranet.</p>	
1.4	To engage appropriately with stakeholders, the Service has devised multiple forms of	Yes	<p>Internal Feedback- Service Blog</p> <p>Through discussion with the Head of Corporate Communications and the Acting Chief Fire Officer,</p>	The Head of Corporate Communications could devise a standard template for Station	Suggestion

	Controls (actual and/or missing)	Adequate Design (yes/no)	Test Result / Implications	Recommendation	Categorisation
	<p>feedback.</p> <p>There are various channels identified within the Fire Service for receiving feedback from Service Personnel and the public, as follows:</p> <p>Internal Feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal Station Visits; • Managers' Meetings; • Comments on Consultations; and • Staff Surveys. <p>External Feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated Risk Management Feedback; • Complaints and Compliments Process; • Press Office Survey; and • Public Opinion Survey. 		<p>we noted that the Service Blog was not currently facilitated by the Communications department, as the objectives of the Blog were not being achieved. However this may be reintroduced moving forward to allow service personnel to provide feedback.</p> <p>Internal Feedback- Station Visits</p> <p>We were provided with a 2011/12 Station Visit Schedule that showed the previous process for managing station visits. For 2014/15, station visits from Senior Management were not formally planned or documented. Through discussion with the Fire Authority Chairman, we noted that all stations are visited on an annual basis by the Chair.</p> <p>We were provided with an informal schedule for the Acting Chief Fire Officer, showing station visits for the remainder of 2014. We noted that Assistant Chief Fire Officers attend individual stations on request of the station management or personnel. We noted within the draft document prepared by the Head of Corporate Communications, that formalising this process was an aspiration for 2014/15 and onwards.</p> <p>Internal Feedback- Managers' Meetings</p> <p>From review of the previous three agendas provided, we noted that meetings are held at stations to discuss key issues within the Service. Personnel are invited to attend these meetings to discuss issues with Senior Management.</p> <p>Internal Feedback- Comments on Consultations</p> <p>When a consultation is held by the Service, the details are posted to the Service intranet. The Communications team were currently implementing a process of allowing Service Personnel to comment on consultations when they are live, thus allowing them to provide feedback on each consultation.</p>	<p>Visits.</p> <p>The Service could implement a Public Opinion Survey for 2014/15 to identify any changes from 2010/11 in public opinion of the Fire Service.</p>	<p>Suggestion</p>

	Controls (actual and/or missing)	Adequate Design (yes/no)	Test Result / Implications	Recommendation	Categorisation
			<p>Internal Feedback- Staff Surveys</p> <p>In November 2014, an internal survey has been piloted by the Communications Department. This survey is aimed at receiving feedback from staff on a reward and praise, management effectiveness and the culture within the service.</p> <p>External Feedback- Integrated Risk Management</p> <p>We noted that the final page of the 'Building A Safer Essex: Integrate Risk Management' provides a feedback option for the reader, in which they can provide their opinion on the risk identification and management process.</p> <p>External Feedback- Complaints and Compliments Process</p> <p>The Communications Team have devised a process for logging both public compliments and complaints. These are escalated and held within Communications.</p> <p>External Feedback- Press Office Survey</p> <p>In April 2011, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service conducted a survey into their Press Office from industry professionals. A report was provided that summarised the findings.</p> <p>External Feedback- Public Opinion Survey</p> <p>The results of a Public Opinion survey were collated in 2010 to identify public responses to a range of questions. This had not been implemented for the current year.</p>		
1.5	The draft Communications proposal document recognises that due to the variables of each individual crisis that may occur, there is not a standard procedure that outlines the protocol for crisis management.	No	We confirmed through discussion with the Head of Communication that there are no documented processes for crisis management, and the Communications team will devise a strategy for each crisis. We noted that a brief report was prepared showing the process for Communications in relation to the recent accounting error by the Fire	The Head of Corporate Communications should implement a training needs analysis, identifying which Service Personnel require communications training,	Low

	Controls (actual and/or missing)	Adequate Design (yes/no)	Test Result / Implications	Recommendation	Categorisation
	<p>Training courses have been devised by the Communications team, and a training pack has been developed for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Communications; • Corporate Communications, Media and Marketing; and • Social Media Boot camp. <p>These provide key information and scenarios to senior management in relation to managing communication.</p> <p>At the time of the review, there was no training needs analysis completed to identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who required training? and • What training content was required? <p>Additionally, there was not a log retained detailing who had completed training courses.</p>		<p>and Rescue Service.</p> <p>A Service Level Agreement is in place that defines the responsibilities of the Communications and Operations department. This document provide a brief overview of the process for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incidents of Media Interest; • Images Taken at an Incident or Training Scenario; • Press Protocol at Incidents; • Media Staff attending an Incident; and • Training and Development. <p>We requested the training needs analysis and log for communications training, but were informed by the Head of Corporate Communications that these were not in place.</p> <p>We reviewed the training packages for Corporate Communications, Media and Marketing and Social Media Boot camp and confirmed the key training requirements were detailed.</p>	<p>and a training log, to effectively monitor training completion.</p> <p>Additionally, the Service could incorporate a training incentive scheme with the new social media software purchased by the Head of Corporate Communications.</p>	
1.6	<p>Whilst there is not a documented process for processing Freedom of Information requests, the Service has a process in place, implemented by the Personal Assistant to the Service Solicitor.</p> <p>Both the Freedom of Information Act and ICO procedures are used as guidance. Freedom of Information requests are received via email or a written letter.</p>	No	<p>Through discussion with Personal Assistant to the Service Solicitor, that the Service does not have a procedure in place at present, but this is a going to be drafted moving forward.</p> <p>When we raised the concern that there was only one person completing this process, the Personal Assistant to the Service Solicitor informed us that there was more than one of the Personal Assistants that can log and process Freedom of Information Requests.</p>	<p>The Fire Service should ensure a guidance document or procedure in developed for processing Freedom of Information requests, to ensure the process is implemented consistently.</p>	Low

	Controls (actual and/or missing)	Adequate Design (yes/no)	Test Result / Implications	Recommendation	Categorisation
	<p>Requests are allocated a unique reference number and are logged within a Freedom of Information spreadsheet, and the request scanned and saved to a drive within the Service server.</p> <p>These are processed within the required 20 days. Once these have been responded to, the results are sent to the Communications Team to upload onto the Service website, to prevent any duplication with future requests.</p>		<p>However, without a protocol in place, there is a risk that Freedom of Information requests are not processed consistently or as expected, which could result in a reputational risk.</p> <p>We requested the Freedom of Information spreadsheet, and found that requests had been logged and allocated a unique reference number.</p> <p>For a sample of ten requests, we confirmed nine of these had been processed within twenty working days. The exception was request reference 0895, and was a minor delay of three days.</p> <p>We have not provided a recommendation as this was an isolated incident. We noted the Service have identified a process for publishing Freedom of Information requests and responses on the Service website.</p>		
1.7	<p>Performance of Communications is currently reported on an ad hoc basis by the Head of Corporate Communications to the Acting Chief Fire Officer.</p> <p>As the formal implementation plans for the three work streams have not been identified, the mechanisms for monitoring and reporting performance, including reporting to the Strategic Management Board, had not been established.</p>	No	<p>Due to the embryonic stage of the Communications long term aspirations, there was not a documented process for the reporting and monitoring of 2014/15 outputs for Communications.</p> <p>We requested the performance reports for July, August, and September 2014 from the Head of Corporate Communications. At the time of the review, these were not provided.</p> <p>The risk to the organisation is that Communications is not appropriately monitored, and effectiveness managed.</p> <p>We have not provided an additional recommendation in this control, as a recommendation has been provided within control 2 for the establishment of implementation plans and governance arrangements for Communications.</p>	Following the development of the three implementation plans for work streams: Corporate Communication, Employee Engagement and Community Safety, the Head of Communications could develop key performance indicators to allow effectiveness to be reviewed.	Suggestion