

ESSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

Essex County Fire & Rescue Service



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:

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