

For Publication

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority
31 October 2022

REPORT LEAD: CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

SUBJECT: FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY'S ACTION PLAN FOLLOWING LGA GOVERNANCE REVIEW

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Background Papers: FRA Executive report from 26 May entitled Independent Review of Governance See [HERE](#)
FRA report from 7 June on the Member Development Programme See [HERE](#)
FRA Executive report from 22 June on Final Resourcing Options for Monitoring Officer role See [HERE](#)
FRA report from 20 July entitled Independent Review of Governance see [HERE](#)
FRA report from 8 September 2022 entitled Monitoring Officer Report See [HERE](#)

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to present members of the Fire & Rescue Authority (FRA) with an action plan to update the Fire and Rescue Authority's constitutional aspects of the Member's Handbook.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Members acknowledge the content of this paper and:

- That Members approve the action plan.

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Local Government Association's independent review of governance has been an inclusive and engaging process. The Authority now has a clear route map to move forward.
- 1.2 In particular, the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) will now develop and redefine the professional partnership between officers and FRA Members, define the scrutiny function and futureproof our governance arrangements.

2. Background

- 2.1 The LGA's Joint Member and Officer Workshop held on 6 October 2022 was a culmination of a programme of development and support activities as follows:

- A desktop document review of Bedfordshire FRA Governance Documents conducted by Shahin Ismail, Monitoring Officer at Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service
- Separate diagnostic sessions for Members and Officers:
- Member Discovery Session on 8 September 2022; and
- Officer Discovery Session on 14 September 2022.

- 2.2 Key themes from the Discovery Sessions according to the LGA are:

- clarifying of the governance roles and responsibilities including the Remit of the executive; role of portfolio/challenge groups; role of non-executive members; and build in the monitoring officer function;
- clarifying the Scrutiny process including who does it, how, when, and how can it be improved whilst retaining the good relationships that exists.
- developing Member and Officer engagement include more opportunities for informal dialogue and learning;
- making the FRA more visible and accountable to the public;
- empowering managers to take decisions; reduce bureaucracy
- Working together better as a professional partnership which needs to be more systematic,
- considering extending tenure of the Chair;
- reviewing the Member's Handbook including standing orders and code of conduct;

- increasing middle managers knowledge of the democratic process; and
- reviewing Member’s training and development including a programme of continuing professional development (CPD)

3. Governance Review Action Plan

3.1 Objectives:

- Future proof governance arrangements;
- Reform our governance arrangements to support a long-term professional partnership between officers and FRA Members;
- Make the FRA more accountable to the public; and
- Raise the visibility of the FRA and inform the public about what it does and why.

| Action | By When | By Whom |
|---|--------------------------------------|---------|
| Design a new Member Development Programme and consider the content, costs and benefits of LGA’s Development Phase delivered by Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. Formal member training packages could include sessions on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FRA governance literacy; • Community Risk Management; • Corporate Risk Management; • Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; • Data literacy; and • Visits to or observation of other FRAs. | FRA Exec meeting on 14 November 2022 | HSSA |
| Agree new Member Development Programme | FRA meeting on 14 December 2022 | CFO |

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| <p>Agree new governance elements outside the Member's Handbook including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of the LGA equality and diversity charter; • Adoption of the Fire Standard Code of Ethics; • Public and media participation; • Local pay review; • Livestream and recording FR meetings. | <p>FRA meeting on 14 December 2022</p> | <p>CFO</p> |
| <p>Review constitutional aspects of Member's Handbook to include reviews and options for strengthening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FRA terms of reference; • The function and role of scrutiny; • Call-in procedures and the function and role of task and finish group(s); • The role of the Monitoring Officer; • The process of Member appointments; • Review the terms of reference of the Audit and Standards Committee; • The terms of reference of the Executive Committee; • Member code of conduct; • Scheme of Delegation to Officers; and • Financial regulations and financial instructions. | <p>FRA workshop – 25 January 2023</p> <p>(The review will determine the timetable for approvals)</p> | <p>MO and BSM</p> |
| <p>Test FRA elements of website and report back results</p> | <p>FRA Executive meeting on 10 January 2023</p> | <p>HSSA</p> |

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| Develop People Impact Assessment (formerly known as an Equality Impact assessment) | FRA meeting on 2 February and 30 March meeting 2023 | HSSA |
| Finalise new FRA elements of the Website and modern.gov pages to improve user experience | FRA meeting on 30 March 2023 | HSSA |
| Inform key stakeholders of governance changes | TBC subject to outcomes from review | CFO |
| Final approval of all new Governance arrangements | TBC subject to outcomes from review | CFO |

4 Next Steps

- 4.1 The Authority will move forward in line with our action plan above and report back to FRA and FRA executive meetings.
- 4.2 The Authority will consider the content, costs and benefits of LGA's Development Phase delivered by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. We will seek quotes from other suppliers to gain assurance we are receiving value for money.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 That Members approve the action plan.

ANDREW HOPKINSON
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