

For Publication

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority  
18 July 2019  
Item No. 6

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**REPORT AUTHOR: CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND SECRETARY/MONITORING OFFICER**

**SUBJECT: GOVERNANCE REVIEW**

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Background Papers:

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Implications (tick ✓):

LEGAL		FINANCIAL	
HUMAN RESOURCES		EQUALITY IMPACT	
ENVIRONMENTAL		POLICY	
CORPORATE RISK	Known	OTHER (please specify)	
	New		

*Any implications affecting this report are noted at the end of the report.*

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## **PURPOSE:**

To make decisions on the future governance arrangements of the FRA.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

That:

- 1 The Policy and Challenge Groups are suspended;
  - 2 Two additional FRA meetings are added to the 2019/20 calendar – 4 September 2019 and 6 November 2019 and the updated calendar of meetings be approved;
  - 3 The interim Executive Committee and Audit and Standards Committee elected at the Annual Meeting remains in place;
  - 4 FRA Meetings continue to be held at Dunstable Community Fire Station, with the Annual Meeting held and Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters;
  - 5 The terms of reference of the Executive Committee are amended to include the management of the employment relationship between the FRA and the Chief Fire Officer; and
  - 6 The decision to suspend the Policy and Challenge Groups for a trial period will be reviewed at the next Member Development Day in October 2019.
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### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting on 28 March 2019, the outgoing FRA decided that any changes to its future governance arrangements should be made by the newly elected FRA. It was decided that the review would be discussed at the Members Development Day on 2 July 2019. This report is to ratify the decisions made on 2 July 2019.

### 2. Background

- 2.1 The Police and Crime Act 2017 made provision for Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC's) to take over the governance of Fire and Rescue Services, subject to the acceptance of a business case. Where the PCC had no wish to take over the governance of the FRA, the Act included arrangements for the PCC to become a voting member of the FRA. This element required secondary legislation to vary the combination orders under which FRAs are constituted and this legislation has yet to be enacted. In the meantime, Bedfordshire FRA has chosen to invite the Police and Crime Commissioner to participate in Authority meetings but without a vote.

- 2.2 Each year the FRA carries out an internal review of its effectiveness and both external audit and internal audit have given confirmation of the effectiveness of the governance arrangements that are in place.
- 2.3 In 2018 the FRA commissioned RSM, its internal auditors' to carry out a review of the governance arrangements for the authority. RSM submitted their report in October 2018.
- 2.4 The Review suggested a number of initiatives which, if implemented, might improve the efficiency of the Authority and reduce the bureaucratic burden on the Fire and Rescue Service in supporting it at a time when resources are increasingly under pressure. The review also included some benchmarking information.
- 2.5 In summary the report dealt with the following areas:
- The size and composition of the FRA
  - Number and functionality of FRA meetings
  - Location of meetings
  - The demands placed on staff to support meetings
  - Structure of Policy and Challenge Groups
  - Members' Allowances
- 2.6 At the Member Development Day held on 2 July 2019, Members discussed the options which had been reported to at the Authority meeting held on 28 March 2019.

### 3 Discussion and Suggestions

- 3.1 During the discussions at the Members Development Day, it was suggested that for a trial period the Policy and Challenge Groups be suspended and two additional FRA meetings be added to the 2019/20 calendar. This would remove non-decision making meetings and allow additional time for the full FRA to consider and make decisions on proposals. Officers will need to have further discussions to decide on how future reporting will take place.
- 3.2 The proposed dates for the new FRA meetings are 4 September 2019 and 6 November 2019. The September meeting will be held at Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters and will include the scheduled Kempston Fire Station visit. An updated calendar of meetings is attached to this report for approval.

- 3.3 Members agreed that the Executive Committee and Audit and Standards Committee, which had been elected at the Annual Meeting on 6 June 2019, should continue to function during the trial period, though it is proposed that there should be a change to the terms of reference of the Executive Committee which is covered below. It is also suggested that the Chair and Vice-Chair should give up their places on the Audit and Standards Committee during the trial in order to allow other Members to serve on that Committee.
- 3.4 Meetings of the FRA, Executive Committee and Audit and Standards Committee are public meetings and should be held at a venue where there is sufficient space to accommodate members of the public if they wish to attend.
- 3.5 It has been proposed that FRA meetings should, with the exception of the Annual Meeting, continue to be held at Dunstable Community Fire Station. The Annual Meeting of the FRA and meetings of the Audit and Standards Committee and the Executive Committee would continue to be held at Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters.

#### 4. Terms of Reference of the Executive Committee.

- 4.1 High level decisions about the Chief Fire Officer's relationship with the FRA are taken by the full Authority. In practice, lower level decisions have in the past been taken by the Chair. It is suggested that in the future the Executive Committee should be responsible for managing the employment relationship between the FRA and the Chief Fire Officer and that the following paragraph be added to the Executive Committee's terms of reference:

*To manage the employment relationship between the FRA and the CFO, including such matters as objective setting and appraisal, discipline and grievances.*

#### 5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The FRA is asked to approve the following changes to its governance arrangements on a trial basis:

- The Policy and Challenge Groups are suspended;
- Two additional FRA meetings are added to the 2019/20 calendar – 4 September 2019 and 6 November 2019 and the updated calendar of meetings be approved;
- The interim Executive Committee and Audit and Standards Committee elected at the Annual Meeting remains in place;

- FRA Meetings continue to be held at Dunstable Community Fire Station, with the Annual Meeting held at Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters;
- The terms of reference of the Executive Committee are amended to include the management of the employment relationship between the FRA and the Chief Fire Officer.
- The decision to suspend the Policy and Challenge Groups for a trial period will be reviewed at the next Member Development Day in October 2019.

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