

For Publication

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority
Executive Committee
10 January 2023

REPORT LEAD: ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER

SUBJECT: GOVERNANCE UPDATE & NEW MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

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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](#)
FRA report from 31 October entitled FRA's Action Plan Following LGA Governance Review see [HERE](#)
FRA Executive Report from 15 November 2022 entitled Revised Governance Action Plan and Timetable
See [HERE](#)
FRA Executive Minutes from 15 November 2022 see [HERE](#)
FRA report from 14 December 2022 entitled New Member Development Programme see [HERE](#)

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to present members of the Executive Committee with a new Member Development Programme that reflects the LGA's independent review of governance and subsequent discussions. The programme is a result of Member discussion and agreement at the Fire and Rescue Authority's Executive committee meeting on 15 November 2022.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Members:

- i. note the progress made in delivering the outcomes from the Governance Review, and;
- ii. approve the new Member Development Programme as set out in Appendix 1.

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. In particular, the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) will work with senior officers to develop the Member Development Programme.

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;
- reducing bureaucracy;
- working together better as a professional partnership which needs to be more systematic;
- considering the opportunities and risks of extending the 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)

2.3 The Fire and Rescue Authority provides Members with an opportunity to shape the future direction of a service that provides an array of public services to local communities. It is therefore imperative that FRA Members fully understand their role and the complex legal and statutory framework that underpins the work of the Authority.

2.4 As part of the Members Development Programme, there is a requirement for new Members to undertake an induction to ensure that they have the background knowledge and understanding to be able to undertake their role effectively.

3 Member Development Programme

3.1 The Member Development Programme (MDP) is primarily focused on the statutory responsibilities of Fire Authority Members and the specific requirements associated with the governance of the Fire Authority and its associated Committees. The MDP also offers an insight into both the community and business safety services and the extensive emergency response capabilities provided by the Authority.

3.2 Modules were agreed upon during the LGA Review of Governance with both Officers and Members and are as follows:

- 1) FRA governance literacy;
- 2) Community Risk Management;
- 3) Corporate Risk Management;
- 4) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion;
- 5) Ethics and ethical governance;

- 6) Data literacy; and
- 7) Visits to or observation of other FRAs.

Further details on each Module can be found in Appendix 2. Planned implementation for the programme is following the FRA AGM in June 2023.

- 3.3 To ensure the best value for money, a project brief, detailed specification, quotes and timetable has been sought from:
 - In-house providers, in particular 2), 4), 5) and 7)
 - The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny for items 1), 4) and 5)
 - RSM auditors for all 6 items
 - Two other suppliers, Beth Evans and Ian Hickman Consulting, who we have observed and are known to us for items 1) to 6)
- 3.4 Indicative costs vary between £600 to £1,200 per day. Half day sessions based in Dunstable Community Fire Station are being planned, preferably linked to designated Member Development Days in 2023. Discussions on visits to or observations of other FRAs are taking place with East Sussex FRA, Durham and Darlington FRA, and Cambridgeshire FRA who are similar FRAs to Bedfordshire. All three of these FRA currently have or are planning to have online meetings.
- 3.5 It is proposed that individual Members training and development requirements will be considered at the initial new member induction, including specialist training for Chairpersons and Members of the Audit and Standards Committee.
- 3.6 A new Member Handbook will also be devised to be presented to all Members at the June 2023 FRA AGM. This will contain useful background on the Service, information about the duties of an FRA Member, a free virtual self-help training guide, useful contacts and a glossary of acronyms.
- 3.7 A Member Induction programme will be compulsory for new Members and made available to returning Members as a refresher. This will include training on ICT, Information Security, Code of Conduct and Complaints. This will be delivered in house and will provide a good opportunity for Members to meet and liaise with key Officers within the organisation.

- 3.8 All training and development undertaken as a Member of Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Authority will be recorded against each Fire Authority Members Training and Development record, and constituent councils will be informed to ensure council records are kept up to date.
- 3.9 Regular meetings will be held between Portfolio Holders and their associated Officer to promote collaboration and transparency. Details of the current Portfolio areas and how their associated officers are found in Appendices 3a & 3b, and Members are invited to comment on the current system and propose amendments if they are deemed beneficial.
- 3.10 In order to strive for improvement, Members will be asked to fill in a feedback form [Appendix 4] after attending development sessions. This will identify any gaps in knowledge that need to be addressed and assist in value for money assessments of external trainers.

4 Governance Review Update

- 4.1 As discussed at the last meeting of the Executive Committee held on the 15 November 2022, Officers have begun the first steps of the agreed Governance review plan. This will be in conjunction with Members as the agreed documents are developed.
- 4.2 There has been much discussion on the remit of the Executive and Audit and Standards Committee, including where the Scrutiny function sits. This will be discussed with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Executive, and the Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee in January 2023, with the intention of drafting new Terms of Reference documents for each group to be approved following this. The new Terms of Reference documents are to be agreed and implemented before May 2023.
- 4.3 It was proposed that the Scrutiny function is to lie within the Audit and Standards Committee, with a clear call-in procedure outlined and the ability to create Task and Finish groups for larger projects set out in the Terms of Reference. This is to be discussed and agreed with the Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee.
- 4.4 The Head of Strategic Support and Assurance is leading on the creation of the Public Affairs function for the FRA. This will include a greater social media presence and outreach into different forms of communication such as podcasts and short videos. This aims to promote the work of the FRA to stakeholders and to increase the visibility of the FRA Chair and other Members.

4.5 The Governance Team have been looking into the possibility of webcasting FRA meetings and publishing the recordings. We have received a quote from one provider thus far and are awaiting further quotes to follow. The Business Support Manager is liaising with staff in IT to assess the suitability of the Microsoft Teams Live function, with the findings to be reported to the FRA at their meeting on 2 February 2023.

4.6 Various Constitutional updates are in the process of being drafted and reviewed by officers in consultation with key Members. These include:

- defining the role of the Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer,
- the adoption of the LGA Equality and Diversity Charter and the Fire Standard Code of Ethics,
- the Scheme of Delegations,
- the Code of Conduct,
- the Process of Member Appointments; and
- procedure rules for Task and Finish groups.

It is the intention that these documents will be presented to the FRA at their meeting on 2 February 2023 for discussion.

5 Next Steps

5.1 The Authority will move forward in line with our action plan above and report back to FRA and FRA executive meetings.

5.2 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 that we are receiving value for money.

6 Recommendations

6.1 That Members:

- i. note the progress made in delivering the outcomes from the Governance Review, and;
- ii. approve the new Member Development Programme as set out in Appendix 1.

GAVIN CHAMBERS
ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER