

REPORT OF THE LANCASHIRE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY 23 APRIL 2018

REVISED COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority presented a report advising that the Committee Terms of Reference had been reviewed and updated. It was noted that the updated drafts were consistent with those previously agreed, with the only significant changes being:-

- the transfer of responsibility for approving and signing the annual accounts moving from the Resources Committee to the Audit Committee. This was to reflect the revised year end accounting timescales and requirements. (Monitoring of the financial position would continue to be undertaken by the Resources Committee.)
- reducing the frequency with which the Strategy group met from three times per year to twice a year (which reflected current practice) and amending the wording so that only significant changes to Committee Structure, terms of reference, schemes of delegation etc. were considered by the Group (minor changes, such as this, were reported direct to the Authority.)

THE KERSLAKE REPORT AND OPERATIONAL LEARNING

Following the publication of The Kerslake Report Members were provided with details of Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service's operational assurance.

The Authority had a legal duty to ensure the provision of a safe and effective Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS). To contribute to meeting this duty, LFRS undertook a continual process of Operational Assurance, within which operational readiness and operational performance was routinely assured. This process comprised the Service's 'Operational Assurance Framework' within which a range of assurance activities were undertaken by a dedicated Operational Assurance Team, Area based Officers and the Training and Operational Review Department. The Framework was based upon requirements detailed in the Fire and Rescue Authorities: Health Safety & Welfare Framework Document. The methodology used within the Framework was built around 2 key elements i) operational assurance at incidents and ii) post incident / event learning and support. Thus in practical terms the Framework aimed to provide a process of continuous improvement through a formalised system of audit and review. These measures contributed towards making Lancashire safer and the overall attainment of corporate priorities, specifically: 'Responding' to fires and other emergencies quickly and competently.

An active and open learning environment had to be something that was embedded and must therefore be an ongoing feature of the operating environment. Embedding assurance meant that LFRS truly did learn from its findings and there was confidence that the lessons identified became the lessons learnt, and that this approach was underpinned by robust evidence. The Chief Fire Officer and wider leadership of LFRS had for many years stressed the need for risk awareness as opposed to risk aversion. This had led to an operational culture that supported staff who assessed risk, after taking into account experience and core knowledge, and interpreting and adapting policies in the context of the situation in front of them.

The publishing of the Kerslake Report was a reminder to everyone in the emergency services that we must review and learn from every incident to ensure public safety. LFRS response to the Kerslake Report was outlined in the report. Lord Kerslake had identified a number of areas that went well and a number of major areas for learning including recommendations. LFRS would continue to review its service in light of all recommendations arising from the above, and would make further improvements in the service delivered if required.

COLLABORATION WITH POLICE

Since the introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners in 2012, there had been increasing pressure from central government for their greater involvement with Fire. This gained greater traction with the long awaited move of Fire to the Home Office on 5 January 2016. Throughout the development of the collaboration agenda the Authority's consistent position had been how to deliver the best outcomes for the communities it served. The Authority's view was that these benefits for its communities could be realised without the need for change to corporate governance.

On 31 January 2017 the Policing and Crime Act received Royal Assent and embedded into law the main provisions regarding collaboration between emergency services and options that enabled PCCs to take on responsibility for the governance of Fire thereby becoming Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners. Where the PCC did not take responsibility for Fire, the legislation enabled them to be represented on the Fire Authority.

LFRS continued to work with the Police to explore new collaborative opportunities. Workshops capturing initiatives within a structured framework provided auditable evidence of the work that was being undertaken. The outcomes anticipated were a number of work streams to be assessed and prioritised and then presented to the Authority; with ongoing work presented to Planning Committee on 19 March 2018.

At a meeting between the Chair, PCC and two CFA Members on 21 February 2018, the PCC stated there was increased pressure from central government to review governance arrangements regarding Fire. Subsequently he sent an email to the Chief Fire Officer which said he was commissioning some work "which will produce an Options Report for further discussion with you and other stakeholders. I see the Options Report as being complementary to the work you are already undertaking through your collaborative arrangements as described already. The Options Report will review a range of options to further Police and Fire collaboration in Lancashire, including the status quo, representation on the Fire and Rescue Authority, the governance model (having a Police Fire Crime Commissioner) and finally the single employer model. Through this report I am also keen to develop a further understanding of the scale and impact of collaborative efficiencies and how these can be best harnessed for the people of Lancashire."

On hearing this development, the Authority confirmed it remained confident that current governance arrangements presented the best way to deliver a fire and rescue service for its communities. The Authority would provide the information required for the work proposed by the PCC, which it believed would evidence that LFRS was already effectively progressing collaborative opportunities within existing structures. Following the Planning Committee meeting on 19 March 2018 that position was unanimously endorsed and a Task and Finish Group has been established to consider this and other matters in more detail.

The Authority reaffirmed its commitment to collaboration but remained strongly of the view that current governance arrangements best served LFRS and the communities of Lancashire. This position would inform a motion going before LCC on 24 May 2018.

FRANK DE MOLFETTA
Chairman

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