**ESSEX POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY**

Essex County Fire & Rescue Service

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| Meeting | **Essex Fire Performance & Resources Board** | Agenda Item |  |
| Meeting Date | 29 May 2018 | Report Number |  |
| Report Author: | Head of Technical Fire Safety |
| Presented By | Assistant Director of Prevention, Protection & Response - Service Policy |
| Subject | **Technical Fire Safety – Contingency Planning** |
| Type of Report: | Information |

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the Performance & Resources Board are asked to note the content of this report.

# BACKGROUND

The role of the Technical Fire Safety (TFS) department is to fulfil a statutory requirement placed on Fire & Rescue Service’s. The requirement is to provide technical advice and support to the business / commercial sectors in order to ensure compliance with the requirements of ‘the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005’ (RRFSO) and where necessary take appropriate enforcement action.

The department also act as statutory consultee for planning and Building Regulations applications, ensuring that designs of new and materially altered buildings within Essex are compliant with the requirements of the functional requirements of the Building Regulations. The department are also a statutory consultee on licensing applications.

The department has a small group of Fire Engineers within its structure qualified to Master’s degree Level. These Officers have the ability to assess complex building designs and work with architects and external Fire Engineers to ensure that large and/or complex buildings constructed within the county are safe. The engineers also provide a consultancy service for other Fire & Rescue Services under contract through EFAT generating income.

ECFRS has also signed up to three Primary Authority Scheme (PAS) agreements, with Care UK, the Salvation Army and Co-Op East to provide assured advice to those organisations which can be used nationally within their premises. We have been

approached by further organisations who wish to enter into partnership agreements but have been unable to do so due to limited resources.

The TFS Department currently comprises of the following inspecting/ enforcement roles (as at May 2018)1:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Positions (total) | Positions filled substantively | Positions filled temporarily | Vacant positions |
| Group Manager | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Station Manager | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Watch Manager | 21 | 8 | 1 | 12 |
| Green BookSO1 | 9 | 8.6 | 0 | 0.4 |

The team has been running under capacity for a period a few years. The reasons for the number of vacant positions include:

* Retirement
* Early Retirement
* Resignations
* Promotion

# OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS

Training

All TFS Officers receive comprehensive training in Fire Safety in line with guidance provided by the National Fire Chief Council. Officers attend a variety of courses covering the various aspects of fire safety and upon successful completion attain a BTEC Level 4 Diploma in Fire Safety. The training required for a TFS Officer takes on average 2-3 years to attain the requisite BTEC Level 4 Diploma and competence in TASK demonstrated by the application of those skills in practice.

Fire Engineering is a specialism within a specialism. It enables Officers to comment on complex building designs and assess the level of compliance of that design. Common examples of engineered buildings are shopping centres, large warehouses etc. Officers are trained through attendance at University on a part-time basis. The Bachelors Degree (BEng (Hons) which takes four years to complete. The Masters programme (MSc) part- time takes a further two years.

Succession planning

This has been underway for a while. Those officers who are approaching their possible retirement dates have been identified and highlighted (see structure chart Appendix A). The difficulty with this is that it can only be highlighted when they reach their possible retirement age, but they may choose not to retire. Additionally, with the Green Book Inspecting Officers, 7 of the 9 current Officers were once Grey Book Officers who have

1 Following Job Evaluations in Spring 2017it has been agreed to change the ratio of Green Book : Grey Book Inspecting Officers to 50:50. This will be implemented when recruiting new personnel from the Talent Pool.

already retired from the Service and receive a pension and therefore could choose to hand in their notice at any time.

Additionally, succession planning needs to be included for the more specialist role of the Fire Engineer due to the length of training required (4 years to attain a BEng (Hons) Fire Engineering) due to the significant science and mathematics input careful selection of the candidate would be required. The three current engineers are close to their potential retirement age. In order to address this challenge the Service has put the following in place; -

 TFS ‘open day’

An opportunity for people to come along to a session to find out more about the area, what TFS does, potential opportunities (short and long term), development options, career path etc. Consider whether this could be incorporated with another session i.e. development evenings etc.

Anyone who shows interest (along with others) can then be invited to: Day in the life / Taster sessions

Advertise the opportunity to spend a day / half day with the team to find to more about what they do and go out on visits.

Target individuals within the Talent Pool (at all levels)

Arrange access to those in the Talent Pool to identify whether they have any ambitions to join TFS. Development could be supported and added to their development plans. Representation has been made at information sessions for the current Talent Pool process which is commenced in January 2018, to promote the Department and roles to those that had engaged in the process.

A Clear career pathway

A clear pathway exists for Inspecting Officers to attain competence, this is through attendance at a range of training courses provided by an external provider (some courses are residential) to attain a BTEC Diploma Level qualification. Progression routes within the department are also essential for both Green book and Grey book Officers to allow development and assist retention of highly skilled team members, by enabling further opportunity to develop within the Department.

Work is underway to look at progression/ promotion for Green Book TFS Officers within the Department to utilise their skillsets fully and facilitate their development and allow them to undertake specialist roles and/or line management.

Similarly due to the length of time Grey book Officers traditionally stay within the TFS Team, it has led to significant operational skills fade making it difficult for those Officers to transition onto operational roles such as flexi-duty posts. A project is currently underway to enable Inspecting Officers to retain their operational competence and when required attend operational incidents. This will provide greater resilience for the Service and eliminate the skills fade.

Separate Talent Pool / Assessment Centre process

It is essential that people appointed to the role are committed to it and have the appropriate qualities and attributes to enable them to work both individually and as part of a team in a highly technical field and occasionally in pressurised confrontational

situations. It may be necessary to run an additional talent pool process to facilitate entry of personnel into the department.

Apprenticeships / Graduates

TFS Officers are currently involved with a Trailblazer group to develop a fire safety apprenticeship scheme for Fire Safety Officers, this could provide an entry route for people into fire safety whilst allowing some of the training costs to be offset by government funding. This could also potentially link in with a graduate scheme.

Currently a Level 3 Course has been developed, with a Level 4 course still in development, as is a Level 6 Fire Engineering Course.

The Future

As mentioned previously it is anticipated that the Grenfell fire will lead to a significant change in fire safety legislation. Historically significant fires which have led to loss of life have led to the amendment and evolution of Fire Safety legislation. More recent examples are, The Bradford City football stadium fire at Valley Parade in 1985, which led to the implementation of the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987. Similarly, the Kings Cross underground station fire in 1987 led to the implementation of The Fire Precautions (Sub-surface Railway Stations) Regulation 1989.

It is likely that the effect of the Grenfell fire will be significantly greater than those fires mentioned due to apparent failures with both the Building Regulations and the application of the RRFSO.

The Independent Public Inquiry into the fire is underway being led by Sir Martin Moore- Bick. An independent review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety is also underway, headed by Dame Judith Hackitt, the interim report has been issued, however the main report is not due to be released until late May at which point we will have a better understanding of the likely impact. Discussions at the moment centre around the competence of people working within the fire safety industry e.g. Fire Risk Assessors, as there is currently no baseline standard for someone undertaking this role professionally. The Building Regulations are also likely to be subject to significant review due to their complexity (an issue previously criticised following the Lakanal House fire). Also there is the conflict of legislation in relation to residential premises between the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order and the Housing Act.

Organisations that operate in and around the Building industry have been vocal that the RRFSO is not fit for purpose and that there should be a return to Fire Certification, which would give the Fire Services greater control. Re-introduction of Certification would have a significant impact on the department requiring additional resources.

Should fire services be given greater control, there would be greater demand placed on the Fire & Rescue Services, which would require greater resourcing for TFS to ensure statutory obligations could be met, which would require a change in the Departmental structure to maintain appropriate spans of control.

Whilst the department has submitted a business plan detailing training requirements to the Training Department, the caveat has been included that the requirements may increase dependent upon the outcomes of the Grenfell Inquiry.

TFS will organise a task and finish group to implement the requirements identified in the report and to ensure the structure in place is fit for purpose dependent on the new requirements. This will also include regular briefings to the SLT so that relevant information can be shared with the Safer Essex Forum.

# BENEFITS AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

If we do not address the issue of vacant positions and succession planning, we could be in a position where we are unable to provide an adequate response to our statutory requirements for both Building Regulations consultations and enforcement of the RRFSO. Additionally without the retention and recruitment of Fire Engineers we could be in a position where we are unable to fulfil our contractual obligations

Recent events such as the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower required a significant response and stretched the team to its limits.

It is anticipated that there will be significant changes implemented following the Grenfell fire that could significantly impact the TFS department, fundamentally changing the work that is carried out and how. A post Grenfell action plan exercise is underway to assess and pre-plan for those anticipated changes where possible.

Short term risks (1-12 months)

* Retention of green book staff (receive development and training and then leave for enhanced remuneration elsewhere) this has been addressed with a market supplement. But following Grenfell the opportunities in the private sector are increasing with high demand for qualified personnel and limited supply.
* Number of vacancies vs volume of work
* 5 Grey book Officers within the team will be eligible for retirement within the next 12 months

Medium term risks (12-24 months)

* Lack of expertise / losing skilled individuals
* Retirements – *potentially* 14 due to retire by 2020
	+ 2 x Station Managers
	+ 4 x Watch Manager
	+ 8 x Green Book SO1

Potential solutions

There are a number of activities that could occur that may start to address some of the issues and risks identified above. It should be noted that TFS have already identified that temporary positions / secondments do not work in this area due to the complexity and cost of training required and the time required to demonstrate competence to undertake the roles. TFS is a long-term career choice.

# FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

It is likely that some succession planning solutions contained within the paper will have a financial impact, but will be met within existing budgetary constraints.

# EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

Successful long term succession planning will focus on increasing the diversity within the department. It will also focus on equality of opportunity for progression across all contract types within the department.

# WORKFORCE ENGAGEMENT

Engagement with Representative bodies will take place as necessary.

# LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Are set out within the contents of the paper.

# Appendix A

WM Vacant

Engagement Proposed Green Succession Post

WM Vacant MDS/

HT

TFS Enforcement &

Engineering SM M Sparrow

TFS Engagement/ Policy/Training SM T Russell

TFS Delivery North

P Nash

TFS Delivery South/ FI SM J Lloyd

TFS Manager GM M Earwicker

Head SC Po licy

AM M Bruin

WM C Fry

May 2018

SO1 J Dixson

IT Process Contractor 0.6 M Roebuck

SO1 B Moroney

SO1 K Acton

SO1 B

Chamberlain

Admin Team Leader T Harrington

SO1 G Marler

SO1 Wade (0.6)/

SO1 Butcher (0.4)

SO1 G Owles

Admin Team

Leader W Kidd

SO1 B Dean

S01 S Askew

(Seconded)

WM G Masters

WM Vacant

WM Vacant

South West Group

WM Vacant

PAS

Proposed Green

Succession Post

WM Vacant

Engineering

WM D Perry Policy

WM Vacant

Training

WM A Loades

WM L Hurst

WM J Lockerbie

SO1 S Nicholl (0.6)/

SO1 Vacant (0.4)

WM Vacant

WM Vacant

WM Vacant (A

Phipps Base Post)

WM K Fisher

North West Group

North East Group

WM N Townend

WM Vacant

WM A Phipps Seconded from NE Group

South East Group

Harlow, Epping, Braintree & Uttlesford

Basildon, Brentwood, Th urrock and Epping

Colchester, Tendring & Maldon

Southend, Rochford, Chelmsford & Castle Point

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