

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

Essex County Fire & Rescue Service

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| Meeting | **Strategic Board** | Agenda Item | 8 |
| Meeting Date | 7 March 2019 | Report Number |  |
| Report Author: | Hannah Phipps, HR Policy & Strategy ManagerMartin Jones, HR Workforce Information Officer |
| Presented By | Colette Black, Assistant Director of HR |
| Subject | **Annual Workforce Report** |
| Type of Report: | Information |

# Recommendations

Members of the Strategic Board (Fire and Rescue) are asked to note the contents of the report. This paper provides an overview for the Strategic Board (Fire and Rescue) on the Service’s workforce for the period 1st January 2018 – 31st December 2018.

It is recommended that future reports are brought in line with the Home Office reporting and is moved to financial year rather than calendar year.

# BACKGROUND

It should be noted that the overall headcount and Full Time Equivalent (FTE) figures include a number of employees that were on a career break at the end of 2018 and hence there is a minor variation from the figures reported in the December 2018 Finance Report.

For the purposes of this paper a series of data extracts were taken from our HR information system to drill down to the specific workforce metrics. It should be noted that, as at 31 December 2019, there were 76 employees with multiple contracts (e.g. Wholetime On-Call or Wholetime with casual Support contracts) therefore there are multiple records reported. Exit Interview data and Recruitment and Selection data have also been used to provide further analysis.

Calculations for averages and percentages have been rounded to one decimal place.

# Workforce demographics

As at 31 December 2018, the organisation employed 1448 employees, made up of 292 staff on Green Book terms and conditions and 1156 staff on Grey Book conditions. Table 1 below shows the number of employees within each of the following work group categories; Wholetime Firefighters, On-Call Firefighters, Control and Support for both 2017 and 2018. The overall headcount has increased by 2. Wholetime FTE increase is reflective of the 2018 Wholetime Recruitment campaign which saw a total of 2 squads of 12 and the final group of 5 on-call firefighters from the 2018 recruitment campaign moving into the whole time duty system.

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| **Table 1: Workforce Headcount / FTE** |
| **Employee Group** | **2017** | **2018** | **FTE Variance** |
| **Headcount** | **FTE** | **Headcount** | **FTE** |
| Wholetime | 600 | 600.0 | 622 | 621.00 | + 3.4% |
| On-Call | 509 | 407.5 | 497 | 395.00 | - 3.1% |
| Support | 302 | 279.2 | 292 | 273.16 | - 2.2% |
| Control | 35 | 32.3 | 37 | 34.16 | + 5.8% |
| **OVERALL** | **1446** | **1319.0** | **1448** | **1323.32** | **+ 0.3%** |

# workforce composition by protected characteristics

This section covers information on five diversity characteristics – age, gender, ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation.

* 1. **Age Profile**

As at 31 December 2018, the Age profile of the organisation was as follows:

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| **Table 2: Age Profile** |
| **Employee Group** | **Mean** | **Median** | **Min** | **Max** |
| Wholetime | 44.4 | 45.6 | 22.3 | 61.4 |
| On-Call | 38.4 | 36.7 | 18.7 | 69.0 |
| Support | 47.2 | 49.3 | 17.8 | 74.4 |
| Control | 41.0 | 39.5 | 21.0 | 61.1 |
| **OVERALL** | **42.8** | **43.5** | **17.8** | **74.4** |

The age profile of the workforce remains largely unchanged with the majority of the workforce falling in the 46-55 age group. Table 3 shows a full breakdown by employee groups.

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| **Table 3: Majority Age Group** |
| **Employee Group** | **2017** | **2018** |
| **Majority Group** | **% of Employees in Group** | **Majority Group** | **% of Employees in Group** |
| Wholetime | 46-55 | 48.5% | 46-55 | 45.5% |
| On-Call | 23-35 | 36.5% | 25-35 | 38.9% |
| Support | 46-55 | 28.8% | 46-55 | 31.4% |
| Control | 25-35 | 34.3% | 25-35 | 35.1% |
| **OVERALL** | **46-55** | **35.0%** | **46-55** | **33.8%** |

Nationally the age of firefighters has been gradually increasing. In 2011 it was 40, moving to 41 in 2013 and to 42 in 2017 and 2018 (Source: Fire and Rescue Workforce and Pension Statistics: England, April 2017 to March 2018), the Service is reflective of the national trend with majority age group of 46-55 as does Support staff with 46-55 majority age group. However, nationally the average age of Control staff is between 46-55 whereas the Service majority age group for Control is 25-35.

* 1. **Gender distribution**

Of the 31 December 2018 headcount, 225 are female and 1226 male; an increase of 8 for the overall female headcount. Table 4 shows the gender distribution across employee groups.

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| **Table 4: Gender Distribution** |
| **Employee Group** | **2017** | **2018** |
| **Male** | **Female** | **Male** | **Female** |
| Wholetime | 94.3% | 5.7% | 94.2% | 5.8% |
| On-Call | 99.4% | 0.6% | 99.0% | 1.0% |
| Support | 49.7% | 50.3% | 47.8% | 52.2% |
| Control | 20% | 80% | 16.2% | 83.8% |
| **OVERALL** | **85%** | **15%** | **84.5%** | **15.5%** |

Nationally 5.7 per cent of firefighters were women in England in 2018. This compares with 5.2 per cent in the previous year. Since 2010 the main cause in the increase in the proportion of women firefighters has been a decrease in the number of men firefighters (Source: Fire and Rescue Workforce and Pensions statistics: England, April 2017 to March 2018). 5.8 per cent of Wholetime firefighters in ECFRS were women and 1.0 per cent of On-Call firefighters were women whereas nationally this is 4.9 per cent. Across a 10 year period from 2008 to 2018 ECFRS percentage of firefighters that are women has increased from 2.2 per cent to 3.3 per cent (Source: Home Office Operational Statistics Data Collection Autumn 2018).

Nationally the percentage of support staff that are female is 52.8 percent which is reflected in ECFRS with 52.2 per cent.

Gender data from the last census states that for the county of Essex shows that 51 per cent females and 49 per cent (2011 Census Data – Office of National Statistics). Therefore, based on current reporting the Service operational group is not representative of the community it serves.

Our firefighter recruitment strategy includes a range of positive action to address this, further details can be found in Section 8 of this report. There has been an overall increase of female Wholetime firefighters by 0.1 per cent from 2017 to 2018 and an overall increase of female On-call firefighters by 0.4 per cent from 2017 to 2018.

* 1. **Ethnicity**

There remains a lack of monitoring data available and it should be noted that it is not mandatory for employees to provide this information. Nevertheless, based on current data the Service is not representative of the community which it serves. Of the 47.7 per cent of employees who have provided this information 97.0 per cent self-identified as White British with 3.9 per cent identifying as another ethnic grouping.

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| **Table 5: Ethnicity** |
| **Employee****Group** | **White British** | **Other** | **Not Recorded** |
| Wholetime | 39.5% | 1.9% | 58.5% |
| On-Call | 48.3% | 2.0% | 49.7% |
| Support | 53.2% | 1.7% | 45.1% |
| Control | 56.8% | 2.7% | 40.5% |
| **OVERALL** | **45.8%** | **1.9%** | **52.3%** |

National statistics show that 4.1 per cent of firefighters were from an ethnic minority group in England in 2018. This compares with 3.9 per cent in the previous year. This has been caused by the number of white firefighters decreasing by a greater rate than the number of firefighters from an ethnic minority group. This compares with 14.6 per cent of the English population in the 2011 Census belonging to an ethnic minority group. The census data shows that Essex has become more diverse although most of Essex residents are in the White ethnic group; at 94.4 per cent.

Across a 7 year period (no data recorded nationally before this date) from 2011 to 2018 ECFRS percentage of firefighters who were from an ethnic minority has increased from 1.6 per cent to 2.1per cent (Source: Home Office Operational Statistics Data Collection Autumn 2018).

* 1. **Employee Disability**

Of the 52.3 per cent of employees who have provided disability data, 0.3 per cent stated that they have a disability. 47.7 per cent of all employees have not provided any information regarding disability. It should be noted that disability data is captured at the point of entry into the workforce, and updated information is not routinely captured during the post holder’s tenure. The data returns have increased across the Service from 49.5 per cent of employees who provided disability data during 2017 to 52.3 per cent during 2018. The Service continues to encourage employees to provide this information on the Employee Self Service System. Table 6 provides a break down of disability data across employee groups.

The Census 2011 shows that the proportion of population across England that are disabled was 18 per cent and within Essex 17 per cent.

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| **Table 6: Disability** |
| **Employee****Group** | **Has a current or previous disability** | **Not informed/****Unknown** | **Not Recorded** |
| Wholetime | 0.3% | 45.8% | 53.9% |
| On-Call | 0.0% | 54.3% | 45.7% |
| Support | 1.0% | 59.4% | 39.6% |
| Control | 0.0% | 64.9% | 35.1% |
| **OVERALL** | **0.3%** | **52.0%** | **47.7%** |

Although the Home Office collect statistics on disability they are not sufficiently complete or comparable to publish at present.

* 1. **Sexual Orientation**

The Service during 2018 had an overall figure of 1.1 per cent whilst Control data shows 5.4 per cent

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| **Table 7: Sexual Orientation** |
| **Employee****Group** | **Heterosexual** | **LGBQ+** | **Not Recorded** |
| Wholetime | 26.8% | 1.3% | 71.9% |
| On-Call | 28.9% | 0.2% | 70.9% |
| Support | 28.3% | 1.7% | 70.0% |
| Control | 43.2% | 5.4% | 51.4% |
| **OVERALL** | **28.3%** | **1.1%** | **70.6%** |

National figures have been available since 2011 and have shown the proportion of firefighters that stated they were gay, lesbian or bisexual has been 3 per cent in each year between 2011 and 2017. The figures for Fire Control and Support Staff were also 3 per cent over this time (Source: Fire and Rescue Workforce and Pensions Statistics: England, April 2017 to March 2018).

There is no data on sexual orientation within the local community as the Office of National Statistics concluded that it would not include sexual orientation in the 2011 UK Census.

* 1. **Workforce joiner diversity**

This year for the second time, the Home Office collected information on the diversity of those joining FRSs. Last year this was a voluntary collection but it was mandatory in 2017/18. The proportion of women, staff from an ethnic minority and younger staff within new joiners in 2017/18 was greater than from within existing numbers of firefighters. The proportion of firefighters who were women and staff from an ethnic minority was greater than in the previous year (Source: Fire and Rescue Workforce and Pensions Statistics: England, April 2017 to March 2018).

The recruitment campaign and attraction strategy used during the 2018 Wholetime Recruitment process was designed to recruit firefighters from a diverse range of backgrounds with the personal qualities, skills and attributes needed to become competent firefighters. The actions we took were cognisant of the Local Government Association (LGA) memorandum of understanding in January 2017 on equality, diversity, behaviours and organisational culture in the fire service. During 2018, 3.7 per cent of new firefighters were women.

Table 8 below shows the workforce joiner gender for each employee group.

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| **Table 8: Workforce Joiner Gender** |
| **Employee Group** | **Male** | **Female** |
| Wholetime | 95.2% | 4.8% |
| On-Call | 97.3% | 2.7% |
| Support | 42.0% | 58.0% |
| Control | 0.0% | 100% |
| **OVERALL** | **80.3%** | **19.7%** |

During 2018, 8.0 per cent of all new joiners were from an ethnic minority group compared with 1.2 per cent during 2017. Table 9 provides a breakdown of workforce joiner ethnicity.

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| **Table 9: Workforce Joiner Ethnicity** |
| **Employee****Group** | **White British** | **Other** | **Not Recorded** |
| Wholetime | 74.2% | 3.2% | 22.6% |
| On-Call | 26.0% | 12.3% | 61.6% |
| Support | 48.0% | 8.0% | 44.0% |
| Control | 66.7% | 0.0% | 33.3% |
| **OVERALL** | **48.4%** | **8.0%** | **43.6%** |

Note: The figure for “Other” includes individuals whose response was “not stated”.

During 2017/18, 74 per cent of new firefighters were 35 or under, this is greater than the 27 per cent of all firefighters that were 35 or under and the same as is 2016/17 (Source: Fire and Rescue Workforce and Pensions Statistics: England, April 2017 to March 2018). The Services data for workforce joiner age distribution shows that across Wholetime and On-Call the average age group is 25-35, this is greater than the 46-55 majority age group for all Wholetime firefighters. This difference may be reflective of the 2018 Wholetime recruitment campaign.

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| **Table 10: Workforce Joiner Age Distribution** |
| **Employee****Group** | **16-24** | **25-35** | **36-45** | **46-55** | **56+** |
| Wholetime | 9.68% | 62.90% | 19.35% | 6.45% | 1.61% |
| On-Call | 23.3% | 56.2% | 15.1% | 5.5% | 0.0% |
| Support | 12.0% | 26.0% | 22.0% | 32.0% | 8.0% |
| Control | 0.0% | 33.3% | 33.3% | 33.3% | 0.0% |
| **OVERALL** | **15.4%** | **50.0%** | **18.6%** | **13.3%** | **2.7%** |

# turnover

Employee turnover refers to the proportion of employees who leave an organisation over a set period, expressed as a percentage of total workforce numbers (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development). The overall total staff turnover figure for 2017 was 8.5 per cent compared to 13.1 per cent for 2018. Table 11 below provides the total staff turnover of each staff group.

The overall turnover rate for the Service is lower than the average total turnover for public sector services; 10 per cent (XpertHR) down on 2017 figure of 14.7 per cent.

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| **Table 11: Workforce Turnover** |
| **Employee Group** | **2017** | **2018** |
| Wholetime | 6.6% | 7.2% |
| On-Call | 10.8% | 15.3% |
| Support | 9.3% | 22.6% |
| Control | 2.9% | 0% |
| **OVERALL** | **8.5%** | **13.1%** |

Nationally total firefighters (FTE) has broadly remained stable which Control and Support Staff (FTE) have increased. Since 2009 the total workforce (FTE) has decreased by 22 per cent. One per cent decrease compared with the previous year (Source: Fire and rescue workforce and pensions statistics: England, April 2017 to March 2018).

* 1. **Leavers**

In 2018 the total number of leavers from the Service was 188, this was 13.0 per cent of staff headcount compared with 8.4 per cent of staff headcount in 2017. The most common reason for employees leaving the Service was because of resignation, which accounted for 61.2 per cent of all leavers. It should be borne in mind that the completion of exit interviews is voluntary, which reduces our ability to further analyse individual employees’ motivations for leaving, particularly where that departure is voluntary, rather than being enforced by reasons such as redundancy or dismissal.

The Wholetime rate of staff retiring through either ‘normal retirement’, ‘early retirement’ or ‘ill health’ in 2018 this figure was 19.7 per cent.

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| **Table 12: Reasons for Leaving** |
| **Employee****Group** | **Transfer to other service** | **Retirement** | **Resignation** | **Redundancy** | **End of Contract** | **Dismissal** | **Death** |
| Wholetime | 5 | 25 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| On-Call | 0 | 4 | 74 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 |
| Support | 10 | 8 | 30 | 1 | 12 | 1 | 1 |
| Control | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **OVERALL** | **15** | **37** | **115** | **1** | **12** | **6** | **2** |

Apart from retirement the main reason for leaving was broadly attributed to natural turnover with resignation accounting as leaving for On-Call, Support and Control. Table 12 provides a further breakdown of this data and shows that the On Call staffing group have the highest number of leavers for the reason of Resignation followed by Support accounting for the second highest leavers due to resignations. This is consistent with previous trends and is mainly due to the fact that the majority of people taking on the On-Call duty system will take on the role as secondary employment. Table 13 shows the length of service at leaving which highlights that the majority of On-Call leavers left within 1-3 years.

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| **Table 13: Length of Service at Leaving** |
| **Employee Group** | **< 1 Year** | **1-3 Years** | **4-5 Years** | **6-10 Years** | **11-20 Years** | **20 Years +** |
| Wholetime | 2 |  | 3 | 1 | 9 | 27 |
| On-Call | 14 | 24 | 4 | 10 | 16 | 15 |
| Support | 10 | 20 | 6 | 13 | 12 | 2 |
| Control | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| **OVERALL** | **26** | **44** | **13** | **24** | **37** | **44** |

* 1. **Joiners/Recruitment**

Throughout 2018 there has been a further increase in joiners with 27 more staff being recruited than the year before. The largest group of joiners being On-Call followed by Wholetime this is reflective of the recruitment campaign during 2018 to recruited Wholetime Firefighters to maintain our operational capability.

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| **Table 14: Joiners** |
| **Employee Group** | **2017** | **2018** |
| Wholetime | 4 | 62 |
| On-Call | 87 | 73 |
| Support | 66 | 51 |
| Control | 4 | 3 |
| **OVERALL** | **161** | **188** |

Agency worker numbers continue to decrease further from when energies began to be focussed on the reduction of this cost.

# absence

Following the move from SAP to Civica at the start of December 2018, On-Call employee sickness is now recorded in the system. However, it has been identified that there are issues with the data migration, in that some absence records have not been transferred, while others have been duplicated. Further analysis of the data is required to ensure it is reliable before accurate absence data and costs can be reported.

# employee relations

Table 17 shows the overall case volumes of both informal and formal cases for all employee groups.

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| **Table 17: Casework Volumes** |
| **Employee****Group** | **Attendance** | **Disciplinary** | **Grievance** | **Performance** | **Total** |
| Wholetime | 85 | 7 | 6 | 7 | **105** |
| On-Call | 67 | 9 | 5 | 30 | **111** |
| Support | 41 | 2 | 3 | 9 | **55** |
| Control | 3 |  |  |  | **3** |
| **OVERALL** | **196** | **18** | **14** | **46** | **274** |

* 1. **Disciplinary Cases**

During 2018 there have been 18, this is a decrease of 6 formal cases compared to 2017 figures. Of these case 4 resulted in a final written warning and 1 first written warning. The remaining saw no formal sanction.

This reflects the drive to resolve informally using alternative methods of resolution like mediation, facilitation or restorative justice.

* 1. **Employment Tribunal Claims**

During 2018 there were no employment tribunal claims made.

* 1. **Formal Grievance Cases**

During 2018 there were 14 grievances raised, this includes both formal and informal cases. This is 1 case less than 2017.

# action being taken

* 1. **Workforce Demographic Actions**

The Service is committed to improving fairness and valuing difference within our workforce. To support this, an Inclusion and Diversity Steering Group meet quarterly. A strategic action plan was ratified in October 2018 to deliver against our published Equality objectives (Appendix A) and progress reports will be submitted to the Service Leadership Team and the Performance and Resources Board. The action plan focuses on increasing diversity within the workforce by improving data collection to allow for analysis of all selection processes including recruitment, development and promotion. Positive action will be a key feature of these processes to try to improve representation of all protected characteristics throughout the Service.

The recruitment campaign and attraction strategy used during the 2018 Wholetime Recruitment process was designed to change perceptions of the role of a firefighters, and who can apply to become a firefighter. This was an opportunity to undertake some ‘positive action’ to increase our diversity. The actions we took were cognisant of the Local Government Association (LGA) memorandum of understanding in January 2017 on equality, diversity, behaviours and organisational culture in the fire service. Of the 59 conditional offers made from the 2018 Wholetime Recruitment Campaign offers made up 10.2 per cent were female. We plan to recruit Wholetime Firefighters in 2019 with specific activity to attract BAME and female firefighters.

Consideration needs to be given to the strategic impacts of changing workforce demographics. There are 3 key areas of HR challenge which needs to be integrated – retirement forecasting, retention of knowledge and recruiting in line with succession planning in particular for specialist and/or business critical skills or functions. Regularly reviewing the age and retirement profile allows the Service to identify areas of risk and priority for succession planning and recruitment. Data is collected on a regular basis and monitored closely to support decision making and action planning for maintaining organisational capability.

* 1. **Turnover Actions**

There will be a focus on retention to ensure that diverse talent can be retained where possible with a greater emphasis on conversations prior to individuals exiting the Service to better understand their reasons and experiences.

It had previously been recognised that the pay policy may not be competitive and the Job Evaluation Project set to address this. During 2017 the Service achieved equity and a consistent approach to evaluating jobs, salaries for Green Book jobs were moved to the recommended Hay Market median rates. Phase III of the Job Evaluation project sought to align Green Book staff salaries to the revised 2018 NJC pay spines and associated grades at the same time as ensuing compliance with the Equality Act 2010. Following negotiation with UNISON the Pay and Grading structure was agreed and it was deemed to be fit for purpose and equality proofed.

In 2017 the way the government funds apprenticeships changed. The Service contributes to the apprenticeship levy as the Service pay bill is in excess of £3m, we pay 0.5 per cent of our pay bill to the apprenticeship levy each month. In August 2017 we started to access the funds in our digital account for our first 2 apprenticeships in Workshops. In January 2018 SLT approved a proposal for the best way to utilise these funds following this a further 3 apprenticeships were identified in 2018. In 2019 we plan to recruit apprentice Firefighters drawing on the levy and following the national standard.

At corporate level, we have a leadership and management development offering. The Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) externally accredit this. This is developing all of the time. Development needs are identified with colleagues through appraisal and line manager discussion. The performance of our Service is reliant on our people. For them to perform we must build and develop a workplace where we feel proud of what we do and how we do it. We have a talent pool process that we use to ensure that we have a group of high-performing, high-potential employees from within our Service. The Talent Pool is the primary source from which we seek to fill vacancies. The Talent Pool process was extended to all colleagues during 2018 and as a result, 52 people are due to be promoted into substantive positions. We have created the following Talent Pools:

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|  | **Level of Talent Pool** | **Number in Talent Pool** | **Grey / Green** |
| **Middle Manager** | Group Manager / P01-2 | 4 (1 external) | 3 / 1\* |
| Station Manager / S01-2  | 6 | 2 / 4\*  |
| **Supervisory Manager** | Watch Manager / Scale 6 | 13 | 13 / 0\* |
| Crew Manager / Scale 5 | 19  | 19 (inc 6 in Control) / 0\*  |

* 1. **Absence Actions**

Following the move from SAP to Civica at the start of December 2018, On-Call employee sickness is now recorded in the system and absence data for 2019 will see an increase in sickness data for that group of employees. We recognise that there will be a period of learning/adjustment while users become familiar with the system and during this period, it is likely that we may encounter some data quality issues for this group.

The HR Business Partner Teams have produced some additional guidance regarding absence management including return to work and attendance management steps. This was shared with managers along with offering to meet with watch managers to support their understanding of attendance management to try to build their confidence in tackling things early.

* 1. **Employee Relations Actions**

As a result of the Discipline and Grievance workshop work with ACAS and in response to discussions with representative bodies, the recommendation was that managers should attend course on conflict handling, informal resolution and discipline and grievance processes. There was a 1 day investigation skills training held in July 2018, attended by 14 employees from across the Service, a further course is scheduled for January 2019. This training will form the basis of our pool of investigators. Further training included Part 1: Conflict Handling (2 days), Part 2: Day 1 Alternative & Informal Resolutions and Day 2 Disciplinary Process. These four days (run as 2 sections) were attended by managers.

Our People Strategy details the way that we look after our people, promote our values and culture, train our people, ensure fairness and diversity and develop leadership capability. This strategy is key to driving high performance for the Service.

‘Looking after’ our people has six key elements:

* Culture – helping people to feel engaged and valued
* Inclusive workplace
* Learning and management
* Recruitment and development
* Organisational learning and performance
* Employee wellbeing
	1. **Cultural Change**

Reports from the Expert Advisory Panel following the Lucas Review and from Sir Ken Knight identified significant changes that were underway. In addition, the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner commissioned an independent review of progress on Phase One of culture change within ECFRS. The review concluded:

* ECFRS had been brave in its response to the challenges of the Lucas Review;
* That the work undertaken had focussed on what was best for the Service and the well-being of staff;
* That a lot of excellent work had been done;
* It identified a need for future culture change work to ensure that all staff were taken on the journey of change and that allowances were made to ensure that all staff completed the journey.

Work-streams relating to the cultural change programme will be introduced incrementally. The key elements of the approach are:

* Values and behaviours
* Recognition
* Communication
* Continuous improvement
* Developing manager self-awareness
* Implementation

Dignity at Work Champions have been introduced over the past 12 months to create a network of individuals committed to improving behaviours across the Service. Champions provide an informal route to resolve unacceptable behaviour including bullying and harassment that may arise. In addition, Champions take on a proactive role to identify perceived unfair practice and notify the Inclusion and Diversity Lead who can consider appropriate action.

The Service have also introduced Professional and Inclusive Workplace visits to better understand what works well for small teams and what improvements could be made to make their working environment feel more professional and inclusive. Visits have identified a range of suggestions which are captured within an action tracker to enable a feedback cycle. The visits will continue throughout 2019.

We are striving for greater inclusion in our workplace and are committed to creating an Inclusive Culture. We have:

* Established a steering group
* Published equality objectives
* Published gender pay information
* Introduced professional and inclusive workplaces
* Established Dignity at Work Champions
* Undertaken positive action in our recent recruitment of firefighters
* Run development and awareness sessions such as dyslexia awareness

The People Strategy 2017-2020 introduced a scheme for rewarding and recognising contribution made by individuals and teams that go above and beyond the normal expectations of their role. We launched a Special Performance Recognition Scheme in February 2018 which was developed based on the feedback from a number of workshops, staff meetings and informal conversations conducted across the Service on how reward and recognition could be delivered in a manner that rewards contribution by any employee to bringing the Service values to life. The scheme gives prompt and tangible recognition to those staff who have given an exceptional personal investment to the Service.

# Benefits and Risk Implications

All cases have been dealt with in accordance with the current Disciplinary Procedure and with current employment legislation by Service managers at the appropriate level, supported by HR Business Partners and their teams.

High levels of sickness absence, and poor levels of competence can have a detrimental effect on crewing availability, training and costs including overtime.

There are no additional risk management implications.

# Financial Implications

The Service has generous Occupational Sick Pay (OSP) entitlements which bring significant costs to the Service should sickness levels not be managed effectively.

The cost of backfilling the roles of staff either on a regular or ad-hoc basis (e.g. dynamic out duties, agency temps) who are absent due to sickness and in receipt of OSP can be significant.

# Equality and Diversity Implications

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service is committed to creating an Inclusive Culture with a workforce that is high performing and values differences to benefit the communities it serves. Our People Strategy is our template for attracting, engaging, developing and retaining our most valuable asset – the people that work here. It provides the components that will equip us to transform our workplace to be more agile, change able and inclusive.

We have several development programmes to encourage development from employees of all backgrounds. Investment in the development of potential is vital in building a pipeline of future supervisors and managers.

# Workforce Engagement

We meet regularly with our representative bodies. We listen to our employees through our annual Employee Survey. There are regularly opportunities for two way communication via forums such as ‘Your Voice’, ‘Manager Briefing’ and ‘Managers Cascade’.

# Legal ImplicationS

The Service must ensure that attendance management procedures are fair and in accordance with Employment Legislation.

1. **HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no health and safety implications associated with the content of this paper.

**Appendix A**

Equality Objectives

Our objectives, published in line with The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) of the Equality Act 2010, are:

* To improve the recruitment, retention, progression, development and experience of the people employed by Essex County Fire and Rescue Service to enable the organisation to become an inclusive employer of choice.
* To promote and encourage employees to voluntarily declare their self-classification diversity data to ensure ECFRS actions as an employer are evidence led and improvement focused.
* To improve the mapping, quality and extent of equality information in order to better facilitate compliance with the public sector equality duty in relation to service delivery including IRMP additional activities.
* To review the equality impact of key organisational policies for differential impact in areas such as: recruitment and selection, learning and development, absence management, modified duties, talent management, appraisal, disciplinary and grievance.
* To ensure that all staff are treated with dignity and respect and have a workplace that is free from harassment and bullying by changing the culture of the organisation to one that is genuinely inclusive. All employees are high performing because we value their differences, which includes gender identity, race, or religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, pregnancy, caring responsibilities or membership of a trade union.
* To seek external review, challenge and accreditation of ECFRS’ actions as an employer by actively participating with relevant equalities standards and benchmarks including the Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework.