

# Everyone Matters

Professional and Inclusive Workplaces

## Summary of Themes

- In February 2019, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (ECFRS) reached out for independent support regarding a number of deep rooted cultural issues within the Service that were being addressed through a series of management initiatives.
- The Service may appear to have audit fatigue, but due to the 2015 Independent Culture Review and the 2018 Performance and Resource papers it remains keen to understand how it can build on the initiatives already implemented to provide more support to its workforce whilst the organisation continues to transform.
- Due to the extensive cultural review experience of RealWorldHR Ltd across a range of complex sectors and environments, and for our broad and long running experience within the fire sector, we attended an SLT meeting in February 2019 to gain a greater understanding of the issues. Subsequently we provided a costed proposition to help consider the issues through a different lens that focused on the health and wellbeing of its staff which instead sought to get to the root cause of issues rather than their effect.
- We believe that by properly diagnosing the issues and listening to what staff feel can be done to improve their working lives, prevention will inevitably be better than the cure.
- The team on this assignment have completed similar work across a number of organisations, including the fire and rescue service, police forces, local authorities, the NHS and central government, and we hope that providing a *fresh pair of eyes* from our experience across a larger range of sectors, we have provided you with the professional and independent support you have been seeking.
- This programme began in March 2019 and has been completed by the end of October 2019 as proposed.

# The Everyone Matters Programme

- The 'Everyone Matters' approach was the next phase of the Service's internal Professional and Inclusive Workplaces programme
- It was a listening exercise that sought to engage with every member of staff to get their views
- It aimed to make sure that every employee had an opportunity:
  - To be heard
  - To share their thoughts on how to ensure the Service is the best it can be
  - To talk about their own wellbeing and how the Service can help them thrive
- Every employee was offered the opportunity to have a confidential, individual conversation focused on their wellbeing at work (although some chose to come in pairs or have group conversations)
- Meetings were based on appreciative inquiry, looking at what was going well and not just on what wasn't
- We introduced two main areas to discuss in the meetings, but participants were free to discuss whatever they wished in their meeting:
  - Environmental stressors in the workplace, including the frustrations and the little things that can become the big things. This question was then flipped to ask what was going well
  - Practical actions that would help the individual thrive in the rest of their career in the Service
- The meetings identified opportunities for additional support and any apparent 'quick wins' alongside informing the organisational diagnostic
- Project progress updates and 'quick wins' were provided fortnightly to the ACEO People, Values and Culture
- Two interim updates on emerging themes were given to SLT during the programme, with a final diagnostic debrief presentation to SLT on 17 October 2019.

# What is an OD Diagnostic?

Carrie Foster (2018) describes the purpose of an OD diagnostic as:

- *An organisational development (OD) diagnostic is a tool that aims to provide an organisation with data, and a clear basis for decisions regarding what OD interventions are appropriate going forward.*
- *It enables organisations to develop a deeper understanding of the organisational situation, what issues the organisation is facing and what strengths the organisation possesses in order successful achieve any subsequent management interventions.*
- *It is the diagnostic phase of OD which provides the platform from which the organisation is able to highlight what cultural and capability shifts the organisation is able to make and how those shifts can be made and embedded for sustainable organisational performance.*
- *Therefore the diagnostic is intended to be more than just a data gathering stage, it is a disturbance process, and is designed to get stakeholders to begin to question the current reality, and begin thinking about what could be.*

By undertaking the programme in the way we have, we feel the organisation should now be in a better place from which to be clearer on what has emerged and why, be able to understand how it can break and disrupt some of the patterns of behaviour and build on the process to be able to collectively generate new and innovative ideas that create the environment from which you can move forward.

This document summarises the 13 themes from Everyone Matters discussions with staff. Note that department-specific and station-specific feedback is captured separately as there could be specific needs that are required which are not relevant across the Service but are unique to that department/station. We report back the predominant views we heard, and their inclusion here should not be taken as indicating that the views are well founded or that there were not some counter-views. It should also be noted that some of the matters raised in earlier meetings may subsequently have moved on or been resolved.

- 1 Positive feedback
  - Pride
- 2 Stressors
  - Capacity
  - Working relationships
  - Management of change
  - Recognition and reward
  - Wellbeing support
  - Communication
  - Recruitment
  - Training and development
  - Talent pool and promotion
  - Facilities and equipment
  - Policies and procedures
  - Fairness

# Positives

# Themes – the Positives

- People are **proud** to work for the fire service
- People are proud to serve the **community** and help people
- People like their **jobs**
- People like their immediate **teams**
- The majority are positive about **new SLT**
- **‘A day in the life’** is seen as positive by both support staff and operational staff
- There is mostly **good support** for people during difficulties, e.g. access to counselling, physio, mostly positive feedback about TRIM and some would like it extended to a wider range of incidents and people

## Support staff

- People like the **flexibility** – flexible hours, working from home or stations
- People like the **physical environment and facilities** at KP
  - but some find the open plan office environment difficult to work in
- People at KP find others at KP **friendly**
- Staff welcomed the increased **visibility of SLT**
- Staff feel **behaviours** have improved
  - Some feel there is less ‘us and them’ between support staff and stations (but not universal)
  - Some support staff feel more valued than before (but not all)

# Themes – the Positives

## Operational staff

- People **enjoy the job itself**, going on shouts
- Wholetime staff like the **shift system**
- Some people appreciate that the Service still provides beds
- Operational **appliances** are up to date for wholetime and on call staff, although there are some concerns about the crew cab and automatic braking system
- **Equipment and PPE** are good quality and well maintained, some positive feedback on new PPE
  - Some feel PPE should be clearly marked as ECFRS
- Some stations are positive about their **physical environment**
- Wholetime staff are positive that **wholetime recruitment** has restarted
- **Positive feedback** was given about support received from some HQ teams, e.g. pay team, talent pool team, Nikki Geaves, workshops
- There has been positive feedback on **training** (BA, HAZMAT, trauma training, swift water training) but with a caveat of “when we get it”.



# Stressors

## Workloads

- **Middle managers** feel workloads are unachievable, many work out of hours and on rota days, they want to be present on stations and support more but do not have enough capacity, especially if allocated multiple stations. Some work does not add value, e.g. passing messages between HQ and watches, and some meetings have minimal benefit/outcomes. People feel there is a lot of project work. There are perceptions of an unfair balance of workloads between different roles, e.g. HQ-based vs. station-based. Some more senior officers said that some admin support would be welcome
- Increased workloads from **sign-off processes** for Task, Civica and assessments for new recruits, particularly for crew, watch managers and station managers
- Some busier wholetime watches feel their **allocation of FSO40s and community fire safety** work does not take into account how busy the station is or the mix of appliances they need to maintain competence on. Some say FSO40s aren't counted toward their fire safety quota, which is demoralising, and frequency of inspection should be better linked to risk
- **Operational trainers** have a heavy workload
- Some departments are at or beyond full capacity. Severe **workload difficulties** were raised by:
  - Technical Fire Safety – concern for being able to meet statutory timescales; concerns about the length of time to train to competent level if bringing in new staff
  - HR – especially with added impact of Civica implementation. Internal customers have raised the turnover in HR staff meaning there is no continuity in casework and that HR processes can be excessively slow
- Other departments raised workload difficulties owing to specific circumstances or during periods of leave or **absence/vacancies** (e.g. ICT and especially the ICT call out rota, Facilities, Comms, Community Fire Safety)
- There is some **duplicate recording** or reporting of data because of system/process problems, e.g. work-arounds on CRM, manual leave records as back-up for Civica, reporting crewing levels on a form and also to Control

- Some felt crew and watch managers had to spend too much time on **office/computer work** and this put some people off the role
- Some On Call staff feel they do not have enough **access to services out of hours** and would appreciate it if they did not need to take time off their primary job for fire service appointments, e.g. by having doctors and fitness appointments on evenings or weekends
- Some operational staff said that some **things are done differently on different stations**, e.g. recording of routine checks, some of these were viewed as inefficient/duplication and made it more difficult when on out-duties. A few raised that equipment is not always stowed in the same place on the appliances in different stations
- Some raised issues with **waiting for ambulances** for an extended time, and lack of clarity on this

## Crewing - wholetime

- Riding with **crews of 4**. Some feel that they are down to a crew of 4 more than the agreed amount of time (i.e. to ride with 5 for 95% of the time); there is pressure on crews at operational incidents: multiple tasks for driver; OIC can't stand back; moral imperative to act; carrying equipment with fewer people than recommended; it is harder to motivate smaller watches/groups; some drills require more than 4 people
- Frustrated by frequent **out-duties**, it disrupts training plans and can take crews down to 4, OICs don't know the strengths and weaknesses of the crew, people don't have their own watch around them to debrief after difficult incidents
- Some stations are regularly sent on **standby**, especially if On Call appliances are unavailable; some think there are better ways to manage this than sending an appliance
- For some people, out-duties and stand-bys mean people are not serving their local communities
- **Jump-crewing** appliances – there is a view that the rationale for locations is not correct as local crews are already deployed when the special appliances are needed
  - View that ALP crews do not get relieved but should be as crews get wet and cold.

## Crewing – On Call

- Crews feel under pressure to maintain appliance **availability** even when short of staff, and feel this often goes unrecognised or unappreciated
- **90 / 120 hour contracts** place a lot of demands on staff and their families and put people off joining
- Frustrated at **lack of flexibility** in On Call contracts; some would like to be able to offer cover at other stations, e.g. when working in the area or to keep an appliance on the run somewhere else
- People with both ECFRS wholetime/support and On Call contracts would like more flexibility in how/when they take their **mandatory rest breaks** to help keep appliances on the run
- Some think On Call staff with ECFRS green book contracts should be permitted to **respond from their green book role**, both to keep appliances on the run and because it is seen as hypocritical when the Service expects other employers to do it

## Crewing – Control

- People with **flexible working** patterns appreciate them, but some feel this has affected Control staffing, they can be short on night shifts in particular and people feel morally obliged to work beyond the end of shift to maintain cover. The recent watch moves do not seem to have fixed the problem
- There is a wide **structural gap** between watch managers and the group manager role, and some feel that it is too much to expect a watch manager to take responsibility for the whole county's mobilisation
- Some raised that Control is not able to simply ask for **back-up** capacity, and that although some duty officers are supportive there is little they can practically do to help during periods of high pressure/demand. Some who are required to maintain competence whilst posted elsewhere are not confident on current equipment and procedures or what training they can expect
- Not comfortable taking on work to enter pay data into **Civica** and feel this should be done by payroll

## Strategic workforce planning

- Concerns that there are a lot **temporary postings** in the wholetime service. Posts are reserved for On Call conversion wholetime crews, but there is uncertainty over timelines. Some On Call conversion crews would like to know their watch postings
- Some concerns expressed that there are not enough wholetime recruits coming through to replace **predicted retirements**. A few wonder whether the Service has a plan for the potential impact on the retirement profile from the national firefighters pension case
- Some feel that recruitment activity is **not started quickly enough** to replace predicted/known leavers, especially with lengthy recruitment process and/or training periods
- Some feel that **On Call to wholetime conversion** is ‘robbing Peter to pay Paul’ without a proper plan to back-fill

## Additional Shift Work (ASW)

- Perception that ASWs have **not always been offered** when crews are short
- Some perceptions of **unfair access** to ASWs, e.g. crew managers get fewer opportunities because firefighters are invited to act up first, those who are both wholetime and On Call cannot access ASWs

## Time Off In Lieu (TOIL)

- **Managed differently** in different places
- People appreciate being able to take TOIL and short notice leave but there is **no global view** and it can result in out-duties for other people

## IT Systems

*We have included these as a capacity issue as many of the comments related to their impact on effective working*

- Very **slow to log on** in many locations
- **Not enough PCs** for the number of people needing them in On Call stations (e.g. to record training on Task). Some raised not having the ability to switch user on locked PCs. Some would like a ‘station admin’ account. Some want the ability to log on from home, although others said this facility was already available
- Staff have **multiple log-ins** and some would prefer to have a single log-in
- Some stations noted that the **IT helpdesk** only covers office hours
- Managers’ **laptops are old** or they only have a tablet and not a laptop
- IT systems don’t talk to each other and run on **different operating systems**
- Some experience short **battery life** on Nokia phones
- Some think the Service does not make best use of technology to support effective and **agile working**, e.g. conference calls, skype to cut travelling, capturing notes electronically, using tablets to capture data on site
- ‘Lock down’ of features and **apps** on tablets and phones discourages use and is seen as showing a lack of trust in staff to use them properly, and limits effective working, e.g. sending pictures of vehicle faults to workshops
- Staff receive **too many emails**, particularly about system availability that is not relevant to them. Some staff are concerned that important messages get ‘lost’ in the volume
- It is difficult to find information on the **Intranet**, the search function does not work, specific mention of difficulty finding training materials and policies
- Mixed reviews of **MDTs**, in some places they are slow to connect/update. Some said they do not function as sat-navs and it is quicker to use their mobile phone apps. Some do not like the lack of visibility of other appliances responding

## IT Systems continued

- There were many complaints about **Civica** in our early meetings: some found the training inadequate; it takes longer to input data; some are not aware of ‘short-cuts’ e.g. bulk approvals; issues with recording of annual leave and some issues with correct payment of overtime when launched.
- Some people find it difficult to access **payslips** on Civica, some find payslips are not detailed enough, and some are keeping manual records and/or finding it time consuming to check their pay is correct
- Crew Managers have different access rights than Watch Managers so have to request **access when acting up**, but the process for giving access requires finding someone in the management chain to give permission
- Watch Managers cannot **sign off** each other’s system entries peer-to-peer; some expressed concerns about additional workload on Station Managers to sign off entries and possible delays caused
  - Some viewed these two points as demonstrating a lack of trust
- **IRS** was said to be good when it works, but often goes down or incidents are not on the system. There is a limited window in which to update IRS and staff are frustrated at being chased on group emails to complete their entries when those entries were not available to complete
- Users think **CRM** is not fit for purpose. A number of work-arounds are in place
- There is a **lack of a suitable system** for the Central Resourcing Team
- **4i** mobilising system crashes if there are big incidents. Some stations say mobilising algorithms overlook local knowledge and have impacted some stations’ grounds. Some staff believe that Control staff cannot override 4i instructions or do not have experience to do so, and are frustrated that they are unable to influence mobilising decisions
- A number of on call stations raised **ERB**, some find it ‘refreshes’ at 9am and they have to re-enter whether they are available, and it is difficult to populate with irregular working patterns
- Some On Call staff would like a mobile phone **availability app** like other Services use
- ICT team spends a lot of time ‘propping up’ systems that are no longer supported

- Amend the wording of the IRS email to recognise that incidents may not have been ‘on the system’ for completion
- Simplify – ask yourselves honestly whether all activities and data recording are being used and add value to what you want to achieve.
- Make better use of agile working and better meeting discipline – make it the default for briefings to have a dial-in facility and make it ok not to attend in person. Some Services are using Skype or station based video conferencing facilities
  - This requires your IT provision to be developed under a releasing capacity investment strategy
- Work with operational middle managers on how to rebalance work and remove unnecessary activity
  - May require a change in mindset for the Service that all communication has to go through the chain of command
  - Need to make it ok not to work out of hours, e.g. it does not affect promotion prospects
  - Ask what can you start, what has to stop and what do you need to continue (but be clear why, as this can be your narrative to staff and managers)
  - Look at what you are signalling in the promotion process – e.g. check your PQA questions as this could be inadvertently signalling the behaviours you are looking for in your managers
- Communicate strategic workforce plans to allay fears on planned capacity
- Upskill watch managers in management and particularly people management to take pressure off station managers
- Work with unions to agree leave policies



## Longer term

- Make sure the central resourcing team is adequately resourced and has access to information to maintain global crewing levels
- Develop and communicate the ICT strategy
- Look at what is a realistic expectation for On Call firefighters and those maintaining competence across a range of specialisms – this will take a long time so set expectations accordingly
- Map out the time demands that each area of the Service places on others (e.g. department to department, departments to stations) across the week/month/year to see where pressure can be relieved (this could form part of a broader strategic workforce planning and demand planning project)
- Use staff and manager forums to review workflows to see which activity can be streamlined and made more effective.
  - Identify a theme each quarter which is a group of the activity seen as a key stressor e.g. a PMO project, TOIL, Overtime etc
  - Capture the efficiencies created for evidence of delivery against VFM measures.
  - Use mixed teams so that the workflow reviews include staff affected by each part of the process so each has a better understanding of the pressures on the other.

# Working Relationships

- Some staff are experiencing a lack of **personal interaction** with others. Some would like more visits from managers to stations and departments. Contact with HR and IT is through mailboxes, and phone calls have to be followed up by email, which is seen as 'covering their backs'. Operational staff now use MDTs rather than radio messages and some feel this loses insight into the incident that radio messages give. Some individuals and teams were mentioned positively for taking the time to explain and speak with people
- Some people **do not know what other teams do**. A number of station staff feel there are too many staff at headquarters and they do not know what they all do. Some do not know which individuals in teams to contact for different matters
- Some staff in **non-KP offices feel overlooked**, and they cannot easily take part in working groups and activities that are based at KP. A number of operational staff feel uncomfortable going to KP and particularly walking through the open plan office area
- Some staff at KP would like more opportunity to **get to know each other socially**
- Some station staff felt that it was a shame that there were not more watch and station-based **social events** and family events like there used to be
- Some would like to see more **interaction** and understanding between wholetime and On Call roles and stations, and more mixing. Some On Call staff feel wholetime staff do not fully understand their commitment
- Some **subject matter experts** feel they are not consulted early enough before decisions are made that affect their work. Staff in some professional areas feel they are not afforded respect for their area of expertise by a handful of operational staff

- A number of support staff felt there is much less of an **'us and them'** with stations now, but some station based staff feel there is still an 'us and them' with KP or senior management.
- People are largely positive about the new SLT but now want to see visible change and action (although few people can articulate what that looks like). Some stations and teams raised that they had not had a **visit from the Chief** or SLT and some were unaware of the planned schedule of SLT visits
- Some feel that SLT should be visibly **speaking out** against further cuts and supporting calls for pay rises
- Some view the FBU in particular as having too much **influence** on how the service operates and not representing the views of members who want change
- A few perceive that new operational staff are **pressurised** into joining the FBU
- Some people told us there are **interpersonal difficulties** between individuals, with some reports of bullying or overbearing management styles. In most cases HR and/or managers were aware of the allegations. In some cases, people feel that the Service did not take steps to take action directly with the individuals at the centre of the difficulties and instead relied on whole-team interventions. In some cases the interventions were not viewed as particularly effective (e.g. moving people)
- **Mixed-crewing** and **On Call conversion stations** – some wholetime crews feel the Service has lacked empathy in expecting them to train the incoming On Call crews. Some feel the matrix management of on call crews by wholetime watch managers is not particularly effective. There appears to be little mixing between wholetime and On Call crews in some places other than for training

- The issue of **resilience working** is ‘the elephant in the room’. Some people are resentful that resilience workers are still being paid a supplement. Some people are demonstrating their frustration at those they believe to be resilience workers by turning their backs or refusing to engage with them. Some stations perceive that actions are directed at them because they were resilience workers, and some resilience workers feel the Service has not given them the support they were promised. Some managers are unsure how to deal with the situation or are concerned that if they ‘pull up’ a resilience worker they will be accused of bullying. There is a perception that people are not allowed to talk about the resilience issue, or a reluctance to address it for fear of ‘getting it wrong’
- A number of people made reference to the Irene **Lucas review** and specifically the reported ‘toxic and corrosive culture’. There were mixed views about whether this was an accurate reflection of people’s experience of working for the Service, particularly at station level. Some people seem offended by the implication that they were part of that reported culture. Others feel the Service must not forget that there are people who are still hurting over past behaviours. There are mixed views on whether the culture had changed: some say it has not, many say it is “moving in the right direction”, and others say the difference is noticeable

- Continue encouraging agile working between KP and stations (and vice versa)
- Break the narratives that ‘it can be intimidating to go on a station’ and ‘we don’t like going to KP’
- Use the successful H&S roadshows as a model of building understanding between stations and departments
- Promote the One Team ethos noting the feedback that support staff are proud to be able to support the operational delivery of the Service
- Develop a position to allow people to openly and safely discuss resilience contracts
- Communicate the number of conduct cases resulting from discussing resilience contracts
- Publish a who’s who of key staff in departments and their role and responsibilities
- Continue with ‘a day in the life’ and find other opportunities for face-to-face interaction (like the H&S team have done with their roadshows), including less formal methods
- Have a tour of a station as part of induction for support staff roles
- Consider introducing more ‘buddy’ arrangements for peer-to-peer learning and to foster relationships between different parts of the Service.
- Surface the underlying sentiment about resilience working and upskill watch managers on managing workplace relationships and managing conflict

## Longer term

- Introduce an internal buddying or mentoring scheme that allows people to seek support from across the Service

## Decision-making

- The Service is seen as **slow** to make decisions, subject matter experts are not always involved in a timely way, it is not always clear who is making/made the decision and the rationale. But the SLT cascade meeting is appreciated by some
- Perception that priorities and approaches **keep changing** (e.g. as SLT members change)
- Some think the Service would benefit from a more task-and-finish/agile **project approach** (but not ‘go overboard’)
- Widespread perception that SLT will not make any changes from the Everyone Matters feedback, staff have been asked their views many times before and **nothing happens**

## Consultation

- Some feel projects are not given enough time to engage widely with stakeholders. Some feel they do not have enough **input to changes**, or that their responses are not taken into consideration, such as new equipment, new uniforms and PPE, or people are not aware that others have been involved in consultation
  - Example was given of consultation on whether to be called ‘retained’ or ‘on call’
- **Parameters** for consultation are not always clear (is it user acceptance testing, one of a variety of items being tested in different places, etc)
  - “If we get it to test and we like it, we know we’re not going to get it”
- **Subject matter experts** feel they are not always consulted or not asked/involved soon enough

## Initiatives

- Some feel there is no need for ‘**Essex-isms**’, i.e. wanting to adapt/bespoke a solution rather than adopting something that has been shown to work elsewhere
- Some feel there is **change for change’s sake**, sometimes from the frequent changes in managers. Some perceive that changes are implemented in order for people to have PQA evidence for their promotion and the changes are ineffectual and/or don’t stick

- Some feel that **projects do not come to fruition**, or are discussed at length, or work is carried out but is not launched and there is no explanation why
- Staff can have difficulty getting traction for ideas they wish to implement, but once they are successful the Service takes them over without recognition/**acknowledgement**
- Some feel that there is a lack of accountability for the management of change and some would like to see more honesty on saying **‘we got it wrong’**

## Management of change examples

- Size and composition of SLT
  - Some people were unclear on the rationale for additional posts in SLT when there was meant to be a reduction in the size of SLT, e.g. the DCFO post and development posts
- Civica implementation
  - Some felt that the timing of the implementation was poorly chosen, at Christmas when there was little support available for problems, and that the requirements of all employment types were not taken into account. Some assumptions were voiced that the system ‘can’t have been tested properly’ because of the issues experienced on system launch, although those more closely involved told us about a number of parallel runs that were completed
- Green book Hay job evaluation process
  - Seen as poorly handled by some: the process took a long time; poor communication about the process and outcomes; lack of recognition of the human impact of the process, uncertainty and cutting pay; it has affected willingness to ‘go the extra mile’

## Management of change examples

- Fleet workshops – potential relocation
  - Staff feel they have not been kept well informed about progress and what was under consideration, there is limited maintenance of their building while it is under review, and little consideration for the impact on the team
- Potential collaboration with police
  - Some teams felt they have not been kept well informed about future potential collaboration with the police
  - There are some concerns about collaboration with the police impacting the public perception of the fire service and the ability to make connections with some sections of the community
  - Some feel collaboration with the police is all one way, i.e. fire taking on police work, police using fire facilities
- On Call project
  - A number of On Call stations raised that they had been asked their views for the On Call project but nothing had come of it
- On Call conversion stations
  - Some feel their concerns have not been fully recognised and they have not always had regular communication or answers to questions. Some feel that the human impact and disruption for them and their families is not recognised, nor their concerns as local residents as well as staff. There have been difficulties with process for sale/purchase of Service houses



## Management of change examples

- Location changes for special appliances
  - Some stations feel special appliances were moved too soon or should not have been moved at all, or training was not provided promptly, e.g. animal rescue unit, boats. The DIM unit move was unexpected for both losing and receiving stations
- Rank to role
  - Some feel the process could have been better, some matters are still outstanding
- MTFA
  - Some were unclear on where the Service now stood on MTFA, and whether they were insured for MTFA activity. Some had not received kit
- Some positive feedback on the roll out of the new PPE, returns were handled promptly

- Check that the scheme of delegation is clear and people understand their levels of authority
- Consider stating a named decision maker / decision forum on projects and papers
- Set up a routine progress update for all projects, e.g. on a set date each month, and publish an update even if it is that there has been no progress
- Consider implementing a ‘rule of thumb’ that decisions on individual grievances are given by the decision-maker personally, with support for documenting decisions provided by HR. This will help individuals to feel properly heard and will clarify that HR are not the decision makers
- Highlight what research and consultation has been carried out in projects, to counteract views that the Service has not looked at what others do or involved staff
- Celebrate positive news, like the successful roll-out of new PPE

## Longer term

- Review the On Call project recommendations and give an update on work that the Service is progressing
- Review stakeholder mapping process for change initiatives to make sure that all relevant stakeholders are taken into account, particularly subject matter experts. Consider putting in place a ‘call for evidence’ stage in project scoping
- Conduct a PESTLE for the county to understand the geographical differences
- Involve unions in forward planning on the programme of change

- Mixed views on **formal staff recognition programmes** – some appreciate them, others don't, some think it is too KP-centric, some think recognition events should be more inclusive, some are frustrated at putting a lot of effort in to nominate someone who is then not recognised
- **Not enough informal recognition** – saying thank you or well done, recognition of effort, visiting crews after hard operational jobs. Some feel the focus is always on the negatives
- There is no **recognition of service** other than the uniformed 20 year medal
- Some feel the **unions' role** in improvements is not always made explicit
- Some feel there is little recognition of skills developed outside of the Service

## Support staff

- Some feel support staff are **less valued** than operational staff
- Professional **expertise** is not always recognised or respected by others in the Service
- **Policies** are designed for uniformed staff, and support staff have to make them fit
- Mixed views on **pay**, but some are consciously trading off higher salaries elsewhere for good work-life balance

## Wholetime staff

- Some feel the Service **values them less** than On Call staff
- National issues on **pay, pensions and later retirement dates** are impacting morale
- Some feel there should be an **Essex weighting** to recognise the local cost of living
- The small **pay differential on promotion** to Crew Manager means there is little incentive to progress
- **ARAs** are only given at more senior levels, and some see this as unfair

- Some raised that there is no additional pay for **specialisms** or driving
- Some would like clarity on the **pensions** situation

## On Call staff

- Some feel they are **treated as ‘second class’** to wholetime firefighters
- Some feel that the Service should be ‘more honest’ about their **role relative to wholetime** firefighters
- Many feel that the **commitment** they give and the impact on their personal and family lives is not truly understood or appreciated
- Some mentioned that there is no **pass out parade** for On Call firefighters
- Some feel the On Call view is **not adequately represented at SLT** as members don’t come from an On Call background
- Some feel **policies, processes and systems** are designed for wholetime staff, and On Call have to make them fit, e.g. the annual leave policy, Civica
- Many feel the **pay** does not adequately reflect the commitment; there is no financial reward for giving availability over the contracted hours. Some think there should be a ‘salary’ system or bonus
- Some queried why On Call staff cannot join the **pension** scheme from day one

## Fire Control staff

- Some feel Fire Control gets **forgotten**
- Fire Control’s **role in resolving incidents** can be overlooked in communication about incidents and in the support given afterwards

# Suggestions

- Write some letters of appreciation – e.g. for keeping appliances on the run
- If possible to do so, greet staff as they pass by
- Contact people who have serious conditions and are long-term sick
- Contact those people who are to retire to thank them for their Service
- Contact people with ‘landmark’ service anniversaries and include them in corporate comms
- Congratulate those that have been promoted
- Give credit to the initiator of schemes adopted by the Service
- Agenda item on recognition at (quarterly) performance meetings, with follow-up action (phone call / letter / visit / small reward)
- Include more operational peer-to-peer shared learning in comms

## **Longer term**

- Promote recognition through the management chain

- **TRIM** is largely seen as positive, but a small number do not want/trust in-house TRIM support. Some feel the letter could be more individualised and sent more promptly, as it stirs up memories they have dealt with if letters arrive too late, and a few would rather not receive them to their home. Some felt TRIM for flexi officers was sometimes overlooked
  - Middle managers are not always notified that TRIM has been triggered for their station and would like to know so they can support their teams
  - Some appreciated having alternative support mechanisms outside the Service, such as Sapper Support and the Firefighters' Charity
  - Control staff cannot always take time out after difficult calls and it is sometimes forgotten that they have also been exposed to upsetting incidents
- Some felt there should be more proactive **mental health** support for support staff
- Largely positive about **occupational health services**, the availability of physio and counselling. Some felt the Service was short-sighted in not extending their physio/counselling support whereas other did feel well supported in this regard. A few still don't trust that Service-supplied counselling services will be confidential and arrange their own support. Some felt there ought to be a way to self-refer anonymously. A small number were concerned the Employee Assistance Programme would not be confidential
- Some teams want to be better equipped to give **support to colleagues** that have personal or emotional problems and do not know how best to support them. Some feel there is not always recognition of the impact on the wider team

- Some people were very complimentary about the support they received when **long-term sick**, but others had a less positive experience. There is a lack of clarity about who should maintain contact with people who are long-term sick, e.g. some expected HR would do this instead of the manager and were disappointed where it did not happen. Some people believe the Service did not adequately support loyal colleagues during sick leave, following extended absence, or who had left through ill health
- Some people raised that there should be a conversation with people who are on sickness absence before they receive a letter notifying of a reduction in **sick pay**
- A number of people were positive about the support they received in gaining a diagnosis of **dyslexia** and some of the adjustments that have been made for them, but a number of people are experiencing delays getting IT upgrades/tablets/mobile phones that could run the adaptive technology they need. *[Note: we are aware the Service has set up a working group to improve provision of equipment for dyslexia].*
- [Paid] **compassionate leave** is only granted if there is no annual leave to use and some felt this was uncaring or unfair. Some said the Special Leave policy was unclear
- A few people felt there should be more **proactive** wellbeing support, e.g. mindfulness, a wellbeing chat as part of the annual medical
- Some feel the Service could be more considerate of crews when **communicating updates** of operational incidents, e.g. the crews in attendance find out about the outcome of difficult jobs through social media or Service comms
- Some feel the Service could be more proactive at putting support in place around **anniversaries** of difficult events
- Some feel operational catering is poor and not all **dietary requirements** are catered for on training courses or incidents

# Suggestions

- Publicise the avenues for mental health support for support staff
- Check that managers of people who are long-term sick understand their responsibilities for keeping in touch and have made contact with relevant people in their teams
- Determine responsibility at SLT level for follow-up in wellbeing cases
- Review TRIM admin processes to see if letters can be issued sooner, and more generally to see if other feedback can be incorporated in processes
- Clarify the position on compassionate leave and special leave

## Longer term

- Develop a programme of tracking the stressors in the workplace to understand if they are reducing or why they are not



- Mixed views on **corporate communication**. Some think it is helpful, others say they do not need to know some of the information shared or that too much information is communicated. Some managers appear to be ‘filtering’ communication for their teams (with the best of intentions)
- Some support staff feel the **focus** of comms is all on operational staff
- Some operational staff feel that there is not enough focus on **operational matters** in comms materials. A few raised that there used to be a DVD that shared operational learning (‘Smoke Signals’) and would appreciate something similar
- Some feel that the focus of communication is often on **budgets and cuts**
- Some feel the Service does not give the **full picture** in communication and only gives the positives, e.g. in reporting staff survey results
- Some feel that communication methods wrongly assume ‘everyone sits at a **computer** all day’
- Some feel there is no mechanism to give **feedback upwards**
- It was raised that there is a **feedback/suggestions** area on the intranet but some people who have used it have not had a response
- Some managers felt that there was not always a useful **outcome to meetings** and they do not always have input to the agenda for managers’ meetings
- Some people find the **SLT debriefs** useful
- Some operational staff feel that senior managers only **visit** when they have an agenda, not to listen
- Some people rely on the management chain / **chain of command** for communication and would not step outside of it, but some are not sure that messages are being relayed

- Some feel that SLT are not always told the **full story**, or that they advised by the same voices
- Some feel they are unable **to raise issues** or ‘speak out of turn’ and there is a perception that people may be moved or promotion prospects affected if they do
- Some people feel that they make **suggestions** but do not get feedback
- Some are frustrated at being told “**we’re looking into it**” when matters are raised
- Some are frustrated that they raise matters with senior staff who promise a response then **hear nothing**
- **Communication packs** and posters are sent to each watch, but it was raised that each station only needs one copy (i.e. send 1 copy not 4)

- Confirm the link between engagement and communication
- Begin a dialogue on what has been delivered – a 2019 Review
- Continue with ‘You said we did’ messages
- Clarify who is responsible for taking forward and responding to items entered on the Intranet feedback link and send a response to any outstanding items
- Continue with the programme of SLT visits to give the opportunity for open dialogue
- Encourage more telephone and face-to-face contact (where logistics allow)

## **Longer term**

- Alongside the ICT strategy, look at more dynamic ways of communicating rather than reliance on emails

## Support staff recruitment

- Some had been on **agency or rolling fixed term contracts** for extended periods, and the renewal process was not always smooth
- Mixed views of the recruitment and onboarding **process** – some had a positive experience but others found it excessively long and had to keep checking at various stages, particularly for taking up references
- Some felt the recruitment process **did not start quickly enough** when posts became vacant
- Some managers feel **HR should take on more of the recruitment process** instead of sending lots of actions to managers

## On Call recruitment

- Many feel the **process takes too long**, it can be a year between applying and going on the run (including training). Individuals have to chase for updates
- There are **lots of stages**, all happen on different days which means multiple days off from primary job; some would like more of it to be offered on evenings and weekends, and some said it used to be done on one day, which worked better for the applicants
- The new application system does not give clear **oversight of all the stages**, it only shows the next step. It would help to know the dates in advance
- Mixed views on **fitness pre-test** – some think it is good so you know if you are likely to pass, others think it is an additional day off needed from their primary job. Some were unclear on whether interested candidates were allowed to try fitness tests on stations (e.g. bleep test)
- Lack of clarity on who is responsible for **sifting applications** on the system – some stations have had applicants progressed/rejected without the watch manager's knowledge

- Not all applicants **observe drill nights** before the course but some stations think it is a good thing to do
- Lack of **interviewer capacity** is delaying the process in some places

## Wholetime recruitment

- Some were positive about their experience of the wholetime firefighter recruitment process, but some reported that unsuccessful candidates had not had a timely response to requests for **feedback**
- Some were not sure of the purpose of some of the **selection tests** and a few expressed the view that the maths and English tests seemed hard
- Some raised the difference between **entry criteria** for wholetime and On Call firefighters, and some On Call firefighters were disappointed that they were deemed ‘good enough’ for On Call but not for wholetime
- Some On Call staff are disappointed that there does not seem to be a **conversion route** to wholetime any more
- Some On Call staff feel that they should have an ‘in’ to wholetime recruitment because they are **doing the job already**
- Some had been unaware that recruits would now be classed as **apprentices** and some experienced teething problems with it

# Suggestions

- Look to give visibility of all stages of the On Call recruitment process at the start
- Clarify ownership and ways of working for On Call recruitment, e.g. who 'sifts' applicants on the system
- Look at the capacity needed for On Call recruitment and the impact of interviewer availability on timelines
- Communicate the strategic workforce planning that is happening to allay fears that it doesn't happen

## Longer term

- Review the Service approach to strategic workforce planning and risk appetite for starting recruitment processes earlier

*Note that many of the meetings took place before the roll-out of additional operational trainers*

- There is more visibility of courses available now they are publicised on **Civica**, but there is some confusion on whether the courses will run or if it is an expression of interest
- Some lack clarity on what happens with training requests that are made through the **appraisal process**
- Many operational staff felt it was not appropriate to expect that new recruits would update established crews on **new methods**, and felt that these should be cascaded out from training routinely
- Some operational staff raised the potential **inconsistency** when watch managers are creating their own lecture packs and training material
- Some raised the difference in **training time** available to wholetime staff and On Call staff and what was realistic in the time available, although some On Call stations reported being ahead in their training schedule
- Middle managers struggle to find **time** for training courses
- Some have not been able to access **financial support** for educational courses, which they believe the policy allows/supports
- Operational crews would like more access to **cars to cut up**; some queried why some stations can have a **vehicle compound** but others can't. Some felt there could be more knowledge transfer from the extrication challenge team
- Some feel more could be done to accommodate different **learning styles**
- Some feel more information could be shared by **video/DVD** to reduce travelling
- Some would like the in-house training to be **accredited** so that it is recognised outside the Service

## Support staff

- Mixed views – some say they have good **access to training and development**, others say they do not
- Some feel they have been promised development but not received it or don't have **capacity** to access it
- A number felt there is a **lack of career progression** paths for support staff, and some would like more opportunity for cross-department secondments
- Some felt the Service did not make enough use of the **skills** they brought to the Service, particularly where these were not directly part of their current role

## Fire Control

- Control no longer have a **training officer** and they feel this is a gap, as training lacks structure
- There is a strong desire for **advanced call handling**, some have never had it, others not for a considerable time
- Some would like to see more structured **recruit training**, currently training is by volunteers from the watch 'sitting by Nelly'
- There is no clear programme for Control staff in other departments who need to **maintain competence**; some mentioned the need for a training pack to refer back to



## Wholetime recruit training

- Some indicated there were **teething problems** with re-introduction of wholetime recruit training
- There are some views on stations that there is **not enough emphasis on drilling the basics** and suggestions were made that some components could be picked up later or on station, e.g. prevention and protection
- Some feel that training school is **not robust enough**, it does not prepare recruits for stations (e.g. they have not practised loud clear words of command to simulate a noisy incident ground)
- There were mixed views on whether the style of training is '**disciplined** enough', e.g. use of first names rather than 'Firefighter X'. Some felt it had 'gone too far the other way after past problems. Others gave a counter-view and felt the current approach was more appropriate
- Some feel there are not enough **check-points** during the 18 month development phase and that there might not be a consistent approach across stations
- There was some mention of not knowing what **station life** is like during recruit training and some felt it would be beneficial to having some exposure on a station during recruit training

## Wholetime operational training

- **More operational training** was wanted, especially refresher training, and it needs to keep up with changes, e.g. electric cars; needs to recognise the reduction in incidents (i.e. there is less 'live' practice)
- **BA V&D** is seen as an assessment rather than training
- Some think there should be a V&D process for **RTCs**
- Some think there should be dedicated **BAIs and RTCIs**
- Some **watch managers don't feel equipped to train their watches**, they have not had 'train the trainer' input and may not have expertise in the subject. Some would appreciate more support to organise practical training
- **Lecture packs** are difficult to find on the intranet and some are out of date. Some Crew and Watch Managers are creating their own lecture packs, and there were concerns about inconsistency between watches/stations
- **National Operational Guidance** lecture material is uninspiring
- **Location of Wethersfield** is a disincentive for more distant stations to arrange training
- Some think **Witham training facilities** needs refurbishment, especially as it is used for pass out parades
- Some have been unable to get the **boat training** they have requested
- **Training scenarios** don't always accurately reflect that it might be a crew of 4
- Some who move station would like to be able to maintain training/competence on **specialist equipment** from former station

- **Training delivery teams** run training back-to-back without time to properly review feedback on past courses, and don't have time for their own development. Managers have had to adjust training delivery to protect the wellbeing of trainers, e.g. some BA sessions in cosmetic smoke to limit trainers' exposure to heat and smoke.
- Some new managers and newly promoted managers would appreciate more support and input on their **new role**, especially at supervisory manager level, both practical on how to fill in records etc and on managing teams. Some feel it is a big jump from watch manager to station manager which needs more support
- Some felt that they would benefit from having an experienced '**buddy**' to support them in a new role, e.g. officers taking on specialisms and wholetime watch managers taking on responsibility for On Call crews in conversion/mixed crewing stations
- Some felt that the **operational monitoring officer** role should be extended so that supervisory manager incident commanders have support and so station managers can observe incidents
- Some operational staff would like to be able to work in **specialisms** without having to go up the 'ranks' first, e.g. go into fire investigation
- Extra operational training resource was largely welcomed, some positive comments were made about the **pumps and ladders** training. Some middle managers would like a training resource that they could deploy in addition to the central trainers
- Some positive feedback on **swift water** training, new **first aid/trauma** course, **HAZMAT**, and **BA** training

## On Call recruit training and development

- Some felt there is not enough **practical input** when squads are large (e.g. squad of 15), more would like to fast-track through the post-initial training 10 weeks (e.g. weekends rather than evenings) but only some squads are offered this
- Some managers mentioned not being **kept updated** on their recruits' progress and any areas for improvement that could be looked at on drill nights

## On Call operational training

- Some were positive about the training they received from the Service, e.g. driving
- People have to use annual leave from primary employment to take fire service courses, would like more to be run on **evenings and weekends**
- Some raised that trainers are all wholetime and felt there should be some **On Call trainers** who understand the On Call role

## Task recording

- Some activities can only be signed off in the relevant **3-month window** but some would like to be able to record the activity at the time it is done
- Many find the Task recording mechanism **cumbersome** and time consuming, particularly the manager sign-off process
- Managers and those in specialisms have **multiple Task books** to complete
- **DDOR officers** and those in functions who have to maintain operational competence don't have anyone to sign off their Task book
- People would like to be able to click through from Task to the relevant training pack in an **integrated** way

- Clarify the status of training courses listed on Civica (i.e. is it an expression of interest to gauge whether a course will run?)
- Clarify the process for handling training requests made on appraisals
- Clarify the current position on financial support for external qualifications
- Publish the programme of updates to training materials / lecture packs; create an index sheet of links to the latest packs as they are rolled out as an interim measure
- Put in place advanced call handling training for Fire Control

## Longer term

- Look at whether there is a difference in training spend in different departments and the reason for this
- Look at increasing the support and development for people when newly promoted
- Look at different options for delivering some types of training, e.g. webinars by internal specialists, peer-to-peer debrief videos of lessons learned etc
- Consider investigating accreditation of internal training

- Some lack of clarity on whether the talent pool operates as a **development pool** or is a pre-requisite for promotion. Some people feel that they are in a catch 22 if they cannot pass a talent pool process, because they then cannot get the development they need to pass the talent pool process
- Some think it **does not suit specialist support staff** roles where professional experience or qualifications are needed, e.g. engineers
- Some think it **does not suit On Call staff**, who only want to be promoted on their own station, and some do not see the need for a further selection process if there is only one person on station who has passed the talent pool process
- There is a view that **PQA evidence** can be fabricated and is not robustly tested, some feel that some people are making changes or taking management action in order to generate PQA evidence for their promotion
- There is a view that the process does not contain an **operational assessment** but it should for operational roles, and that appraisals/past performance should be taken into account
- The process is **putting some people off** applying, particularly at Crew Manager level
- Some feel there is a lack of empathy for the **personal impact** on individuals who act up or a temporary promoted, who cannot pass the process but are then asked to continue to act up
- Some feel that there is a lack of **career path** / promotion opportunities for green book staff, and that re-employing retiring grey book staff into green book roles blocks promotion opportunities. Some see this as ‘jobs for the boys’.

- Clarify the status of the talent pool, i.e. whether further selection is necessary to access jobs and whether those who have not passed a talent pool process are also eligible to apply
- Clarify the development options for those who have not passed a talent pool
- Identify those who have not passed the talent pool a number of times but are still asked to act up, and work with them on a tailored development plan

## **Longer term**

- Look to map career paths for green book roles and be clear about what is or is not possible
- Consider whether there is any merit in a twin-track route to promotion opportunities at junior levels (e.g. a talent pool route and a portfolio of evidence route for crew managers)

## Uniforms and workwear

- Problems with **zips** on operational trousers, and female trousers are only single-seamed not double-seamed (i.e. not “workwear”)
- **Problems getting uniform items**, particularly trousers; some have had to have items altered to fit. Some reported having to send back the current item before a replacement is sent, leaving a gap in provision
- **Sizing** comes up different, it is not consistent
- A number of people would appreciate more uniform **allocation**, particularly for t-shirts. Some noted that recruits do not have previous years’ allocations to fall back on
- Some people commented on the colour mix of blue and black, and the **inconsistent appearance** when uniform style changes and people wear a mix of current and old items
- Some wanted to have **more input** into the new uniforms, some were concerned it would not be branded as ECRS or that there will be both fire and police logos which was seen as inappropriate
- Some On Call stations said they were given **second-hand items**

## Operational equipment

- Kit was generally seen as **good quality**, well researched and well maintained
- Repairs and replacements work well for larger kit, some would like to have local **back-up supply** of smaller hand tools that are frequently used
- Some issues with equipment roll-out, specific mention of **impact drivers** which had not been issued to some stations and **first aid/trauma kit** – the training was seen as good but the equipment that goes with it had not been issued. Some could not get **whistles** because they had been issued with one at the start of their career



- New on call **alerters** were seen by some as big to carry, not as loud as the previous ones and don't have flashing lights which is not helpful for people who work in noisy environments. People would like to have a different alert/indication for a standby vs a shout
- Some said there should be more **radios** on appliances and a few felt these should be personal issue items, along with torches
- There are mixed views on the **MDTs**
- Some raised that they had not been issued with kit for **MTFA** duties
- One person felt a lot of time and effort went into **returning kit** to its home station unnecessarily

## Operational appliances

- People were positive about **appliances** being more up to date than neighbouring services, but the newer appliances are (too) wide for some locations and some felt their specific location needs had not been taken into account
- There were mixed views on the **automatic braking** safety system which some perceive as dangerous although others found the training to change driving style was helpful
- Some say the **crew cab** is not big enough (knees hit against the seats in front, BA kits dig into backs, concern for injury if there is sharp braking), and believed that they were designed for equipment and not for people, or to meet the needs of purchasing partners and not ECFRS

## Premises

- Staff at **KP** are complimentary about the building and facilities. Some non-KP-based staff think that KP is too 'fancy' for a public sector service
- Some stations were complimentary about their premises whereas others were in need of maintenance. Some watches were reluctant to raise when rest areas needed renovation because they believed that the Service would make them **sterile/less comfortable**. Some stations raised that **pictures** had not been replaced after redecoration
- Some stations are struggling for enough **space** for gym equipment, lockers and cross-contamination procedures. Some felt that contamination procedures did not take into account their space limitations
- Some stations raised that small maintenance issues had been reported but did not get fixed. Some staff were frustrated that they are not allowed to do their own **routine maintenance**, e.g. changing lightbulbs or painting, particularly as there was a view that contractors were costly
- Some staff – both male and female – felt the Service had not listened to their feedback on whether station facilities were suitable for **mixed male/female crews**, e.g. 3-foot partitions in dormitories and unisex shower rooms. There are no sanitary vending facilities at KP and some stations, and some felt there was a need for more storage for sanitary items and more places to place clothing in shower rooms
- A small number were concerned the **beds** might not be suitable for those with back problems
- A small number felt that it was not appropriate for stations to have a **bar**, although it was believed that most were not active
- In some locations, **fobs** only access part of the building and some felt this indicated a lack of trust. Station staff fobs do not give access to KP.

- Give updates on the new uniform, give details of consultation that has happened/is happening
- Give regular updates on premises matters and timescales
- Look into the apparent delay in roll out of impact drivers and trauma care kit
- Create a 'snagging list' of minor premises issues that have not been resolved and commit to resolve these and not to send them to 'the bottom of the list'

## Longer term

- Look at better integration between delivery of training and roll out of associated equipment

- Some feel there is too much **bureaucracy** and red tape, and processes take too long
- Some felt a number of policies were **out of date** and that they had been in consultation for extensive periods of time. Some felt that the FBU blocked the progress of policies, or that the Service would not progress them for fear of the impact on industrial relations
- There were mixed experiences of the operation of a range of **HR policies**
- Some people questioned the **consistency of application** of policies and procedures, and some felt there was scope for a more ‘common sense’ and compassionate approach e.g. the special leave policy
- A few raised there is no **environmental/sustainability policy**, no recycling facilities on stations and that frequent movement of appliances would have an environmental impact
- A few raised that there is no **menopause support policy**

## Fitness policy

- Some said the policy document is **not available on intranet**, there is a view that it has been in discussion with unions for a number of months
- Some people would like more clarity on which of the **different fitness tests** will be used in future, as some people feel some tests suit them better than others
- There was an appreciation for station **gym facilities** but some On Call stations don’t have anywhere suitable to put it and note that wholetime staff get allocated time to maintain fitness but they don’t. Some noted there is no gym provision at KP
- Some operational staff are concerned about the **consequences** of not being able to maintain fitness levels with a raised retirement age and the high standard of fitness that requires, particularly for females

## Annual leave policy

- Some said the policy is **out of date**, does not show current number of appliances in each location which makes it difficult for managers, and it allows for last-minute changes which affect availability and out-duties. There is a view the policy has been in discussions with unions for a number of years
- Some On Call staff find leave arrangements **too restrictive** and they could be more flexible at keeping pump on the run if they could take half-days, leave running from midnight is inconvenient (booking on/off at midnight) and people could give cover for longer if this was flexible
- Some with wholetime and On Call contracts felt too **restricted** by having to take both sets of leave together

## Special leave policy

- Lack of clarity on interpretation

## Transfer process

- Some don't like the '**sob story**' element and feel a first-in-first-out ordered list is easier to understand
- Some people have been **waiting for a transfer** for a number of years, and believe people might be more inclined to take other posts if they can see a clear way to move on
- USAR feel they should be treated as a **specialist function** in transfers and have a competitive process

## On Call to wholetime conversion

- There is a lack of clarity on the **current status** of conversion from On Call to wholetime.
- Some raised issues with the status of people who are in **different phases** in their On Call and wholetime roles, and the impact on pay

## Induction

- Some support staff felt their induction was left **too late** to be useful. Some would like more input on HR matters and practical introduction to IT systems on induction

## Appraisals

- Some feel the new **streamlined** appraisal is better. Some think it does not suit those who are not interested in progression. A small number feel appraisals are pointless if they do not influence pay or if they are not taken into account for promotion. Some were unsure how to progress training requests that were raised in appraisals

# Suggestions

- Revisit the policy review schedule and work with unions to determine a realistic schedule for finalising outstanding policy updates
- Set a plan but complete each of the reviews based on a shared understanding of priority order

*Note some points on perceived fairness are also included under the preceding themes*

- Some people felt that **procedures** were not always applied fairly, either to themselves or to colleagues e.g. perceptions about whether people had spent 12 months in role before being transferred/promoted; posts filled that were not advertised; people who had moved ‘on paper’ so were effectively allowed to be promoted without moving; operation of TOIL; decisions on flexible working requests; access to ASWs
- Some felt there is still an ‘if your **face fits**’ element to promotion and opportunities, and that those based at KP were more ‘visible’ or that you need a senior sponsor to be given opportunities. There is a view that the talent pool process may be run equally but postings are still decided by individuals/SLT
- Some felt there was a lack of transparency on how some **opportunities** came about, e.g. managerial roles in some departments, development roles in SLT
- Perception that station staff will be ‘hauled over the coals’ for **mistakes**, but that senior managers / HQ can make costly mistakes without consequences
- People across a number of teams perceive that other teams are **treated more favourably**, for example when vacancies are advertised whilst being told that budgets are tight. Some feel ‘whoever shouts loudest gets what they want’
- Some view the different terms and conditions and progression opportunities of **grey and green book** staff as unfair, particularly when working in the same department
- On Call staff with an Essex primary contract must take **rest breaks** under the working time regulations but On Call staff who are wholetime elsewhere or with other primary employment do not. This was raised as unsatisfactory by both people who are required to take a rest break and those who are not
- Some suggested there are inconsistencies between wholetime and On Call on who is able to be a **driver**



*Note some points on perceived fairness are also included under the preceding themes*

- Stations lost their cooks but there is a canteen at KP
- In some places, On Call firefighters said that wholetime firefighters **do not speak** to them
- Some felt there was still **poor behaviour** or lack of consideration exhibited towards some people, e.g. those with protected characteristics
- Perception that **premises** are not always suitable for different protected characteristics, e.g. accessibility, availability of sanitary provisions, unisex facilities, space for religious observance
- Perception that some people who exhibited poor behaviour in the past have been **promoted**
- Some feel that **statistics** used for IRMP are not a fair reflection of their work as it only reflects the first appliance on their own station ground, not standbys etc

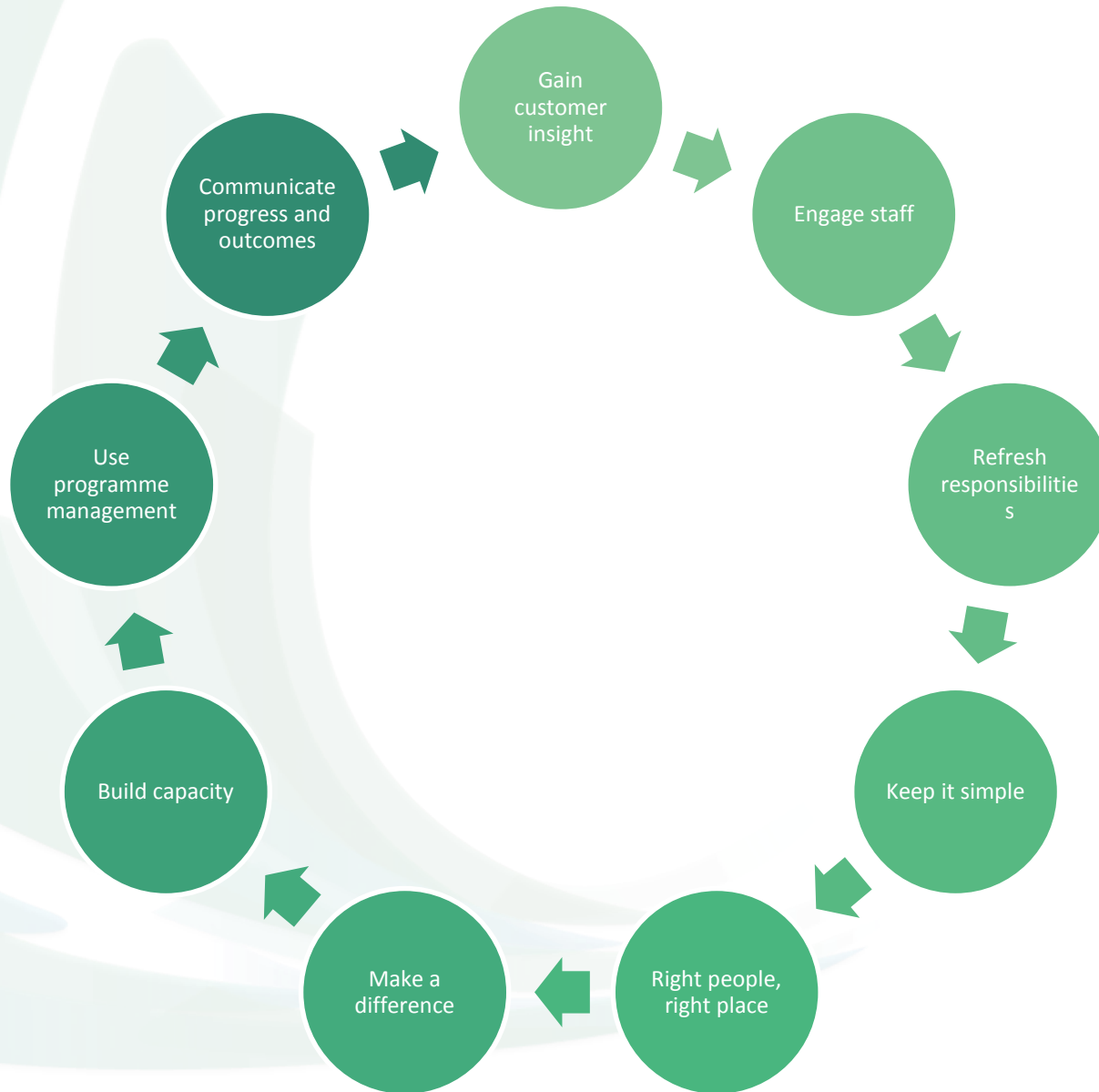
# Suggestions

- Clarify whether policy requirements are hard-and-fast rules, or guidance, both for those implementing/advising on policy and for the wider workforce
- Ensure managers understand the flexibilities and freedoms they have to manage, and the limits of that authority
  - Updating, agreeing and communicating policy changes as per the previous section will help with this
- Consider the ‘justified true beliefs’ at play that may give rise to perceptions of unfairness and clarify any misperceptions
- Use the public sector equality duty as a level to examine perceptions of unfairness, but across broader perceptions of fairness than the protected characteristics specified in the duty

# Shaping the Future

# Shaping the Future

- Shaping the Future is an organisational development approach to putting in place the necessary practical actions to effect organisational change aligned to the strategic direction.
- On the following slides we give an outline of the what some of the component steps could be. This is a draft of what a dialogic approach would look like to organisational development.
- Some of there ECFRS will already have in place or be in progress, for example through the IRMP process



# Step 1. Customer Insight

*Aim: To define, with the PFCC, staff and the community, a feasible and valued set of outcomes for the Service to deliver; to confirm the business model or make changes to the structure to support the vision*

1. Work with stakeholders and the local community to **clarify expectations, wants and needs**
2. Negotiate a new definition of the **highest priority outcomes** to be delivered, including a thorough communication of the costs and trade-offs
3. Honestly **evaluate the strengths and weaknesses** of the organisation
4. Engage PO's and SLT (where appropriate) in **rethinking the business model**, using the analysis of needs and strengths to identify opportunities
5. This will open the door to looking at new options that would historically have caused concern and scepticism.
6. Working from the business model, **design an operational and organisation structure** that will deliver it
7. Improve the organisation's ability to **collaborate effectively**, focusing on culture and skills
8. **Thorough research** needs to be conducted on those we wish to collaborate with
9. **Set the scene** by getting the commitment of the PFCC and SLT to this strategy. Translate these decisions into a powerful narrative about the values, purpose and contribution of the organisation.
10. **Communicate this internally**

## Step 2. Engagement

*Aim: To help middle managers create a climate that engages the entire workforce; to align individual efforts with the vision set out in Step One*

1. Ensure that the organisation's vision and values are **visible** throughout a newly developed workforce strategy
2. **Assess the climate created by middle managers** across the organisation
3. **Develop the leadership behaviours** of middle managers to create clarity, provide feedback, delegate authority/accountability and make the most of diversity
4. **Embed** these expectations in the selection and performance management of line managers.
5. **Connect reward strongly to performance**, focusing on the intangible elements such as progression, conditions, development and recognition.
6. We offer a vast array of contractual and local benefits that people fail to recognise, these should be summarised and published to **raise awareness**.
7. **Audit barriers** to effectiveness through a comprehensive survey of staff experience, backed by an action plan to address any gaps (see also Step five).
8. This Step requires strong **collaboration** between human resources and operations. The development needs to be part of a long-term programme, not a one-off intervention.

# Step 3. Refresh Responsibilities

*Aim: To expand the scope of junior roles to take on higher value work; to reduce the demand for expensive, senior and professional roles; to focus senior roles on areas where their skills are genuinely required*

1. **Identify the major ‘families’** of jobs in the organisation (in the light of the outcomes of Step one and, if necessary, five)
2. Find opportunities for **redistributing** the accountabilities to lower levels, adjusting the capabilities required appropriately
3. Ensure jobs are **feasible and engaging** by assessing the balance of authority, accountability and capability in each role (see also Step two)
4. Ensure that professional/technical and managerial job families are **split out** into separate career paths where possible
5. Implement changes in **one job family at a time**; translate them into formal job descriptions, work through line managers and support with additional training
6. **Consult and engage** trades unions, HR, Learning and Development and various professional associations in the development
7. **Clarify** the additional responsibilities for senior professional and specialist roles that support junior colleagues: mentoring, coaching, and guidance should be introduced. **Embed** these accountabilities in the performance management system



# Step 4. Simplification

*Aim: To ensure that processes are efficient and staff have the resources (including ICT) to perform effectively; to ensure the correct volume of staffing for the new design to reinforce new processes with genuine cultural and behavioural change*

1. Convene a cross functional task group to look at Business Process Mapping and identify savings
2. Develop and **communicate a rationale** for this Step of activity that focuses on creating the space/time/freedom for staff to attend to the most important parts of their role
  - **Identify** the core business processes associated with the outcomes defined in Step one.
  - Identify the cultural and **behavioural changes** associated with the new processes and develop communications and training programmes to support these
  - **Engage staff** at all levels in the identification of waste and inefficiencies; actively reward and celebrate their discovery
  - Conduct **workforce and talent management** planning to identify required staffing levels and skills in the new structures
  - **Audit** the resources required to perform effectively in key roles and ensure they are in place
  - Offer cross **training** in skills across functions (or at least insights into each other's activities) to improve communication and efficiency
  - **Review** Service policies and procedures to eliminate over bureaucratic steps that add no real value to the outcomes they aim to achieve
  - Establish a series of **workflows** for processes to enable resilience and greater flexibility of staff usage across the Service
  - **Examine** the behavioural and cultural implications of the programme of change to identify the barriers to its widespread adoption
  - **Address gaps**

# Step 5. Right People, Right Place

*Aim: To improve the matching of people to tasks/roles to speed up the development and acquisition of skills so people can do more, sooner*

1. **Embed** the new accountabilities into role profiles and performance management; ensure that there are accurate definitions of the capabilities required
2. **Reinforce the focus** of the performance review process on behaviours (and their development). Make sure this is linked to recommendations for promotion and progression
3. Conduct a **training needs analysis** against the new capabilities and adapt the organisation's Learning & Development programme
4. Invest in the ability of line managers to **manage performance effectively**, including the provision of feedback to staff (connected to Step 2)
5. Prepare the resources, advice and skills for **managing people out** of the organisation where necessary
6. Introduce a **process of calibration** of line managers' performance assessments through regular discussion of decisions
7. Define the characteristics associated with 'high potentials' and rapid progression to professional and line leadership positions.

# Step 6. Deliver and Make a Difference

*Aim: To ensure that all benefits are captured and delivered to stakeholders of ECFRS*

1. Audit the **effectiveness of SLT** and invest in developing the purpose, structures, norms, accountabilities and resources that enable them to act as a unified body
2. Provide team and individual **mentoring / coaching** based around feedback on individual leadership styles and joint work around the team's values
3. Identify the symbolic 'necessary conflicts' that will be needed during implementation and **prepare collectively** for them
4. **Develop a dashboard** of headline indicators for the realisation of productivity gains and improved outcomes in the community
5. Ensure **collective accountability** as a senior team at SLT (as well as individual responsibilities for delivery) and convene a regular, open discussion of progress on the dashboard
6. Repeatedly **communicate the rationale**, urgency and progress of the productivity gains externally and also internally.

## Step 7. Capability Building

## Step 8. Programme Management and Ongoing Communications



*Aim: To effectively implement and sustain the programme of change required*

1. Establish **strategic accountability** for the change programme through a programme board, chaired by the Chief Executive
2. Establish a '**Shaping the Future**' office, project manager, and assign ownership of communication. Keep this proportionate so that process does not overtake delivery. Certain Steps could be allocated to individual SLT members to ensure ownership.
3. Develop, agree and implement a communication plan. This needs to remain **simple** and key messages released on a regular basis with updates provided against the dashboard indicators.
4. Audit the **organisation's capability** in the five areas identified below and develop action plans to address any gaps identified
  - Effective political leadership well integrated with officers. Strong strategic leadership, with officers operating as a cohesive team
  - A performance culture
  - Strategic human resource capacity with strong line management relationships
  - Community and employee awareness and insight
  - Programme management and regular communication help co-ordinate activity, ensure delivery and win commitment.