



**CFOA**  
Chief Fire Officers  
Association



# **Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service Fire Peer Challenge**

**24<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> November 2015**

## **1. Introduction, context and purpose**

This report outlines the key findings from the Local Government Association's (LGA) Fire Peer Challenge at Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service (HFRS) during November 2015.

The report provides further detail on the themes that were considered under the heading of 'leadership and organisational capacity' as follows:

- Understanding of local context and priority setting
- Delivering outcomes for local communities
- Financial planning and viability
- Political and managerial leadership
- Governance and decision-making
- Organisational capacity

At the request of the Service the Key Assessment Areas covering operational matters did not form part of this peer challenge. Within the areas above that were considered HFRS requested that the peer team address a number of key questions:

### **Commercial Growth Strategy**

How well is the Service's Leadership responding to commercial opportunities? Are its plans for income generation sustainable, going forward? What contribution is 3S Fire making to the Fire Authority's income and what have been the outcomes of its activities?

### **Capacity and Resources**

Is the Service making best use of its resources and assets? To what extent is it taking advantage of new and emerging technologies in the way it operates?

### **Partnership Working**

Are there more opportunities for partnership working between the Service and organisations like the police and the councils around issues like Health and Social Care? How sustainable are the current partnership arrangements with H3 and what impact is this partnership having on HFRS ability to deliver better outcomes?

### **Organisational Culture**

How well is communication from the corporate centre about the planned changes to the Service reaching all staff especially operational staff? What do the staff know and understand about the messages coming from the senior team and to what extent do they support them? How inclusive is the organisation? Are there areas with less inclusivity? How can the service ensure that the services it delivers to the community are inclusive?

### **Governance and Decision Making**

How ready are Fire Authority Members for the significant changes affecting HFRS in the future?

Fire Peer Challenge is part of sector led improvement. In the last four years, all 46 FRSs nationally have undertaken a peer challenge. Following this, the process has been revised to reflect developments within the sector and ensure it continues to meet the needs of FRSs and other key stakeholders. FRSs are now able to commission another peer challenge, to take place at a time of their choosing over the next four years. HFRS deserve great credit for being one of the first FRSs to commission a peer challenge using the revised approach – reflecting their willingness to undertake external challenge and learn from others.

The HFRS Fire Peer Challenge took place from 24<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> November 2015 inclusive and consisted of a range of on-site activities including interviews, focus groups and fire station visits. The peer team met with a broad cross-section of officers, staff, front-line firefighters, partners and elected members. During the challenge the peer team were very well looked after and people the team met were fully engaged with the process and very open and honest.

The peer team undertook background reading provided to them in advance, including the HFRS Self- Assessment. The evidence and feedback gathered was assimilated into broad themes and was delivered to HFRS on the final day of the challenge.

## **2. The fire peer challenge process and team**

Fire peer challenges are managed and delivered by the sector for the sector and peers are at the heart of the process. They help FRSs and Fire & Rescue Authorities with their improvement and learning by providing a 'practitioner perspective' and 'critical friend' challenge.

The peer challenge team for HFRS was:

- Peter O'Reilly, Chief Fire Officer, Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (Lead Peer)
- Councillor Kay Hammond, Surrey County Council (Member Peer)
- Zoe Evans, Director HROD Bedfordshire and Luton Fire and Rescue Service
- Dany Cotton, Director Safety and Assurance, London Fire Brigade
- Robert Herring – External Peer
- Richard Solly – Attexo, External Peer
- Gill Elliott - Review Manager, Local Government Association

## Executive Summary

In 2013 the last LGA peer challenge found a service with a “strong foundation of good performance”. During the 2015 peer challenge it was clear that the Service’s good operational performance has been maintained and HFRS continues to be a well-run service with a deservedly high reputation for keeping its community safe. The Service is ambitious and its top team clearly has the energy and drive to deliver the vision for the service. Fire Authority Members are fully supportive of the direction of change. Staff who work for HFRS are passionate about the service they provide to the public and are proud to work for it. The organization has sound finances and its plans for commercial growth are innovative and exciting. It also has longstanding and effective partnerships. HFRS is an organization that is open to new ideas and it is keen to identify and nurture talent.

HFRS has been on a significant journey of cultural and organisational change since 2013, when it launched Pathway 2020, a programme that signaled a new approach based on empowerment and mobilising the whole workforce on improvement. This change journey is still continuing in 2015. The Service has a new CFO with great energy and drive. He has a strong vision for HFRS’s future direction and the Service has already made progress towards it. There are still some challenges to overcome but the Service has identified many of these itself and has started to address them. The focus of this peer challenge has been to assist this process.

The Service is planning to have a greater focus on outcomes that are shared with the wider public service and it is still in the process of defining appropriate outcomes for itself and being able to measure them. At the time of the Peer Challenge the Service was consulting with the public over its Risk Review proposals. This is essentially the Services Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). There has been considerable engagement and communication with staff around the Risk Review options over the past year. This has not always been successful and peers suggest that simpler and more direct face to face communication by the senior management team (SMT) with station staff is needed. Staff throughout the organization struggle to identify its values clearly because of the sheer number of stated missions, aims and values and again peers would recommend a simpler clearer approach.

HFRS has considerable capacity and resources within the organization which, if fully empowered and harnessed, are capable of delivering the vision that the CFO has for the organization. The peer team felt that as well as being a really supportive body, Fire Authority Members could be more of a driving force for change. Heads of Service could also be more empowered to take decisions. Professional Services have already been re-structured and there are significant plans and some actual delivery that will improve ICT, workforce development and transactional services in HR and Finance.

This report sets out the peer team's key findings and contains a number of recommendations throughout. A section on "Quick Wins" has been included at the end to help HFRS tackle some specific issues relatively quickly.

## **Key Findings**

### **3. Leadership and organisational capacity**

#### **3.1 Understanding of local context and priority setting**

HFRS has a strong, clear leadership focus on reducing community risk. The Service understands its local context and risks and has well established arrangements to gather and use data, intelligence and targeting to assess risk to the community. Risk profiles across a range of risk areas underpinned the priorities in its Service Plan 2013-18. These priorities have since been revised and simplified whilst still aligning to the Service's core aims of Making Hampshire Safer and Making the Service Stronger.

HFRS's new Service Plan (2015-2020) has nine priorities underpinning these two core aims. The Risk Review Project aims to deliver improved flexibility and response times as well as operational savings of £4.2m per annum. Extensive analysis and engagement with operational staff including frontline officers at fire stations has resulted in proposals that are currently out for consultation with the community.

The peer team are confident that the Service is committed to engaging with local communities to redesign their local fire and rescue service and that the priorities in the Service Plan are the right ones for the community. These were agreed by the Fire Authority in September 2015 with delivery to be monitored through the Performance and Assurance team in the Knowledge Management department and the FRA committee system. In September, the Fire Authority also authorised the Risk Review proposals to go out to public consultation. The final decisions on the Risk Review will be taken by the FRA in February 2016 once the public consultation has ended.

RDS and whole-time stations have committed staff who understand the local community and are proactive. There was some concern voiced by staff at stations about the engagement by senior management with them and their opportunity to influence the proposals and put forward alternatives. Staff at a number of stations expressed the view that the outward facing documents put forward for consultation with the community do not adequately explain the relationship between risk and resources that should be in an IRMP and that the true level of risk is not being shared with the public.

#### **3.2 Delivering outcomes for local communities**

Hampshire FRS has a very good operational reputation. It is ambitious and wants to be the best in the country. It appears to be a very effective and well-

run service - its current performance measures show that there has been an on-going reduction in risk across nearly all areas of its current service delivery activity with consistent and continual improvements in outcomes for the community. At the same time the Service has been building its capability in areas such as co-responding and community resilience.

Performance is monitored and reported through the Service Management Team (SMT), the Safer Stronger Board (SSB) and the relevant Authority Committee. Reporting to these groups covers all aspects of the Service including service delivery, outcomes for the community, management of resources, change projects, innovation and income generation. The SSB monitors a portfolio of projects which aim to deliver the Safer and Stronger priorities. The portfolio is monitored by the Project Management Office (PMO). An Integrated Delivery Board, reporting to a Service Delivery Board, to oversee the Risk Review Project has also recently been established. This arrangement has the potential for duplication of effort and the Service should be mindful of this going forward.

The new Service Plan contains a greater emphasis than ever before on measuring the delivery of outcomes for the community and peers recommend that going forward, the SSB consider how it will ensure that a strong focus on outcomes is maintained. The revised priorities describe successful delivery through a narrative of "End States" with associated key performance indicators (KPIs) and outcomes that are intended to be measurable. Peers were concerned that some of these outcomes were not measurable. In support of the requirement to monitor KPIs, HFRS has a large Knowledge Management Department that is able to provide significant amounts of data. The data for operational aspects (not explicitly reviewed for this review) appears to be clear, relatively succinct and fit for purpose. However, with the exception of financial information, the data to manage the business effectively (especially people, processes, and the Safer-Stronger priorities) appeared uncoordinated and somewhat over complicated.

The Service is very aware that it is moving into new service territories such as medical response and the wider health and wellbeing agenda and that the outcomes that it will be seeking to achieve are not yet fully determined. The Service Delivery Transformation Project will be building on this new approach with pilot programmes so the Service can evidence impacts and outcomes of new interventions and build the confidence of partners in Health and Social Care. The Service has a long standing relationship with Adult Social Care who see the potential for greater synergy with the aims of both organisations.

A potential risk to the delivery of outcomes in the future could be the ability to recruit and retain RDS staff. The RDS staff themselves think there is a risk that more of them will leave the service because of lack of morale and not being valued which will lead to more pumps being off the run. RDS staff also raised concerns around the reduction of the quality of service to the community if stations are changed from whole time to RDS at night. Retained firefighters consider themselves to be less well equipped than the whole time

watches and their fear is that the service at night will not be as good as it currently is.

### **3.3 Financial planning and viability**

#### **Financial Planning**

Management and Members of the Fire Service and Authority have an excellent understanding of strategic financial matters. There has been particularly good communication around the Service's proposals on Council Tax.

Through times of pressure on budgets, HFRS has undertaken very effective, prudent financial planning that has resulted in financial flexibility and capacity, when many other fire services are under significantly more pressure.

Budgeting has been rather cautious in recent years, regarding the level of savings needed to be made. Moving forward, there appears to be plenty of capacity within current financial resources and plans to find the required efficiencies. The Service should stop understating its budget at the outset so that it is not consistently underspent at the end of the year.

#### **How well is the services leadership responding to commercial opportunities?**

The Service has a very good understanding of commercial opportunities within the context of community safety. There are a wide range of appropriate income generating activities that complement the service and reflect the strategic view towards income generation that is being taken by senior leadership. The Service has already started to take commercial opportunities from concept to realisation. Project based financial reporting of income and expenditure with contribution to overheads shown, will help demonstrate the financial effectiveness of new income streams as the service diversifies from several grant based income sources.

The Chief Fire Officer has an entrepreneurial approach which has helped to drive the creation of opportunities for income generating schemes. This has been supported by members of senior management who have created a highly innovative environment for putting forward and gaining support for ideas. Activity has focused on specific areas of opportunity and these have been split into two key areas - income generation and commissioning opportunities.

There have been some difficulties in taking initial commercial interest from teams through to implementation. This is potentially difficult when teams within the fire service who are responsible for taking the business case through to implementation may not have the confidence, or capabilities to undertake this.

The Service has recruited a product development specialist with considerable relevant commercial experience, to help develop products from concept to delivery. However it is unlikely, given the number of opportunities, that in future he will have sufficient capacity to be responsible for launching products in the marketplace. Recruitment of further resource (at management level) with the skillsets to deliver business plans and help the teams drive commercial projects forward, should reduce the current backlog. That person could be project based or full-time given the number of potential projects and could be a central point of contact for commercial activities moving forward.

There was a note of concern voiced by staff on stations who felt that commercial customers were being prioritised over fire service needs. An example was given around fleet maintenance. Service managers recognise that this could be the perception but felt that it should not be a major issue going forward as there may well be additional resources to meet growing demand.

### **Are plans for Income Generation Sustainable?**

A number of income generation plans have been quantified as having potential and initial investigations appear particularly promising. This includes fleet and estates management, commissioning and extending specialist services to the private sector. Senior management understand well their areas of responsibility and focus in regards to these activities and partnerships are currently being developed. As yet, business cases for most income generation areas have not been completed.

Full cost recovery was discussed with a number of staff. Management understand the difference between part and full cost recovery and the estates team in particular was able to explain the sophisticated model they use for considering different scenarios of cost recovery, from market value through to part cost recovery, the situation depending on wider factors with partnership working. Although senior managers appeared to have a good grasp on cost recovery, HFRS may benefit from determining whether there is one generic cost recovery model to ascertain the sustainability of projects. This should not be bureaucratic but considered within the context that other variables will require individual judgements on pricing/costing.

For sustainability and appropriate focus of each income generating area, the peer team recommends that HFRS consider the priority and number of commercial activities that are started within the potential constraints of the current change programme. Income generation plans are more likely to be sustainable if they have a solid business case and plan. Managers understand that responsibility needs to lie with the teams developing ideas, but further support in taking business cases forward to launch will enhance the effectiveness of the planning process.

### **What contribution is 3S Fire making to the Fire Authority's income and what has been the outcome of its activities?**

This question is not easy to answer in depth as 3S Fire itself is outside the scope of activities by the peer review and its accounts have not been reviewed. However, the team understand that the organisation is likely to return in excess of £100,000 per annum to HFRA. The peer team recommends that HFRS consider how to identify the true financial contribution to the Authority after discounting costs such as staff and overheads.

The sustainability of the organisation appears well in place. The peer team recommends that HFRS consider the different income generating opportunities available, how they are resourced and by which mechanism they operate (directly or whether they can be outsourced through 3S Fire).

All start-up and young businesses require cash to scale. The Authority should consider if they would like reinvest any dividend payments offered by the 3S Fire board. This would enable the company to scale and grow more quickly. Obviously this would result in a longer term return of investment for the shareholder though, if planned correctly it could be more profitable.

The peer team suggests that it is important for HFRA to be more transparent around the public value aspect of 3S Fire.

### **3.4 Political and managerial leadership**

FRA Members are committed, engaged and supportive of the direction of travel recommended by the Service. They are good advocates for the Service. The governance review of the effectiveness and efficiency of the FRA is timely. Members felt that as the whole Service was considering how it could be more efficient and effective it was right that the FRA should be looked at in a similar way.

The FRA could take a greater role in leading the development of the Service. Whilst it is supportive it really needs to be a driver for the Service on behalf of the community. There is a good induction process for new Members but development in the roles and responsibilities of the FRA could be enhanced by a visible member development programme. It is important for Members to maintain their strategic role, but they could also consider additional champion roles to support the service. These might include equality and diversity or station champions. Currently there is no consistency in Member engagement on stations and some stations are never visited by a Member of the Authority.

HFRS has benefitted from continuity and considerable stability of its political and managerial leadership over recent years. The current CFO came into post in January 2015 after spending ten years as the Deputy Chief Officer. The new DCO was also internally promoted. The former CFO of the Isle of Wight became Assistant Chief Officer in HFRS when HFRS took on the

strategic leadership and management of IOWFRS, ensuring a smooth transition which is benefitting both services.

The CFO has great energy, drive and vision for the Service. As a new CFO he is keen to provide strong leadership for the direction of the organisation. He is well supported by the Directors who all want the Service to be the best. The Heads of Service Team (HoST) are a strong group with a clear desire and huge potential to drive improvement in the Service. Relationships between representative bodies, the Fire Authority (FRA) and the directors are strong and this is a considerable asset for the Service.

The CFO has a very clear view about where the organisation is going and how it is going to get there. However, this vision is not always fully understood by large elements of the organisation. Concern was voiced by SMT that some middle managers lack the confidence to answer difficult questions or “know the line to take”. Middle managers said that there is an inadequate information flow from senior managers to allow them to communicate the corporate line. The CFO recognises in today’s demanding environment, that an entrenched “parent-child” culture in the workplace won’t lead to the best results. However there was evidence that many conversations are still based on positional power. The organisation has a Leadership Framework. This is a good start and further joint work with SMT and other managers could develop a framework that really adds value to the organisation.

There appears to be a genuine desire to foster talent within the organisation and the developing strategy of Work Force Development will aid this aspiration. However the peer team heard a strong perception that unless you are situated in HFRS headquarters, or are part of discreet circles around the CFO/DCFO you will be disadvantaged/overlooked for promotion opportunities.

### **3.5 Governance and decision-making**

Lines of approval for Member reports going to Authority are very clear and well structured. However there are too many governance levels, with a number of meetings (SSB/SMT) that seem to frustrate progress. The organisation is rather ‘over managed’ and there is a universal view that SSB/SMT should be, at least combined if not removed. The peer team support this view. Senior and middle managers recognise that there are too many management meetings and are keen to reduce them.

HoST was assessed as having significant potential that should be freed up and allowed to ‘get on with it’. A recent governance model produced to support the implementation of the Risk Review appears to add even more bureaucracy to an already cluttered picture. Within the organisation there were examples of both a lack of control (where managers ignored governance rules e.g. not utilising terms of reference or role descriptors) and too much control (which saw compliance of governance rules leading to frustration because of lengthy decision making. e.g. waiting two months to progress issues to align meeting dates).

The peer team understands that the CFO wants to empower and trust the organisation but there is more work to be done to achieve an appropriate

balance between control and empowerment. This is manifest in the range of meetings and vast amount of metrics that the Knowledge Management Department is required to maintain. Although the term 'collective leadership' is used, the preferred decision making style appears to be 'consultative' where the ultimate decision needs to rest in the leader's own hands. Over-use of consultative leadership is very time-consuming as there are many meetings, but the outcome ultimately depends on the leadership's views.

### **3.6 Organisational capacity**

Staff are passionate about the service they provide to the public and proud to work for HFRS. There are many capable individuals who want the organisation to be the best. However, there is anxiety in the organisation around the magnitude and pace of change and conflicting priorities.

There is significant capacity at senior and middle manager levels. The Service has a lot of Area and Group Managers and in terms of its ratios it is somewhat top heavy compared to other fire services in the UK. The CFO's rationale for this is the need to achieve service transformation whilst delivering business as usual. This may not be an unreasonable strategy for headquarters based staff at the current time as long as there is an end timeline with a reduction in numbers thereafter.

Many RDS staff are highly motivated and want the opportunity to contribute good ideas. However they also raised concerns about training and development and work-life balance. Many said they were available at weekends but they had been told there were no opportunities for training at weekends which resulted in leave or unpaid time being taken from their primary employer.

The Service needs to articulate its workforce vision and strategy, to bring together a number of "people" initiatives and ensure that they are delivered on time. The Workforce Development team has a number of programmes in place that in time will develop the organisation's people. The Leadership Development Modules are designed to be flexible across the H3 partners and to cater for different leadership levels. When aligned and combined with the developing training academy there is the potential for a real step change in people development. The Workforce Development Team has also developed training modules to support change management within HFRS aimed at individual employees and managers of change.

Amongst other things the Workforce Strategy needs to consider are, what are the critical skills needed within the organisation and how well resourced is the organisation to provide them? For example, there are concerns about the capacity of the Knowledge Management team to be able to respond to new requests. Although currently being drafted, the strategy should include workforce planning, talent management, succession planning for key staff and an emphasis on transparency for staff movement decisions, whether permanent or temporary. The strategy should be HFRS specific picking up on people issues within HFRS such as an aging workforce, increasing sickness

and how to improve health, fitness and wellbeing as well as employee engagement and inclusion.

There is a lack of control over the implementation of the staff appraisal process across the organisation. Some areas do have a robust and consistent approach to appraisals but others do not. This has resulted in some staff feeling under-valued in areas of the organisation that do not undertake appraisals. The peer team recommends that there is one approach to individual/team performance that is consistently applied.

Concerns were raised with the peer team from staff about the secondment and temporary promotion processes in the organisation. There was a lack of confidence in the fairness and transparency of the promotion and secondment processes. A new approach called “Pathway to Progression” has been designed to overcome some of these issues. The view of peers was that despite its good intentions there may still be shortcomings in the process with regard to transparency and fairness of appointments. Staff who were in seconded roles expressed the view that they felt underdeveloped in their new role and often lost the security of their base role. We understand that there are approximately 70 staff in temporary positions, with the average duration thought to be about 4 years although opportunities for Green Book staff development appear limited.

Absence levels are relatively high within the service, particularly in non-operational roles. Trends are being analysed and the issue is being addressed by the Service. Managers can gain access to their own team’s sickness absence but are unable to compare it to the rest of the organisation. Accessibility of HR data from the Shared Service platform is an issue across a number of areas.

There is a need to monitor the cost/benefits of the H3 shared service Shared Service and whether it is achieving the expected outcomes. HFRS joined the transactional service in 2014 and it has been a major change for the organisation with staff and managers having to learn new ways of doing things. Progress has been made and there is now less “firefighting” of problems. Despite this, staff were still very critical of the service they receive, with a lack of access to timely assistance when there is a problem being the major concern. They reported that the payment of supplier invoices is still not as efficient as it could be. Peers understand that areas that have been struggling such as agency provider payments have been targeted for improvement in recent weeks.

There appears to be a “fire specific” skills and knowledge gap within the H3 shared HR service due to employee turnover. Staff TUPE’d over to H3 from HFRS have moved on and their specialist knowledge about the Service has been lost. There are plans to introduce a greatly improved service in January 2016, but the peer team strongly recommends that the service conduct an impact assessment on the future growth of the Shared Service and a thorough review of transactional elements to make processes timely and effective. They appear to be taking up significant management capacity across all management levels; a concern voiced internally and by a partner organisation.

A new ICT strategic plan is being completed, following input from SOCICTM consultants, which plans to resolve some of the key issues raised at the previous peer review in 2013. The plan is due to be presented to the SMT in May 2016. Users suggest that ICT issues requiring a quick fix are usually resolved rapidly. However, several individuals commented that issues requiring a referral either internally or externally can be extremely slow to resolve. There was frustration voiced that IT systems did not allow analysis of data, were not agile or flexible and affected being able to manage performance effectively.

ICT and operational technology staff have indicated that there is currently very little interaction between the two teams and more connected working would be beneficial for the organisation. The 2013 peer review commented on a large ICT management and staffing structure in place at the time. The ICT team has since reduced by nearly 10% due to a restructuring. The previous peer review also recommended an approach that involved business analysts. The current structure has systems analysts, who have had a name change, but the job role has not significantly altered. The peer review team is unsure as to how much progress has been made in regards to implementing business analysts to the team.

There was some very positive feedback about partnerships. Hampshire County Council's Adult Social Services view HFRS as a consistent, reliable and professional partner. The Police are keen to explore joining up trading arms with HFRS. The Blue Lamp Trust cited excellent partnership working with HFRS. The peer team recommends that HFRS reconsider its positions on the Strategic Health and Wellbeing Boards with a view to securing a place on the main Boards so that it can have more influence on strategy as well as developing formal strategic level meetings to influence the Police and Crime Commissioner. Some partners felt that the pace of seeking new strategic working partnerships was slower in HFRS, possibly due to its relatively secure financial situation.

### **3.7 Culture**

Within HFRS there is a widespread belief in the aspiration 'to be the best FRS'. It is a passionate organisation with high energy associated with wanting to make life safer. Employees have an instinctive sense of wanting to do the right thing. The organisation is friendly, welcoming with a 'can do' innovative and entrepreneurial spirit. At the same time, the peer team heard that staff felt that the amount of change was leaving them unclear about the direction and prioritisation of the changes. One quote perhaps summed up the mood: 'So much is going on our heads are spinning'.

Peers found a general lack of clarity about the organisation's aims, vision and values. In a public service organization, where firefighters must put themselves at risk, values are not abstract concepts. However these values cannot be assumed and must be clearly articulated to ensure organisational cohesion and team spirit necessary to both deliver on the fire ground and

enable the organisation to thrive. Without exception everyone we spoke to recited different a different vision and values – if they were able to recite them at all. What the Service called its strap line, ‘make life safer’, was generally known. The Service Plan 2015-2020 does not include a clearly identifiable mission but it does contain:

**Aim<sup>i</sup>.** Our aim is to be the best FRS in the country.

**Vision<sup>ii</sup>.** To work smarter, be more efficient, and be relevant to all.

**Cultural Vision<sup>iii</sup>.**To be the best and how we will make life safer and service stronger if our communities and teams feel.<sup>iv</sup> These are a set of qualitative performance measures.

Whilst the Service Plan does not identify specific values, nevertheless, staff have an instinctive sense of doing the right thing to “make life safer”. During the peer challenge a number of values appeared to be very important throughout the organization:

- Service (to the people and businesses of Hampshire)
- Collaboration (partnerships)
- Innovation and entrepreneurial spirit
- Growing potential

However the lack of a clearly understood and articulated set of values may be reducing operational and organisational effectiveness.

### **Communication**

Although there is a real desire to communicate, and a range of methods are used, they appear largely ineffective in getting through to all levels of the organization. Senior Management Visits (SMVs) are generally well received, although staff said they would like them to be less structured and more tailored to their particular station. The recent (Sept 2015) communications engagement survey only had an 8% response rate with the majority of respondents coming from HFRS HQ.

There is a strong sense within HFRS of ‘them’ (in HQ) and ‘us’ (station manager/firefighter) with group managers doing their best to bridge the gap. ‘Corporate’ methods, be they videos or glossy brochures, do not seem to connect well. Simple, face-to-face communication, delivered by an aligned chain of command in a language that is understood can be very effective. The peer team are aware that a Communication Strategy is currently being drafted and welcome this.

Although there is a ‘Pulse Group’ to take the organisational “temperature” it appears to lack the ability to accurately assess the reality at fire station level. No staff suggestion scheme exists although one did in the past that was well

regarded. A lack of feedback loop and post SMT engagement with staff, has resulted in a lack of trust because staff feel 'what's the point' of engagement when 'we are not listened to'.

<sup>1</sup> Pg 3 of Service Plan.

<sup>1</sup> Pg 2 & 3 Service Plan

<sup>1</sup> Pg 10 Service Plan

<sup>1</sup> Pg 10 Service Plan. Our communities feel....Our teams feel.....

## **Inclusivity**

The Inclusion and Diversity team are energised to progress the equality agenda. There is a very strong LGBT group that could form the basis of an equality group for the whole organisation or a model for other protected characteristics. This would enable good practice to be shared more effectively. There are pockets of excellence but much of the good work is reliant on the strength of the employees who volunteer their time. Experience of working effectively with transgender staff has given the organisation a strength in this area which it can build on. There is an extensive range of senior level diversity champions covering a range of topics. It is important that they have a practical role to play so that their enthusiasm is retained.

Representation of minority groups in the workforce is low with little evidence that concerted action is being taken to address this. However, this should be seen in the context that over the past five years, recruitment has mainly been for RDS staff, which rarely align with where black and ethnic communities live in the county. There is widespread use of gender based language in the organisation (use of the term fireman and not firefighter) which is perhaps indicative of a culture where inclusivity is not yet mainstreamed.

Equality/People Impact Assessments are not robust or within the mainstream of the organisation. The peer team recommend that the organisation refreshes the equality strategy including a SMART action plan.

## **4. Quick wins for the Organisation**

The peer team felt that there were a number of specific issues that could be tackled relatively quickly and which would have a high impact on the organisation. They were:

- Commit to a visible action plan to address issues raised by this peer review
- Clarify and unify the aims, vision and cultural vision of the organisation into one short statement
- Ensure that the presentation of strategies is short and simple
- Streamline the governance framework and decision making processes.
- Identify the 'vital few' performance measures
- Ensure that staff know the outcome of communication or engagement exercises

- Address the number of people in long term temporary positions
- Adopt an integrated approach to Inclusion and Diversity across the organisation

## **5. Conclusion and contact information**

Through the peer challenge process we have sought to highlight the many positive aspects of Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service but we have also outlined some key challenges. It has been our aim to provide some detail on them through this report in order to help the service consider them and understand them. The senior managerial and political leadership will therefore undoubtedly want to reflect further on the findings before determining how they wish to take things forward.

Thank you to HFRS for commissioning the challenge and to everyone involved for their participation. The team are particularly grateful for the support provided both in the preparation for the challenge and during the on-site phase and for the way people we met engaged with the process.

Heather Wills, as the Local Government Association's Principal Adviser for your region, will act as the main contact between HFRS and the Local Government Association going forward, particularly in relation to improvement. Hopefully this provides you with a convenient route of access to the organisation, its resources and packages of support.

All of us connected with the peer challenge would like to wish HFRS every success in the future.

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## **Annex – Contents of the feedback presentation delivered to HFRS on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2015**

### **What's Great About HFRS?**

- Organisation has a very good operational reputation
- The Service is ambitious and wants to be the best in the UK
- Top teams have high energy and drive to deliver the vision for the service
- FRA Members fully support the direction of change
- Directors and Heads of Service are fully on board
- Staff are passionate about the service they provide to the public
- Staff are proud to work for HFRS
- Finances are sound and the plans for commercial growth are innovative and exciting
- Relationships with partners are longstanding and effective
- Service has already identified much of what needs to be done and has started addressing it
- HFRS wants to identify/nurture talent in the organisation
- The service is open to new ideas

### **Understanding of local context and priority setting**

#### **Strengths**

- Service redesign is committed to engaging with local communities to design their local fire and rescue service
- RDS stations have committed staff who understand the local community and are proactive

#### **Areas for consideration**

- Stations requested additional information to allow them to respond to consultation questionnaire
- Concerns from RDS around training and development and work-life balance  
Outward facing documents don't explain relationship between risk and resources

### **Delivering outcomes for local communities**

#### **Strengths**

- Local watches feel they know their local communities best and are able to deliver outcomes
- Adult social care have a long standing relationship and see synergy with the aims of both organisations

#### **Areas for consideration**

- Concerns that people impact assessments at station level in relation to the proposed changes in the risk review not fully considered
- The risk of RDS leaving / not putting pumps on because of lack of morale and not being valued
- RDS raised concerns around reduction of quality of service to the community if stations are changed from WT to RDS at night

## **Financial Planning and Viability**

### **Strengths**

- Good understanding of financial planning at senior management and member level
- Robust financial management
- Foresight in long term financial opportunities through commercial activities
- Council Tax increase proposal understood by Members
- Numerous commissioning and commercial activities identified that complement HFRS
- Innovation successfully commenced to take opportunities from concept to realisation

### **Areas for consideration**

- Innovation needs to be supported by full business plans to take forward a number of opportunities to reality
- HFRS should consider dedicated resource for business planning, product development and launch, potentially in a joint responsibility role with relevant teams
- Evidence suggests that current and future budgets will be conservatively estimated and likely to result in an underspend

## **Political leadership**

### **Strengths**

- FRA Members are committed, engaged and supportive of the direction of travel recommended by the Service
- There is a good induction process for new Members
- The governance review of the effectiveness and efficiency of the FRA is timely

### **Areas for consideration**

- FRA could take a greater role in leading the development of the Service
- Member development in the roles and responsibilities of the FRA
- Members could consider additional champion roles to support the service
- Consistency of Member engagement on stations

## **Managerial leadership**

### **Strengths**

- CFO has energy, drive and vision for the Service
- Directors all want the Service to be the best
- HoST are a strong group with a clear desire to drive improvement
- Relationships between rep bodies, FRA and the directors is strong

### **Areas for consideration**

- Lack of clarity about the vision and values and collective leadership
- Engagement with rep bodies at delivery meetings is limited
- Concern by SMT that some middle managers lack the confidence to answer difficult questions or “know the line to take”
- Middle managers confirmed that there is an inadequate information flow to allow them to communicate the corporate line

## **Governance and decision-making**

### **Strengths**

- Lines of approvals for Member reports going to Authority are very clear and well structured
- Strong recognition that the areas of duplication can be removed
- Senior and middle managers recognise that there are too many management meetings and are keen to reduce them

### **Areas for consideration**

- Frustration felt by HoST in relation to perceived barriers to their ability to make decisions
- Too many senior /principal meetings causing delays in key decision making
- Lack of clarity around meeting structures and interface between meetings
- Governance - lack of control and too much control

## **Organisational capacity**

### **Strengths**

- Significant capacity at senior and middle manager levels
- HROD acknowledge and are planning well for leadership development at all levels
- Absence management is being addressed
- Many capable individuals who want the organisation to be the best and seek clear objectives
- Highly motivated RDS staff who wish to contribute to ideas
- Police keen to explore joining up trading arms
- Positive feedback about partnerships
- Adult Services view Fire as a consistent, reliable and professional partner
  
- Blue lamp trust cite excellent partnership working from Hampshire FRS

### **Areas for consideration**

- Need to articulate workforce vision and strategy
- Address skills and knowledge gap in shared service due to employee turnover.
- Lack of integration between IT systems taking significant capacity from organisation
- Anxiety around the magnitude and pace of change and conflicting priorities
- View from partners that pace is slower in HFRS
- Still losing suppliers due to system not paying on time
- Concerns about capacity of KM team to be able to respond to new requests
- IBC taking up significant capacity from Managers
- Unlocking potential – fairly
- Fleet – priorities of others over FRS
- Accessibility of data across organisation
- Impact assessment - future growth of Shared Service

- Need to monitor cost/benefits of Shared Service and whether it is achieving the expected outcomes
- Transactional elements need a thorough review to make processes lean
- HFRS to consider positions on the Strategic Health and Wellbeing Boards.
- IT should provide evidence that it has progressed issues identified in 2013 Peer Review

## **Organisational Culture**

### **Strengths:**

- Belief in aspiration 'to be the best FRS'
- Passionate organisation with high energy wanting to make life safer
- All people have an instinctive sense of doing the right thing
- Friendly, welcoming and 'can do' organisation with innovative and entrepreneurial spirit
- Range of people/training academy initiatives have the potential to close many of the people development gaps

### **Areas for consideration**

- Complete lack of consistency throughout the organisation from Directors to firefighters as to what the mission, vision and values are. (The 'leadership framework' is not seen as the values)
- Risk Review is seen as cost saving activity that will reduce operational effectiveness. There is a significant lack of trust due to the refusal of SMT to acknowledge this ('tell the truth')
- The amount of change is resulting in a lack of clarity of direction and prioritisation 'so much is going on our heads are spinning'
- The opportunities for green book staff development appear limited
- Some managers are unwilling to challenge due to fear of being criticised or overlooked for promotion
- The PDR system is ad hoc and applied inconsistently. Many staff have not received an annual appraisal
- Perception that only the people who work in HFRS HQ have access to promotion
- People in a 'secondment' role feel insecure and undervalued

## **Organisational Culture - Communication**

### **Strengths:**

- Capacity in organisational communications team
- A strong desire to communicate
- SMVs are generally well received

### **Areas for consideration**

- No up to date communication strategy, although it is under development
- Corporate messages have not reached most parts of the organisation - people feel confused
- Communication mediums down to station level are ineffective
- Glossy publications perceived as 'corporate spin' and a waste of money
- Too much irrelevant, unfiltered corporate communication at all levels
- Chief's Tour seen by some as 'propaganda'

- Lack of an effective communications feedback loop post engagement has led to a significant lack of trust
- There is too little information (job security/risk review) on things that are important to them
- Only 8% staff replied to the comms engagement survey
- Some people were sceptical that they would see the Peer Review Report
- Staff do not feel that their local risk knowledge is captured in centralised risk data
- Consultation is seen as a 'tick box' exercise

## **Organisational Culture - Inclusivity**

### **Strengths**

- E&D team are energised to progress the inclusion agenda
- Very strong LGBT group could be leveraged by cross functional alignment and sharing of best practice
- Pockets of excellence but reliant on strength of the volunteers
- Extensive range of diversity champions covering a range of topics
- Equality champions at a senior level

### **Areas for consideration**

- Representation of minority groups in workforce is low with little evidence that concerted action is being taken to address this with a long way to go
- Extensive use of gender based language
- Equality/People Impact Assessments are not robust or within the mainstream of the organisation
- Need to refresh the equality strategy including a SMART action plan
- On some watches there is a perception of a 'them and us' culture between RDS and WDS firefighters

### **Quick Win Actions**

- Commit to a visible action plan to address issues raised by this peer review
- Clarify and unify the aims, vision and cultural vision of the organisation into one short statement
- Strategy on a page
- Streamline the governance framework and decision making processes
- Identify the 'vital few' performance measures
- Close the communication/engagement loop
- Address the huge number of people in temporary positions
  - Adopt an integrated approach to E&D

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<sup>i</sup> Pg 3 of Service Plan.

<sup>ii</sup> Pg 2 & 3 Service Plan

<sup>iii</sup> Pg 10 Service Plan

<sup>iv</sup> Pg 10 Service Plan. Our communities feel....Our teams feel....