Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service
Fire Peer Challenge
(11-14 October 2016)

Final Report

1. Introduction, context and purpose

This report outlines the key findings from the Local Government Association's (LGA) Fire Peer Challenge at Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue Service (HFRS) in October 2016.

The Review team provided its views on the Leadership and Organisational Capacity themes:

1. Understanding of local context and priority setting
2. Delivering outcomes for local communities
3. Financial planning and viability
4. Political and managerial leadership
5. Governance and decision-making
6. Organisational capacity

The team also provided feedback against the seven Key Areas of Assessment (KAAs) and the questions which sit under each:

1. **Community Risk Management** – How well is the authority identifying and prioritising the risks faced by the community?
2. **Prevention** – How well is the authority delivering its community safety strategy?
3. **Protection** – How well is the authority delivering its regulatory fire safety strategy?
4. **Preparedness-** How well is the authority ensuring that its responsibilities for planning and preparing are met?
5. **Response –** How well is the authority delivering its response, call management and incident support activities?
6. **Health and Safety-** How well is the authority ensuring its responsibilities for health, safety and welfare are met?
7. **Training and Development** – How well is the authority ensuring its responsibilities for training, development and assessment of its staff are met?

The report provides further detail on the areas that the Service requested that the team focus on in addition to looking at the Key Assessment Areas and Leadership and Corporate Capacity elements of the Peer Challenge toolkit upon which the Service produced its Self-Assessment. HFRS asked the Peer Challenge Team to focus their attention on the following areas during the peer challenge:

- **Key Assessment Areas 2 & 3** - In particular, HFRS welcomed feedback regarding the effectiveness and performance of the Joint Protective Services (JPS) department.
- **Key Assessment Area 7** – HFRS asked the team to provide feedback regarding the structure, effectiveness and performance of its Training provision

In addition the Service requested specific feedback in respect of HFRS's performance with regard to:

- Partnership Engagement and
- Communication of Risk Information to Crews.

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 and framework. It is a clear reflection of the Service's willingness to undertake external challenge and learn from others.

The HFRS Fire Peer Challenge took place from 11 to 14 October 2016 inclusive. The summary of activity was as follows:

- Background reading was provided to the team in advance *(A comprehensive Self- Assessment and over 176 supporting reference documents)*
- Meeting with a broad cross-section of officers, elected members and partners via a timetable of interviews, focus groups and visits *(42 meetings over 3 Days during which the team met over 140 people)*

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 evidence and feedback gathered was assimilated into broad themes and was delivered to HFRS on the final day of the challenge condensing over 350 pieces of evidence that the team considered.

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:
- **Lead Peer** – CFO Dave Curry (Hampshire and the IOW Fire and Rescue Service)
- **Member Peer** – Councillor Nick Chard (Chair, Kent Fire and Rescue Authority)
- **Officer Peer** – Jason Avery (Hampshire FRS and CFOA)
- **Officer Peer** – Dean Haward (IoW FRS*)*
- **Officer Peer** – Guy Keen (Merseyside FRS)
- **Officer Peer** – Neil Liddington (Avon FRS)
- **LGA Peer Challenge Manager** – Ernest Opuni

3.   Executive Summary

Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS) has a strong underlying culture of working effectively with partners. It is utilising the benefits of being integral to Hertfordshire County Council and this is clear in all of its partnership working with both internal and external stakeholders.

There appears to be sound financial planning and governance. The Service is clearly accountable to and scrutinised by the County Council. HFRS is also contributing well to the County Council's efficiency requirements.

There is mature collaboration between the Service and Police Partners. There is strong and visible leadership from the Strategic Leadership Group (SLG) and clear evidence of an on-going cultural shift within the service moving from a culture of command to a more team and inclusive approach.

There is evidence of efficiencies and improved community outcomes being achieved through the approach to collaboration being taken within Joint Protective Services (JPS).

The HFRS 'Brand' is being used effectively to access vulnerability and the Service is deploying a wide range of Prevention interventions in an effective manner.

Protection is clearly visible in Operational Response which demonstrates the Service being proactive in addressing an area it was encouraged to explore in a previous peer challenge.

Strategic support in the provision of training facilities has improved the efficiency and effectiveness of training and development whilst investment in the Health and Safety unit of an additional practitioner with relevant industry qualifications was seen as a positive move.

It is clear that the current IT systems are seen more as a burden on capacity than being a resource for freeing it up across the Service. It will be important for the Service to give thought to how this might be addressed.

It appears that the capital investment in the estate has been limited and consideration could be given to the decline in the estate, the increased maintenance this can create and the longer term capital problems this can develop as a result.

The Protection succession risk could pose a real challenge to the Service because of the potential for significant numbers of experienced fire safety officers and managers to leave the Service within a short timeframe.

Alongside recognition of numerous areas of 'Notable Practice' the team found at HFRS, a number of actions which are detailed under 'Quick Wins' and 'Game changers' at the end of this report. The team would recommend that the Service consider these areas as priorities for its continuous improvement.

Detailed Findings

4. Leadership and Organisational capacity

4.1 Understanding of local context and priority setting

Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service has a strong underlying culture of working effectively with partners. There is a clear understanding within HFRS of the benefits of being an integral part of Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and the Service is utilising this effectively. A good example of this in action is the innovative approach shown through the establishment of Joint Protective Services (JPS), a part of the Community Protection Directorate which incorporates Fire prevention, Protection and Trading Standards.

An example of HFRS's successful work with external partners is the Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum (LRF) where HFRS has worked effectively for many years and is highly regarded by other LRF partners. The LRF is widely regarded as being more agile and less bureaucratic than some other LRFs around the country. The connectivity between the various members of the group is strong and appears to be further evidence of the benefit of HFRS being a part of HCC.

HFRS has a strong approach to Inclusion and Diversity with a number of key individuals who seem highly committed to this agenda. Although inclusion and diversity is taken into account in respect of the approach to everything that HFRS and the wider CPD does, this fact needs to be made more explicit.

4.2 Delivering outcomes for local communities

The relationship with the local Representative bodies, particularly the FBU was positive. They were keen to become more involved in the recruitment campaign to ensure they added their support to maximise this opportunity to diversify the workforce to better match the community they serve.

The Community Advocacy Forum (CAF) has implemented a successful way of working that has been recognised through National Awards received. The CAF pairs link workers, who are volunteers from public sector organisations, with advocates who represent and speak for the groups or communities they represent. This innovative approach has produced notable benefits and success such as the work done with Traveller communities in fitting smoke alarms. There has also been some good targeting of vulnerable groups through timely briefings and raising awareness of the risk presented by 'legal highs' and skin whitening products.

There is an enthusiasm to build on current successes and broaden the representation of advocates. The Service recognises that the Lesbian Gay Bi-

Sexual and Transgender (LGBT) community is currently under-represented and is exploring ways of addressing this.

HFRS's creation of Community Rooms on a number of fire stations appears to have been well received by the local communities. They are well used and this positive integration with the community is leading to the education of local crews about the cultures with the communities they serve.

HFRS has a well-developed and growing volunteering section. This is seen as adding positively not just in terms of capacity but also ensuring a wider representation of the community is visible within the workforce.

Text anywhere" was seen as a really helpful facility and was clearly being used to support communications. There was a feeling however that it is sometimes being overly used and that a more targeted approach would avoid losing impact. There was also a feeling that this could be used more as an external communications channel to connect with local communities.

4.3   Financial planning and viability

HFRS is financially strong and there is clear evidence that they are supporting HCC positively in facing the financial challenges which all councils are dealing with.

There appears to be solid financial planning and governance with clear accountability and scrutiny through to HCC. It was also evident that as efficiency proposals come forward there is a sensible approach to testing their political and community impact prior to placing any measures into a more formal process.

It is clear that HFRS are seizing the wider community partnership and collaboration opportunities that are available. This helps HFRS to be well informed and sighted on a wide range of subjects that have an impact on the service it delivers. HFRS spend represents approximately five percent of HCC budget however the influence, impact and outcomes that benefit the wider communities in the county far outweighs this figure. HFRS punches above its weight in making a positive difference to people's lives and well-being. The Joint Protective Services department have been successful in obtaining money from "Proceeds of Crime" amounting to £125,000 per year and this resource is being channelled into positively supporting other delivery such as funding home safety visits

HCC are developing a successful commercial vehicle through SureCare and it appears that HFRS is a key player and contributor to this initiative. As this grows the profits will obviously support HCC and the financial challenges it faces.

It appears that the capital investment in the estate has been limited with only three new fire stations being built in the past 40 years (Watford, St Albans and

Harpenden), which was quoted as an example of this limited investment. The team felt that consideration could be given to the decline in the estate, the increased maintenance this can create and the longer term capital problems this can develop as a result.

4.4   Political and managerial leadership

There is mature collaboration between the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and HFRS. The PCC was Portfolio Holder for fire in 2006 and is a Member of Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) meaning he has the knowledge of, contacts within and a good relationship with the Community Protection Directorate. The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) is also the Chief Executive of the Office of the PCC which further enhances the connectivity between Hertfordshire Constabulary, the PCC and HFRS.

There is strong and visible leadership from the Strategic Leadership Group (SLG). It was also evident that SLG makes time to spend with developing leaders. This was witnessed by the team through the week at the development day at attendees expressed their appreciation of the time spent with SLG.

There is clear evidence of an on-going cultural shift within the Service, moving from a culture of command to a more team and inclusive approach. This was welcomed by most. It was also evident that there are some areas that are holding this cultural shift back. Examples observed were the estate and working environment, imagery, some areas of commonly used language and the use of green and grey book roles. It was felt that a good examination of these areas would release the full potential of this cultural shift.

The move to a more open, team orientated culture aligns with the cultural shift being made within HCC and this alignment is seen as helpful. However there was evidence of pockets of older culture through middle and supervisory levels, which did not match that seen in SLG. This again could be explored to achieve a more consistent leadership approach. Nonetheless, it was clear that middle management was aligned, on message and supportive of the progress being made within the Service.

There was a feeling expressed to the team that greater clarity could be provided in how inclusion and diversity will shape the future workforce and the culture that is created. This could be documented through a clear Workforce Strategy and the team would encourage HFRS to give further consideration to developing this.

Results from the latest staff survey have shown a potential increase in bullying and harassment. However this could be a result of changes to the questions posed which may have had an impact on these results. Nonetheless it is clear that the outcomes of the recent staff survey do provide a good basis for the development of a Workforce Strategy which could positively support the development of the inclusive culture within the workplace that the Service is moving towards.

4.5   Governance and decision-making

The CFO's national role and his leadership of the OPC clearly bring insight, knowledge and experience to help shape and position the progress of the Service. It is likely that the CFO will move on in the not too distant future and consideration needs to be given to how this gap can and will be filled over time.

The SLG has good and relevant capacity and are well aligned on messages going out to the wider Service. The team is new with some recent changes and will develop further however individuals already appear confident to add value to the discussions and decisions of the SLG.

It was clear that the Service has well developed and robust performance and risk management processes in place. It is believed this strength may be a result of the previous command culture and is an aspect of the Service that should be maintained as the culture shifts.

The strength of the Advocacy Group could be better used within the EqIA process and therefore further enrich the decision-making process.

The positive relations with the FBU could have a greater input at an earlier point in developing strategic projects. The example used was the Occupational Health Unit review. It was further understood that this review had not started as yet and therefore this may be a simple communication issue. In addition there was a feeling that on some projects the FBU contribution was not fully recognised (for example on the launch of the Bluelight Mind initiative). This could be addressed by agreeing communications through regular dialogue between the various parties involved.

4.6   Organisational Capacity

The Service seems to maximise its positive links with national developments such as the development of a Procurement Hub and is able to balance this well as a result of the benefits of the integration with HCC.

The use of the Longfield site, which is seeing increasing site usage with both fire and partner activities, is a good example of maximising the fire estate capacity.

The Equalities and Inclusion team were successfully embedding advocates into the workforce and this appeared to be releasing both potential and capacity to support this agenda.

The cultural shift is having a positive impact on organisational capacity. A good example of this is the plans to re-balance grey/green book staff in JPS

which will provide the opportunity to bring in new skills. Involving the FBU on groups such as the SOTB, Equality Action Group and the Appliance Equipment Planning Board are good examples of using this capability and capacity at an organisational level. The Discipline Team is having a positive effect in resolving cases at an earlier point. This is having a useful impact by reducing managerial time that would have previously been taken up by extended processes.

There was a concern amongst middle managers that they were at "information overload" and that this may lead to a risk that they miss or misunderstand important information.

The team felt that there was a change programme which was being managed through business as usual governance and this seemed to be working well. It was however communicated in a number of meetings that there is an expectation within the Service that this change programme was about to accelerate. The team's view is that there may be some value in some additional resources being allocated to coordinate change and ensure the impact is fully embedded.

HFRS has taken this approach to achieve this in parts of the Service through the use of dedicated Project Officers particularly seen in the work on the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). This work will make an important contribution to the effective review of HFRS's IRMP. It will also be integral to other large scale change programmes so there may be some value in the Service considering this approach in order to effectively deliver this area of work.

Some partners expressed the view that although there is a drive to see change in the estate to include a new Headquarters, there is also a degree of resistance which appears to be down to an emotional attachment to the current building. The team could not say for certain that this view is accurate but suggests the Service may find it helpful to gain a better understanding of this perception.

HFRS could give further consideration as to whether it is deriving the full benefit of the talent and expertise held within the RDS workforce. This could be particularly beneficial to the Service's delivery of projects and other change initiatives.

There was a view that the lack of integration of IT systems could affect the services ability to progress the IRMP as planned. On a wider front, the view expressed to the team on a number of occasions is that IT systems are seen more as a burden on capacity than being a resource for freeing it up across the Service.

There is also a possibility that some opportunities for LRF partner training are being missed as a result of some agencies not liaising in a timely manner with the LRF manager. This means that some exercises - both desk-based and practical - could yield greater value if the LRF manager had more timely information.

Significant thought and preparation has gone into the SLG's succession planning. This does not appear to be as well developed in other areas of the Service and the team felt able to identify potential single points of failure where turnover may impact on future success. This was the case not only with individuals but with some teams more widely. HFRS may wish to review this in order that it can assure itself that it is able address these potential points of future failure.

The team identified that there may be more of a focus on Response than there is on other areas of the Service such as Prevention and Protection. It is not the team's view that has been created deliberately. Rather it seems to be a perception which has grown within the Service due not only to the CFO's national role but also because of the involvement and profile of many HFRS SLG colleagues in relation to the Response function. This appears to have led some individuals in the Service to pursue an operational career path within HFRS rather than exploring opportunities in other disciplines. As an immediate implication it appears fewer HFRS staff are choosing Protection and Prevention as a route for career progression and the Service may wish to explore further how it encourages staff to more actively pursue these career paths.

5. Key Assessment Areas

5.1 <u>Community Risk Management</u> – *How well is the authority identifying and prioritising the risks faced by the community?*

The Peer Challenge Team found that HFRS is having a significant impact in supporting the achievement of public health priorities through their active engagement and support of public health partnerships. The impact and success of these partnerships demonstrates that the Service understands the local context and contributes to the reduction of risks faced by the local community.

HFRS has fully embraced the recently introduced concept of 'Safe and Well' and is expanding the role of firefighters to support the wider reduction of risks faced by the local community. The success of the early impact of the 'Safe and Well' pilot scheme is an area of strength for HFRS against the key areas of assessment for Community Risk Management.

The 'Safe and Well' visits by Operational crews have been prioritised to focus on vulnerable persons who are yet to receive an intervention package. This is proof that the service delivery of 'Safe and Well' is effectively targeting those members of the community deemed to be at greatest risk.

There is good evidence that the Annual Strategic Assessment is well understood and utilised across all areas of the Service. This process, considers a wide range of relevant data in informing the Service's risk priorities. Examples include:

- The Fire Death analysis report 2012-16 which maps out the fire victim profile for the County of Hertfordshire.
- The JPS Strategic Assessment, utilising a wide range of relevant risk information to inform the Risk Based Inspection Programme. This is reviewed annually to ensure it remains up to date and relevant.
- A dedicated JPS Intelligence Officer maps intelligence into a report to inform the Strategic Assessment and review priorities based on emerging risks.
- An HFRS Area Commander is currently exploring the use of Adult Services Social Care System to better inform vulnerability targeting. This is more accurate and cost effective than simply deploying MOSAIC and Exeter data for example.

District and Station annual plans are well aligned to the Service's Annual Strategic Assessment which aims to drive Station performance. There are clear targets set in relation to Risk Based Inspection Programme audits,

Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV's) and Supporting Community Safety campaigns.

The Community Safety campaigns are detailed within the annual Community Protection Directorate Safety Calendar and this is an effective means of organising pre-determined risk interventions aligned to local and national campaigns. This calendar is reviewed, produced and published at the beginning of each year.

District and Station Commanders have a good level of understanding of the contribution station based personnel make to the Service's Risk Based Inspection Programme. They are actively encouraged to contribute to the JPS annual review which ensures that local risk knowledge is captured and prioritised.

There are numerous examples of partnership working which contribute positively to the targeting of risk in local communities. This includes a number of partnerships and collaborations which are actively sharing intelligence and resources to target known and emerging risks swiftly, efficiently and effectively.

The Hoarding Partnership is contributing positively to identification and targeting of a number of overlapping vulnerability profiles relevant to Fire, Health and Housing risks. Partnership collaboration is significantly reducing the number of visits which have to be undertaken. This is being achieved through removing duplication and better utilising signposting as a means of reducing the risk to vulnerable people. Partners are able to close cases more quickly because of increased confidence that the risks have been removed or effectively controlled. More widely the work in addressing hoarding has increased community confidence and is empowering residents to become less vulnerable to crime. Other benefits are fewer evictions, greater financial savings from reduced requirement for repairs, reduction in vulnerability of residents to fire and crime as well as fewer hospital admissions.

Good relations with individuals in the local Immigration Office have led to intelligence on vulnerable sleeping risk being passed to JPS for action by Fire Safety Inspectors. This collaboration is proving to be effective in identifying and prioritising risk thus enhancing the effectiveness of Prohibition Notices served under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order.

The collaboration in JPS has led to income from Trading Standards prosecutions under the Proceeds of Crime Act being diverted into supporting fire safety interventions. In addition to the income generation, there is evidence that the combined structure of Trading Standards and Fire Safety is enhancing the effectiveness of sharing and targeting emerging risk. An example of this is Hover-board fire incidents being quickly identified and

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targeted through a combination of education and regulatory compliance interventions.

Partnership working via the local JAG has enabled swift intervention on emerging arson threats to members of the community. Fire crews are responding swiftly to intelligence gained either internally or via JAG partners to protect homes vulnerable to arson attack by fitting fireproof letterbox plates. Opportunities to secure funding for this work are being utilised well.

HFRS will play a significant role in securing significant savings as a direct result of its Public Health work reducing risk among vulnerable members of the community.

It is clear that the multi-agency collaboration on Event Safety is widely understood and valued by partners and staff alike. This work is contributing effectively to reducing risk through multi-agency capture and sharing of information via the Event Tactical Response Plans. One recent example of this working well was at the British Masters Golf Tournament hosted in Hertfordshire.

Performance Management is largely focused on activity outputs such as the number of Home Fire Safety Visits or Risk Based Inspection Programme audits completed. Officers across the Service were not always able to clearly articulate how this activity was linked to achieving wider outcomes. One such example was the inability to link Protection, Prevention and JPS activity to safety outcomes and it was not clear how the annual Strategic Assessment review took account of risk reductions achieved in either the current or previous years. For example whilst licenced premises have been identified as a priority risk for fire safety audits in 2016, there was no clarity on how Protection activity in Priority areas was reducing risk and informing the risk based targeting for subsequent years.

The failure of the ICT system to meet the needs of individuals and departments across the Service was a common theme which emerged across all areas of the Peer Challenge. In respect of Community Risk Management, it appeared that the current ICT systems does not have the ability to effectively process and share information held in various internal databases in order to assist with risk based targeting.

It appears that the current limitations of ICT systems in processing and sharing risk information could adversely affect future improvement. This is leading to some inertia. However the team would encourage HFRS to make the most of information that is currently available and not allow ICT challenges to act as a barrier to identifying the outcomes that are being achieved.

Although there are practical difficulties in evidencing short, medium and long term impacts of safety interventions, significant improvements could be made by more clearly linking activity to actual impact in achieving reduction of risk. For example, the effectiveness of targeting Fire Safety activity could be measured in terms of the proportion of fire safety audits requiring enforcement action. A more robust measurement of the difference between the perceived risk prior to and following fire safety intervention could enable the Service to better evidence the impact of activity. Longer term impact can also be assumed from reduction in incident statistics in areas where risk reduction activities have been carried out. This will be important in avoiding resources being diverted away from Community Risk Management activity due to the impact of previous initiatives not being clearly evidenced.

JPS have a good partnership with the local Immigration Office. It appears however that this partnership is over-reliant on personal relationships and should certain individuals from either Service move on then the currently effective partnership working could suffer. The Peer Challenge team recommend that this can be overcome by partners signing up to a Memorandum of Understanding which would sustain impact in the event of key individuals no longer being available or involved in future.

Hoarding partners have been unable to engage with Adult Health and Mental Health Services to obtain their assistance in areas where they hold some direct responsibility. The lack of engagement appears to stem from a perception that hoarding is a life-style choice rather than recognition of the mental health and adult health issues involved. There would be value in some Strategic and Political level intervention in order to ensure that the engagement between these two services can be improved.

Analysis of fire death victim profiles are being skewed by the impact of having only a low number of fatalities (1 to 2 per year). There is a risk therefore that common themes are not identified or anomalies accounted for. The accuracy of fire death victim profiles could be improved by widening the research base to include additional relevant data (for example by better utilising findings from other parts of the country and data from fire incidents with injury or serious injuries which had the potential to cause a fire fatality).

Effectiveness of Joint Protective Services

There is evidence of efficiencies being achieved through collaboration. The Trading Standards Legal Support Team has removed the dependence on external legal advice. This has led to efficiency savings for Protection whilst increasing the effectiveness of prosecution activity. This has also impacted positively on enforcement activity as Protection now has full access to internal legal support including a solicitor and a financial investigator. The mix of experience within the team is also providing legal career opportunities.

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Trading Standards have been able to release significant efficiency savings without impacting on front line capacity and productivity with the creation of JPS. This merger has removed duplication of regulator activity which would have previously been the case if separate teams had remained. For example the Petroleum and Safety of Sports Grounds inspections are sometimes delivered through a single regulator visiting and covering all areas resulting in greater efficiency.

Trading Standards now have the opportunity to carry out test burns at the Fire Training Centre. This is saving significant time and cost and is enabling a better joined up approach to Corporate Communications. This is resulting in more rapid safety releases on emerging risks (for example the work on Halloween Costumes which led to positive regional and national coverage). Further benefits were also achieved by convincing Tesco, a Primary Authority Scheme (PAS) partner, to source only fire retardant costumes for their stores nationally.

The sharing of intelligence is leading to prioritised risk targeting and early intervention for both education and compliance. There are examples of Trading Standards benefitting directly from sharing and collaboration with Fire Safety. This is resulting in effective tackling of emerging issues in Community and Fire Risk (for example Hover-boards and Power-bars). Fire Safety Inspectors (FSIs) and Trading Standards Officers (TSOs) are actively sharing concerns via shared ICT systems and shared office facilities. This is leading to greater awareness of each other's risk resulting in earlier intervention. For example FSIs alerted TSOs to concerns over fire risks posed by the material in cushions which were being sold by a local retailer. This has resulted in these being removed from stores nationally and led to a successful prosecution. All FSI's and TSO's have received training on how to signpost to other regulators. This is supported through Better Business for All (BBfA).

The Strategic Assessment is setting the team's priorities leading to more effective action being undertaken by JPS.

There is a recognition of overlapping vulnerability profiles which is enabling regulatory and educational activity to avoid duplication (for example Beer Mats with County Community Safety Unit (CCSU) messages about 'drink-driving' were distributed by JPS Officers whilst targeting inspections in licenced premises).

Managers are multi-skilled and versatile in their delivery whilst recognising the limits of expertise that can be expected from businesses and individuals. The Joint Tasking Group is better able to react to new and emerging issues outside of the Strategic Assessment.

Trading Standards experience in delivering Primary Authority Scheme partnerships is directly guiding the Fire PAS partnerships. This has made it possible for 14 Fire PAS to be fast-tracked. Income generation from PAS partnerships is off-setting the impact of resource reductions whilst achieving a

net gain in regulatory compliance and community safety through national adoption of Fire PAS.

The 'Talking Heads' training package for business has been delivered to all regulators in Hertfordshire. This is leading to wider regulator appreciation of the business need which is reducing the regulatory burden on business and therefore supporting economic growth. This package has received national recognition and has been adopted into the national GRIP toolkit hosted by the Better Regulation Delivery Office (now Regulatory Delivery).

The Advocacy Network used input from the Asian Fire Service Association to train regulators on the issue of unconscious bias on a Development Day. This is enabling regulators to work better with ethnically diverse businesses in supporting regulatory compliance.

Over the last three years the Joint Protective Services has recovered over £375,000 through the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) following Trading Standards prosecutions. This resource has been re-invested into Community Risk Management. Income streams from Fire PAS are contributing significantly to the aspiration that this work becomes cost neutral.

ICT systems appear to be hindering the analysis and communication of risk intelligence. The 'APP' system used by Joint Protective Services does not process information relating to outcomes from activity. This in turn is limiting the scope for effective analysis. Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) on fire appliances are not as effective or resilient as they could be. This means that the communication of critical risk information discovered by Inspecting Officers to responding fire crews is being completed by an inefficient manual process.

There is a lack of clarity around outcomes achieved from Joint Protective Services activity. As a result Service Managers do not appear to establish clear successful outcomes criteria for routine work or reactive projects.

The Service is making good progress on the process of interrogating the APP system as a means of providing accurate performance management information. However, the focus on outputs and activity does not allow the scrutiny of performance in terms of outcomes. For example whilst an Inspector's work can be measured in terms of how many audits they may have completed, further work on achieving greater clarity about the level of risk reduction which has resulted from this work as management reviews focus primarily on quantitative measurements.

It was not clear to the team how JPS data is being factored into the IRMP or how effectively it is contributing to identifying IRMP outcomes. HFRS may find benefit in reviewing this in order to improve managers' understanding of how JPS data is utilised for IRMP to better assure the quality and effectiveness of processes.

It appears that the turnover of internal team members within JPS is resulting in a loss of experience. This is having a negative impact on progress and productivity due to the need to replace this capacity. The team would encourage the Service to give this some attention.

5.2 Prevention – *How well is the authority delivering its community safety strategy?*

There is forward-thinking leadership and an appreciation of the potential to influence the wider agenda and the strengths of HFRS for Prevention.

The HFRS 'Brand' is being used effectively to access vulnerability. The Service is supporting corporate priorities by using intelligence to prevent slips, trips and falls, contributing to health outcomes and is doing this without requiring additional budget.

HFRS is deploying a wide range of Prevention interventions. This includes rapid early intervention from Fire crews following hoarding referrals supporting sufficient multi-agency impact on reducing risk.

The Service deploys a wide number of youth engagement initiatives. The Service's work with the Prince's Trust has delivered an 82 percent success rate in advancing candidates into employment or further education.

The Service is leading in numerous road risk interventions such as the 'Learn to Live', 'Biker-down' and Driving test referrals initiatives to improve road safety outcomes in Hertfordshire.

The clear investment in preparing and delivering the training of firefighters in Safe and Well has improved their ownership and competence in delivering these. Partners on the Hoarding project were very impressed with HFRS's ability to out-perform targets and spoke highly of their experience of fire crews demonstrating ownership of and commitment to this agenda.

Effective partnership working is already having some positive impact through closer working with Public Health. However performance management against wider safety outcomes with stronger evaluation is an area which would benefit from further focus. Building on this further could potentially enable HFRS to benefit in respect of linking safety outcomes to its other Prevention and Protection activity through tapping into the wider experience, capacity and expertise in this area that Public Health could bring.

There were some concerns expressed about the sustainability of Prevention activities and initiatives in light of anticipated future resource reductions. There may be some value in further and more robust evaluation of impact to demonstrate the value for money benefits of this activity.

5.3 Protection – *How well is the authority delivering its regulatory fire safety strategy?*

The Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) is well planned and widely understood across the organisation as evidenced by Operational crews being effectively engaged and supported in delivering against the objectives of this programme.

Station Commander's (SCs) are actively engaged in Protection. A cross-section of SC's from across the Service all demonstrated a good level of understanding of the role of the Joint Protective Services (JPS) and were able to articulate in detail the effectiveness of Protection activities contributing to the multi-agency Event Safety planning process. The distribution of Operational Risk Information being communicated back to operational officers and crews via the Event Response Plans is also a strength and has positive impact on Preparedness.

Crews demonstrated a desire to complete Protection work once the strategy behind the crews doing this work had been clearly communicated to them and adequate training had been provided.

Protection is clearly visible in Operational Response. In a previous Peer Challenge, Protection was identified as not being well integrated with Operational Response. This has been addressed over time as a priority objective by JPS Protection senior managers and the profile of Protection has been raised significantly.

Station Liaison Officers (SLO's) are actively supporting Protection Activity undertaken by Station Crews and are contributing to the communication of operational risk information being found during JPS activities. Consequently, regulatory fire safety matters being discovered by crews during their lower level fire safety audits are signposted to relevant JPS Officers and operational risk information is reaching crews in a timely fashion.

For example, crews undertaking a routine visit became concerned regarding the sleeping accommodation above a scout hut. The matter was referred immediately to the on-duty FSI and a Prohibition Notice was served.

The clear leadership in BBfA is enhancing better regulation priorities. The Z-card produced through this partnership is a good example of regulator collaboration providing business with good levels of support and advice on compliance with regulation.

Protection senior officers are aware of the Protection succession risk and have commenced work on a plan to address this. Given the potential of the Protection succession risk to impact on the Service's capacity to deliver statutory fire safety functions, it may be prudent to add this issue to the HFRS Risk Register and undertake focussed work in this area. Protection activity could be better linked to risk reduction outcomes

The organisation does not appear to have clarity on the value of Grey book personnel in specialist Protection roles. There is not yet a clear distinction between the role separation of Green and Grey book personnel in Protection. For example a Fire Safety Inspector (Green book) performs exactly the same role as a Watch Manager (Grey). This could put HFRS at risk of challenge and make it difficult to defend its position as budget pressures increase. A clear mapping of the separate value that each role brings to Protection would help the Service to plan and maintain the capacity to perform all of their Protection duties without compromising on effectiveness to the detriment of regulatory compliance or firefighter safety. A clear distinction will also assist the Service in maximising the potential of each role across the structure of Protection.

The Protection succession risk could pose significant challenges to the Service because of the potential for a number of experienced fire safety officers and managers to leave the Service within a short timeframe. The high level of knowledge and commitment that is currently underpinning the technical strengths of Protection along with the dependence on mentoring to develop and maintain fire safety competence will need to be taken into consideration within the succession planning process. In the event of the department losing a number of officers, this could have an adverse impact. Replacing senior Protection officers and managers who could in the past rely on the high level of technical fire safety expertise in their direct reports will not be easy and some thought should be given to addressing this as a priority.

There is some reluctance among officers to move into Protection roles. There is a perception that promotion opportunities are limited which is causing a disincentive for Operational personnel to move into Protection. This perception is worthy of additional focus from HFRS.

Plans to re-develop the town centre of Stevenage have potential to exacerbate the Protection succession risk. As a consequence HFRS may miss opportunities to prevent capacity loss impacting on their Protection objectives (for example influencing fire safety consultations for new buildings and developments to avoid these causing a detriment to firefighter safety and effectiveness).

The Regulators Code (Enterprise & Regulatory Reform Act) requires regulatory authorities to demonstrate the competence of their inspecting and auditing officers. This requires that officers conducting audits and inspections under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order are qualified to do so (minimum Level 4 Certificate of the CFOA Business Fire Safety National Qualifications framework). There is a small risk that the Service could be challenged to demonstrate that their officers are competent particularly during enforcement action. One possible solution could be for more experienced officers trained prior to the National framework being implemented being justified as having competence through acquisition and application of their fire safety knowledge, skills and experience. Although they may not have transitioned to the National framework this would be a pragmatic solution given the time and costs of achieving the qualification. The retirement-age

profile of existing experienced fire safety officers emphasises the need to prioritise development of newer fire safety officers. There would be some value in replacing the phrase 'low-level RBIP audit', which is the term used to describe RBIP work by fire crews, with the term 'low-level RBIP assessment' to avoid the risk of challenge under the Regulators' Code. There is also more to do around the quality assurance of operational crews performing Protection activities.

There may be some value in further educating partner agencies with respect to referrals. This could help to remove pressure on HFRS Protection capacity and allow further opportunities for utilising partner knowledge and intelligence to shape their understanding of the risk profile. This is already happening between Trading Standards and Fire Safety and there is an opportunity to replicate such practice

5.4 Preparedness- *How well is the authority ensuring that its responsibilities for planning and preparing are met?*

HFRS are clearly embedded and shows strong leadership with the CFO chairing the LRF. There is access within these structures to resilience professionals with technical qualifications within HCC and District Councils. HFRS are well placed to drive progress within the LRF sub-groups with structured teams to support them.

There is evidence that Resilience Direct is used by HFRS and their LRF partners to publish and share Emergency Plans and Business Continuity Plans. These plans are shared with neighbouring LRF groups that may respond into Hertfordshire.

The LRF exercises on the Community Risk Register Risks. These exercises are prioritised based on 'Very High' and 'High' risk ratings.

Exercise outcomes are shared through the LRF Management Group and are Red/Amber/Green (RAG) rated. Recommendations and actions are monitored through this group to ensure they are completed. This ensures all partners benefit from these learning outcomes.

HFRS may wish to explore the opportunity to promote the LRF outside of its constituent partners. This may raise awareness to other organisations of the benefits the LRF can bring to exercises. This can assist in avoiding duplication of effort and capitalise on other resources in exercise planning.

HFRS may find value in focusing on a single team for RDS recruitment and apply a degree of flexibility around RDS establishment numbers to assist in filling RDS vacancies at key times and days of the week.

HFRS may wish to consider the utilisation of more day staff to assist in proving fire cover during the working week. The Service may also find value in enhanced monitoring of the use of day crewed plus personnel within their current relief strategy.

Some operational crews were unaware the OPI's were held on MDTs and were still accessing potentially out of date documents on stations.

The team would encourage HFRS to consider an RDS availability based scheme to reward personnel for their true levels of cover based on RAPPEL data. This could be in the form of band based payments.

HFRS may wish to consider the effect of using pre-arranged overtime for resilience planning as this may prove to be unsustainable in the long term.

5.5 Response **–** *How well is the authority delivering its response, call management and incident support activities?*

There is a strong sense of professional pride within the Service. Personnel expressed a real desire to perform to the highest standards. Middle managers on the Flexible Duty System have operational references in addition to corporate and management responsibilities. Staff are well equipped with up to date appliances and equipment. One team stated that their appliances and equipment had never been so well maintained following a change of duty system to Day Crewed Plus. This was an indication of greater ownership and pride at a local level.

HFRS has produced a Firefighting discussion paper to review current response methods where "Smart Firefighting" could provide an even more effective and efficient Response function which is a long standing strength of the Service.

Fire Control personnel attendance at debriefs adds value to the organisational learning following incidents. This enables a 'one-team' approach to organisational learning from the first 999 call through to operational response and successful resolution of the incident.

"On watch" quality assurance of Fire Control call handling improves best practice. This has helped evaluate call challenging and assisted in getting correct and accurate information at time of call. There was a clear understanding of the importance of getting the right information at initial time of call and how this can advantage the operational response.

Fire Control has a pragmatic approach and applies common sense to balance call handling and mobilisation. An example of this would be taking longer to gather information and taking longer than the KPI time for high risk incidents such as CBRN or where the location of an incident may not be initially clearly identified by the caller e.g. in rural areas or on the road network.

Fire Control staff have situational awareness of incidents by good use of the motorway camera system. The ability to relay information to responding crews through the observation of incidents via the camera system enables Fire Control to determine the accuracy of call information, apparent risks and

if the incident is escalating. The positive relationship with Highways England is notable and this was displayed during the visit to the Fire Control Room.

Fire Control convey key information to crews dynamically via MDT and radio. This was seen as common practice and was confirmed in conversations with Fire Control and operational staff. The mix of pre-incident inspection and information gathering with emerging intelligence enables incident commanders to build the fullest picture of the incident in hand. There was also an understanding of the issues around correctly managing data and how it should be handled e.g. not having personal or sensitive information transferred via tele printer messages as these can be left or lost at incidents.

Liaison clearly exists between Fire Control and other teams in HFRS to improve operational response. For example Control staff are regularly involved on Incident Command assessments, on training centre courses, visiting fire stations and input to Flexible Duty System officers on the role and capability of HFRS Control.

Fire Control staff are trained to interrogate and interpret data from Chemdata and Hazard Manager. This eliminates the need for a Hazardous Materials Liaison Officer (HMLO) to attend Fire Control and also maximises the added value Fire Control add to operational response.

The Review team were impressed by the high engagement by the crew at the Day Crewed Plus station that they visited. It was evident that the recruitment of the right staff improves pride, attitudes, ownership and professional standards on station. Conversation during the visit was positive and inspiring showing what can be achieved when the team are built at a local level.

Day crewed plus crewing system was seen as being beneficial to operational competence call rate per firefighter. During periods where nationally call rates have halved the ability to expose operational personnel to the maximum amount of real emergencies will enable them to maintain and review individual and team competencies.

HFRS may want to explore immediately improving ICT access for responders as they require multiple logins and training content cannot be viewed on station computers. This has led to frustrations of staff when using internal ICT systems. The team were surprised that not all staff have email accounts and that some crew managers had to use the watch managers logon ID to access the training system.

HFRS is producing recommendations for an electronic operational assurance tool to improve assurance systems and organisational improvement. This project is on the service timeline and scheduled for spring 2017. The Peer Challenge team felt that having this in place along with the leadership supporting it is positive. However the team was equally aware of other projects that were being scheduled for a similar time and feels strict programme management across HFRS will be important to ensure that this is successfully delivered.

The "Text Anywhere" facility is being used for resilience purposes in crewing and recall to duty. This was seen as a good use of technology but a view from conversations with Representative Bodies indicated that it can be a bit 'broad brush' and the effectiveness of it has been lost as messages are sent frequently. A more targeted approach should be considered to increase the potency of the system which could improve the response by staff during periods of critical crewing levels.

5.6 <u>Health and Safety</u>**-** *How well is the authority ensuring its responsibilities for health, safety and welfare are met?*

Investment in the Health and Safety unit of an additional practitioner with relevant industry qualifications was seen as a positive move. Previously the post had been occupied by an ex-serving Grey book employee. The recruitment of a Health and Safety practitioner not only added value but also allowed the Health and Safety manager to operate at the appropriate level within HFRS.

The use of PROTECT magazine online to highlight Health and Safety issues is a useful tool in the opinion of the Peer Challenge Team. The ability to easily and quickly access Health and Safety information via the internal magazine enables staff to be informed of the type of approaches and practice that will make them safer and more effective in the workplace.

A positive culture on the reporting of Health and Safety events has been developed and monitoring of reporting is clearly in hand. Increase of reporting was not seen as a negative as it is not an indication of an increase in safety events but an acceptance of a desire by HFRS to make the workplace safer. This will allow the Health and Safety Department to feed into operational learning and therefore reduce reoccurrences of the incidents.

The Health and Safety unit frequently visit fire stations to educate staff on the work they do, reporting systems and the importance of a no-blame culture among other things. This helps underpin the increased reporting of safety events and the confidence in the relationship between operational staff and the Health and Safety team.

Health and Safety staff have a good awareness of 7(2) d's, SSRI and OPI. It is encouraging that there is a common understanding of embedded systems across teams, whether operational or non-operational.

The Health and Safety manager expressed how positive the support they receive from a strategic level is. The relationship with the ACFO and DCFO was repeatedly raised as an improved situation over recent years following some reorganisation within HFRS. This clearly gave the manager confidence about what is expected because this high level of support is in place.

Development of the RIVO system for recording safety events was being conducted and was observed in the test environment. However the Health

and Safety manager was unaware of the wider ICT programme and there needs to be a greater level of co-ordination to make sure the potential of the RIVO system is maximised.

The Health and Safety manager has been in HFRS for a number of years and in post for a period which has enabled a level of consistency in delivering Health and Safety outcomes. More recently the manager has been able to build a team which in spite of being relatively small is determined to improve Health and Safety across the Service. The team felt it important to recognise the good work observed and the positive influence the team is having. However due to the small team size, which is not unusual for a service the size of HFRS, there could be issues around capacity to deliver if one or more of the Health and Safety team were unavailable for extended periods. The Service may wish to further assure itself that it has the necessary resilience in this regard.

The connection between HIVE and RIVO or other ICT products was not clear to the Peer Challenge team. The Health and Safety manager sits on other boards and committees and as such it should not be difficult to integrate the team into any current or future ICT development programmes. This would ensure they have full view of how RIVO might 'talk to' and integrate into other software packages.

The development of RIVO is another ICT project which has been earmarked but not yet started. This should be supported and development of this package needs to be integrated into the wider ICT strategy.

5.7 Training and Development – *How well is the authority ensuring its responsibilities for training, development and assessment of its staff are met?*

Strategic support in the provision of training facilities has improved the efficiency and effectiveness of training and development by ensuring a geographical spread of potential training locations across the service area. This has decreased travel times for crews and individuals attending training evolutions and has created various satellite sites allowing for a greater diversity of training opportunities for operational staff.

A restructure of the training staff roster which has complimented the additional training facilities has allowed for a seven day a week training delivery programme. This is ensuring that potential bottle necks caused by facilities without instructors has been alleviated. This roster is currently being reviewed to better understand whether further improvements to training provision can be achieved to the greatest benefit of staff, the Service more widely and ultimately to the various communities across Hertfordshire.

The additional capacity achieved by these restructures has supported the quality of training in areas such as the initial 20 week RDS recruits course which is viewed as being of a high standard. It may be possible to improve this training without reducing overall quality by investigating if the period over

which the course is run could be compressed. This would have the effect of creating a more effective development process for the Service and its needs.

A clear vision on solutions to the current IT issues has been set out. Once implemented this will greatly assist in achieving HFRS's objectives in not only the training and development arena but also across the wider Health and Safety function.

Senior officer commitment and involvement in the development of future officers which prepares them for their new roles. The use of preparation materials such as the "Is it for me videos" has ensured that all staff are aware of what is expected of them and that they are supported in their progression.

This support is also in place for the maintenance of targeted development. Flexi officer input days have been produced to prepare the officers for assessments and ultimately operational activities. This ensures that the reduction of operational opportunities are being offset by simulated development and assessment days.

These input days are facilitated by trained assessors whose qualifications and maintenance of skills are regularly updated. This is ensuring that a high level of internally moderated training provision is being provided.

The Technical Fire Safety (TFS) Training delivered to Whole Time personnel is a good example of the efficient use of targeted training in order to release capacity elsewhere in the Service. This has allowed these staff to carry out simple audits during their operational shift which has in turn freed up TFS officer time. This efficient use of time and resource is allowing these officers to focus on the more complex technical issues which contributes positively to protecting the built environment across Hertfordshire.

This commitment to development for all staff is well supported by career pathways which set out the direction of travel and what is expected at each stage of promotion. This is available to both operational and support staff. These pathways are also used in conjunction with competency logs thereby setting out once again a clear route map of what is expected of all staff.

The commitment from the Senior Leadership of the Service to training and development has created a strong psychological contract between staff and the organisation. This was borne out throughout the Peer Challenge by the commitment and passion of staff toward their Service.

A wider Workforce Development strategy including overarching learning and development priorities could be used as a signpost document to the supporting training and development policies which are in place.

The process of evaluation of training currently being carried out across the Service seemed to mainly focus at Level One only (i.e. reaction to the training via 'happy sheets'). The additional levels of 2 (learning achieved), 3

(behaviour changes) and 4 (results produced) could be further investigated to fully appreciate the value of the training.

As a result the potentially rich information required to inform positive future training evolution is not being fully utilised.

Knowledge of the procurement of training delivery was varied across the Training directorate. This could be improved by ensuring all budget holders have had relevant training and have sight of service requirements on the purchasing of training provisions.

It was not clear how the implementation of positive action as part of the next Whole Time recruit intake will be achieved. HFRS is also aware of concerns about how the cost of living in the local area may be impacting adversely on the recruitment and retention of suitable staff.

Succession planning and the process of implementing this is a concern that was expressed by several staff. This was due in part to the low levels of new personnel entering HFRS which in turn has reduced the ease with which key positions can be replaced. It will be important for the Service to consider how the experience and skills which will be leaving HFRS at both middle and senior management positions in the medium to long term will be replaced.

Succession planning within the training department was also highlighted as a more specific potential problem. It appears staff were not keen on putting themselves forward for posts within the unit. HFRS may wish to consider whether an agreement could be secured from staff whereby some time is served in supporting Learning and Development in exchange for the personal development they benefit from. There may also be some value in considering whether a pre-assessment agreement could be implemented where successful candidates are advised that they may be utilised in any positions across the Service including such departments as Training and Community Safety.

The moderation process for operational competency could potentially be reviewed. This could be used in determining whether a specific cohort of assessors could be more regularly used to reduce some of the variations in assessment. Alternatively a more detailed and objective assessment process might improve consistency of approach.

A more consistent approach to RDS recruit probationary portfolio and ADC process for RDS officers which is consistent across the Service might ensure there are common standards between districts. It appears some RDS Recruits are receiving competency pay after 12 months without a sign-off for this competency being assessed against an agreed, documented standard. The Service may find benefit in reviewing this.

The current RDS recruit training period is spread over 20 weeks which can cause gaps between need and resources being available. There may be ways in which this period could be shortened without affecting the high quality of the

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resultant trained fire fighters and HFRS may find value in further exploring this.

Training records were held on various systems which are not fully connected. The Service may be missing opportunities to learn from data which could enhance the ongoing development of training provision. The Service may wish to assure itself further that it is utilising all such opportunities.

There seemed to be limited access and log-ons to training recording systems on stations. This appears to be an issue with the number of licences available to allow for individuals to independently log on. The team would encourage the Service to explore further ways in which this might be addressed.

The capacity for additional specialist bolt-ons such as FI and HazMat to flexi officer's normal day to day work was not clear. The expected CPD requirements seemed to vary. A potential way of addressing this might be to agree minimum CPD requirements for each specialism in order to make clear what is required for each field.

6. Partnerships

Overall the JPS is good at sharing good practice and lessons learned from different areas across the directorate. One such example is the way in which Trading Standards systems and practice is being applied across other areas of HFRS business.

HFRS is a valued and respected partner in public service delivery and seen to "punch above its weight" in terms of influence and impact. A good example of this successful partnering is the extension of the co-responding scheme with East of England Ambulance Service into other areas of the Service.

Consideration could be given to developing further conversations with SERCO the ICT provider to improve the ICT provision and develop greater integration. This could lead to better data quality.

HFRS may wish to explore Road Safety related income generation through SureCare such as Driver Awareness training and Bikeability schemes. There is a view among some staff that there may be further opportunities to do this than is currently the case.

7. Notable Practice

The Peer Challenge team would like to highlight the following as areas of notable practice:

- The breadth and commitment of the Advocacy Group supported by the Side by Side community engagement were seen by the team as notable practice. This level of true community engagement (which is enhanced through the community rooms on stations) is ensuring the Service understands and is integrated with the communities it serves.
- The introduction of the JPS department was a bold move to maximise the benefits of being integrated into the County Council. The team felt this was innovative and that following a number of years of implementation the service was deriving those benefits and this approach should be considered by other County Council Fire Services around the Country. There is clear evidence that the Joint Protective Services (JPS) department adds enormous value to community outcomes.
- HFRS has maximised the relations with health partners and learning from other Fire and rescue Services before implementing Safe and Well visits. The Service has considered the implementation in detail and approached this change in a way that other Fire and Rescue services could learn from. The Service has invested well in planning and implementing 'Safe and Well' visits by operational fire crews.
- HFRS chairs the Better Business for All partnership for Hertfordshire County. This is enabling the JPS Department to actively contribute to the Regulators forum to support economic growth and remove regulatory burdens for businesses in Hertfordshire. The Service is demonstrating a clear leadership role in this arena.

Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service - 'Quick wins'

- With the Advocacy group being seen as notable practice HFRS could quickly lever the benefits here into their decision making process. This would be particularly important and powerful as the Service plans its next IRMP.
- One of the key benefits of establishing the JPS is to learn from others in related fields. One aspect of this is the flexibility and mobility of the Trading Standards team. It was felt that this approach could be quickly introduced into the Fire Safety Team to help them become equally efficient.

Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service - 'Game changers'

We have tried to capture at the end of this report the things that we found that are easy to achieve but if progress could be made on them it would strengthen the Service, remove uncertainty and some frustration and increase efficiency and sustainability. Overall these three issues could progress a good organisation into a great one and ensure it remains so.

<u>ICT</u>

It is clear the creating a solid ICT infrastructure (and integrated systems to work upon it which enable rather than hold back the service) will be crucial for future success. The Peer Challenge team recognise the difficulties in achieving this as this capability is being provided through HCC and SERCO. The team also recognises that there are financial constraints. However the team feels that a different approach needs to be considered which could ease the current significant levels of frustration and enable the Service to deliver better outcomes for the community.

<u>Estate</u>

The estate is not in good repair and does not provide a modern progressive environment for a new culture to grow. Capital investment needs to be considered and faster progress made on projects that have been discussed for many years. Once again the peer review team felt that this aspect although complex and difficult to achieve could be a game changer for the service.

<u>Succession planning</u>

An examination could be undertaken of the Service as to where the single points of failure are or where teams could become vulnerable due to change. In order to pre-empt a loss of continuity the approach taken within the Strategic Leadership Group ought to be replicated across all levels of the Service.

Conclusion and contact information

Through the peer challenge process we have sought to highlight the many positive aspects of Hertfordshire Fire and 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.

Following HFRS's invitation, members of the peer team will be available to return to work with the Service as it takes forward the messages within this report. Gary Hughes (the Local Government Association's Principal Advisor for the East of England) 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 LGA, its resources and packages of support.

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

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Appendix 1 – Contents of the feedback presentation delivered to HFRS on Friday 14 October 2016

Governance and decision making

Areas of Strength

- Linkages to national context (particularly through the CFO and other colleagues)
- SLG providing good governance
- Solid risk management and performance management processes

Areas to Explore

- The expertise of the Advocacy Group not being fully utilised for Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) and therefore decision-making
- Ensuring that the FBU is informed or involved at the earliest stage in project work (e.g. FBU involvement in Occupational Health Unit Review and Bluelightmind launch)

Understanding of Local Context and Priority setting

Areas of Strength

- The FRS budget makes up 5 percent of the County budget. However HFRS senior team's influence and leverage within the HCC far exceeds this figure.

Areas to Explore

- Equalities quickly drops down the agenda when other priorities come into play

Financial Planning and Viability

Areas of Strength

- Financially strong and supporting HCC financial challenge providing financial leadership in the wider-setting
- Efficiencies coming forward from Fire but an understanding that these are not always acceptable politically or via the community and therefore go through a filtering process as part of the consideration (as they are considered)
- Developing commercial opportunity through Sure Care
- Solid financial planning and governance with clear accountability and scrutiny through HCC.

<u>Areas to Explore</u>

- The level of capital investment in buildings and estate is a concern with only 3 new fire stations being built in the last 40 years
- Financial challenges facing both HCC and HFRS are linked with a changing relationship with the community and the increasing influence of council tax
- HFRS may wish to explore Road Safety related income generation opportunities such as Driver Awareness Training and Bikeability schemes

Organisational Capacity

<u>Areas of Strength</u>

- Appropriate connections with CFOA and national work looking for efficiencies on the right issues but mindful of the HCC connections (e.g. procurement)
- Use of Longfield site is a good example of maximising the potential of the asset including partner involvement
- A transparent and mature approach to SLG succession planning
- Cultural shift which is moving away from uniform and hierarchy is having a positive impact on capacity and capability (e.g. JPS Grey/Green Book shift)
- FBU representation on Health and Safety Coordination Group, Strategic Operations Training Board, Equality Action Group and Appliance Equipment Planning Board

<u>Areas to explore</u>

- Information overload – managers' concerned about amount of 'paper work' coming out leading to a concern about being up to date on important issues
- ICT systems are acting more as a burden than an enabler.
- HFRS may wish to take opportunities to engage further with SERCO to improve ICT systems and limit the frustration of staff
- Unseen work of equalities team in supporting cultural shift
- No clear capacity or management of transformational change as opposed to service improvement (PMO?)

- Feeling that although there is drive for changes in estate (HQ), there is also a resistance to change within Fire
- Consideration of RDS talent bank to draw on for projects

- Apparent lack of integration of IT systems – potential negative impact on production of IRMP due to potential for ineffective data management

Delivering outcomes for local communities

<u>Areas of Strength</u>

- Community rooms on stations being used to integrate and educate crews around community culture
- Good examples of the Service achieving good community engagement are:
1. Safe and Well Visits
2. Advocacy Group
3. Volunteers

<u>Areas to explore</u>

- Greater involvement with the FBU in RDS recruitment campaigns – enthused and energised about helping create solutions
- Text Anywhere facility can be overused and could lose impact. Consideration could be given to how this might be better targeted.

Managerial Leadership

<u>Areas of Strength</u>

- Strong visible leadership of the senior team with developing managers
- Good capacity, knowledge, on same page and confidence of SLG – still developing but high performing
- Consistency of understanding and priorities through middle management
- HCC and HFRS are becoming more culturally aligned

<u>Areas to Explore</u>

- Although cultural shift is seen as a positive, certain aspects are acting as drag weights (e.g. estate, imagery, language/roles [Green/Grey])
- Pockets of old culture still seen across the organisation
- Potential loss of CFO's wide ranging responsibilities needs to be fully appreciated
- Service level projects not naturally thinking of equalities input (e.g. Live Burns project – ops. Diversity)
- Service is very focussed on operations which may be to the detriment of other aspects of service delivery

Political Leadership

Areas of Strength

- The Cabinet Member responsible for Fire is knowledgeable and respected by colleagues
- There is a good working relationship between the office of the PCC and HFRS
- The Cabinet Member is a regular attendee at LGA Fire events which gives him a broader understanding of national context and issues.

Areas to Explore

- There is uncertainty and a lack of a clarity on future governance arrangements. There would be benefit in the service and other stakeholders exploring options in order to achieve clarity.

Community Risk Management

Areas of Strength

- Significant impact in public health prevention
- Early impact on Safe and Well
- Annual Strategic Assessment informing risk priorities
- Wide range of relevant data sources
- District SCs actively contribute with local risk knowledge
- Strong prevention partnerships (e.g. hoarding, Safe and Well, Letterbox plates, immigration/vulnerable sleeping risk)
- Clear and effective multi-agency collaboration on ensuring event safety

Areas to Explore

- Performance management is focused on activity
- ICT systems seem unable to assist with risk-based targeting
- Some partnerships are over reliant on personal relationships
- Limited engagement by Adult Health Services and Mental Health Services re: hoarding

Effectiveness and performance of the Joint Protective Services (JPS) department

Areas of Strength

- Collaboration efficiencies
    - Access to legal resources
    - Maintained capacity in the face of reduced resources

- Sharing intelligence leading to prioritised risk targeting and early intervention for both education and compliance
- Development of regulators to support business
- Income generation
  - Primary Authority
  - Proceeds of Crime Act

Areas to Explore

- ICT systems hinder analysis and communication of risk intelligence
- Lack of clarity on outcomes achieved from JPS activity
- Unable to ascertain how JPS data is being factored into the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

Prevention

Areas of Strength

- Forward-thinking leadership
- Effective use of FRS Brand to access vulnerability
- Wide range of Prevention interventions
  - 8k HFSC visits per year/2-3 fire fatalities per year
  - Wide range of high performing youth engagement interventions
  - Numerous road risk interventions
- Ownership and competence in Safe and Well (Fire Crews)
  - Over-achievement of target
- Advocacy – effective model utilising volunteers:
  - Supporting ethnic business community
  - Access to interventions for Traveller community

Areas to Explore

- Ineffective ICT impacting on analysis and vulnerability targeting
- Limited evaluation of initiatives and performance linked to safety outcomes
- Concerns for sustaining Prevention activities in the face of future cuts

Protection

Areas of Strength

- Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) is well planned and widely understood across the organisation
- Operational crews effectively engaged and supported in delivering against the RBIP
- Clear leadership in Better Business for All enhancing better regulation priorities
- Good level of technical competence

Areas to Explore

- Protection activity not linked to risk reduction outcomes
- Distinction between Green and Grey book roles
- Significant succession risks:
    - Top heavy retirement profile risking significant loss of technical & managerial competence
    - Disincentive for operational officers to join JPS
    - Potential for retention risk for green book
    - Stevenage town centre redevelopment could exacerbate succession challenges

Preparedness

Areas of Strength

- Preparation is underway to review IRMP which is linked to improvement strategies and financial challenges
- Clear links from current IRMP to district and station plans
- HFRS is clearly embedded with the LRF at all levels and is well placed to drive progress within those groups
- Resilience Direct is used by HFRS and its partners to publish and share business continuity plans
- The LRF exercises are prioritised by the Community Risk Register ; HFRS ensures all partners benefit from outcomes

Areas to Explore

- Raise awareness outside of your existing LRF partners to assist in avoiding duplication of effort in exercise planning
- Focus on a single team for RDS recruitment and apply a degree of flexibility around RDS establishment numbers and turn out tolerance
- Consider a greater use of day staff and nucleus crewing
- Further monitor the use of Day Crew Plus personnel in its relief strategy
- Confirmation that all crews are aware of the OPIs being held on MDTs and all paper versions held on station destroyed
- Reservists could provide some future potential to reduce pressure on RDS availability (Staff Bank)

Response

Areas of Strength

- There is a strong sense of professional pride and staff are well equipped with up to date appliances and equipment

- Firefighting Strategy to review current response methods will provide 'smart firefighting' and more efficient response
- HFRS is looking to improve electronic operational assurance tool to improve assurance systems
- Day Crewing Plus recruitment of the right staff – improved pride, attitudes, ownership and professional standards.
- Day Crewing Plus system is beneficial to operational competence – call rates per firefighter

(Specific to Control)

- Attendance at debriefs adds value to organisational learning following incidents
- Internal quality assurance process is improving operational effectiveness
- Pragmatic approach to call handling and mobilisation and are encouraged to apply operational discretion and professional judgement.
- Text anywhere facility is being used for resilience purposes in crewing and recall to duty
- Contact between with other teams creates a stronger service (e.g. involvement on ICS assessments, training centre courses, visits by stations and FDS input)
- Interrogation and interpretation of data by staff of Chemdata and Hazard Manager

Areas to Explore

- Consider an RDS availability policy which rewards true levels of cover to assist in more accurate recording on RAPPEL
- HFRS may wish to consider immediately improving ICT access for responders on station
- Incident Command and Officer Specialisms – ability to maintain competence
- District Commanders with additional service references in addition to operational and managerial responsibilities
- Smart Firefighting project in addition to other work could cause capacity issues and failure to deliver projects on time and to quality
- There is a strong sense of professional pride and staff are well equipped with up to date appliances and equipment
- Firefighting Strategy to review current response methods will provide 'smart firefighting' and more efficient response
- HFRS is looking to improve electronic operational assurance tool to improve assurance systems

- Day Crewing Plus recruitment of the right staff – improved pride, attitudes, ownership and professional standards.
- Day Crewing Plus system is beneficial to operational competence – call rates per firefighter

Health and Safety

Areas of Strength

- Strategic support given to all H&S aspects
- Investment in H&S unit via an additional practitioner
- H&S compliance with regard to training school staff (Number of wears)
- Use of PROTECT magazine online to highlight H&S issues
- Positive culture on the reporting of H&S events
- Development of the RIVO system for recording safety events

Areas to Explore

- No resilience for health and safety unit notification when staff sick or on holiday
- H&S manager not linked into any ICT project boards
- No clear connection between HIVE and RIVO or other ICT products

Communication of Risk Information to Crews

Areas of Strength
- OPERA collects information which feeds into SOTB to improve outcomes
- Station liaison officer is recognised role in supporting the collation and recording of risk information
- SIS, 7(2)d have a structure behind them for inspection and can complete ad hoc update to system files at station end
- Mixture of green and grey book positions in digital services seen as a good mix of technical and operational posts
- Clear inspection regime in place using a risk based approach on frequency of visit
- Clear regional and local liaison in exercising around risks including section 13/16 arrangements
- Everyone owns risk information keeping all staff safe
- Staff familiar with accessing information from MDTs and updates sent dynamically with good use at incidents

- IT systems are not linked to allow the efficient management of risk information (Sophtlogic, FP activity via email)
- Ensure that all crews are aware of the OPIs being held on MDTs and all paper versions held on station destroyed
- Development of risk information process on hold due to ESMCP
- Limited initial training of crews in accessing risk information on MDT's

Workforce Development – Training and Development

Impacts
- People
  - Succession planning (Short Medium and Long-term)
  - Cost of living
  - Green Book/Grey Book
  - Positive Action
  - Financial
  - Vocation vs. job
- Plant
  - IT development
  - Facilities – future proofing
- Process
  - Increase in information
  - More specialist information

Structure, effectiveness and performance of HFRS Training provision

Areas of Strength

- Enhanced training facilities.
- Strong psychological contract.
- High standard of RDS training.
- Good use of flexi preparation days

Areas to Explore

- Overarching Workforce Development Strategy would be beneficial
- Evaluation and quality assurance of training could be further enhanced
- The overall approach of HFRS in relation to succession planning would benefit from further review
- There would be value in the Service formalising clearer expectations to resource flexi specialisms
- There is more to do to ensure that all IT systems are better interconnected
- Incentivise specialist post positions

Partnership Engagement

<u>Areas of Strength</u>

- Inclusion in the JPS department of HCC gives close connectivity to other community safety organisations
- HFRS is a valued, respected and highly-regarded partner in public service delivery
- The Service is 'punching above its weight' in influence and impact
- The Community Advocacy Forum is well placed to communicate with hard-to-reach groups using an innovative approach
- Current co-responding scheme success has led to East of England Ambulance Service agreeing an extension of the scheme to other areas of the county.

<u>Areas to Explore</u>

- Changes to the governance of HFRS could threaten reputation and effectiveness
- Resource needs may change as Protection and Prevention initiatives develop (e.g. further secretarial/administrative support for the Advocacy Forum)

Hertfordshire FRS Areas of Notable Practice

- Advocacy Group and Side by side community engagement (e.g. Training on unconscious bias – example of good practice which could be fed into work on a national toolkit)
- Effectiveness and performance of the Joint Protective Services (JPS) department.
- Collaboration with Trading Standards yields clear benefits more for less
- Safe and Well – the implementation along with the public health and research undertaken
- Leadership role in Better Business for All
- Control – strong leadership and clear willingness/desire to apply operational discretion. Also the relationship with Highways Agency and motorway cameras to bring better operational situational awareness to crews
- Day Crew Plus

Hertfordshire FRS 'Quick Wins'

- District Commander reassurance of Incident Command
- Potential of advocates informing EIAs
- Proportionate evaluation before, during and after project delivery
- Adaption to trainers roster will close pinch points in delivery
- Flexibility in RDS FTE establishment levels to support response

- Transfer OPI hard copy to MDTs (or at least put the hard copy in appliances)
- Potential to learn from Trading Standards to achieve more flexible mobile working to increase efficiency of Fire Safety Officers

Hertfordshire FRS 'Game Changers'

- Succession Planning
- ICT
- Estate