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ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY

BVR	Best Value Review
CMB	Corporate Management Board
CPA	Comprehensive Performance assessment
FBU	Fire Brigades Union
FRS	Fire and Rescue Service
GLA	Greater London Authority
GLC	Greater London Council
HR	Human Resources
IPA	Initial Performance assessment
IRMP	Integrated Risk Management plan
LFB	London Fire Brigade
LFCDA	London Fire and Civil Defence Authority
LFEPA	London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority
NHS	National Health Service
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
SHRM	Strategic human resource management
CPA.	Part of the wider improvement agenda set out in the local government white paper <i>Strong Local Leadership – Quality Public Services</i> . The emphasis being to recognise good performance in allowing greater freedoms and flexibilities from central government controls and restrictions and for poorer performance to assist with better focuses support for improvement.
HR Committee	Elected members from the Fire Authority with specific references for HR, Equality and Diversity
IRMP	In general terms, sets out the strategies for prevention, protection and intervention. Has replaced national standards of fire cover, which set out speed and weight of response to fire depending on building density
Watch	Team of fire fighters and supervisors who work together at the station, in a factory this would be identified as a shift

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ABSTRACT

In 2002, fire fighters took part in a series of strikes as part of a pay campaign to increase the salary of fire fighter to £30,000 per annum. This resulted in a direct confrontation with the Government who believed their strategy would strike at the heart of the public sector pay agreements. Government involvement has traditionally been hands off, neatly illustrated by the date of Act of Parliament which provided the legislative basis for the Service – 1947. However, industrial action prompted the Government to commission an independent review of the UK Fire and Rescue Service. This review place in 2002 and what followed has generally been termed the ‘modernisation agenda’ and has significantly affected the management of the Fire and Rescue Service and impacted on the morale of it’s’ staff. Since the review, a white paper published in 2003 consolidated by National Frameworks for the period 2003/2004 and 2004/2005, a fire services bill released in 2003 and the new Fire and Rescue Services Act (FRSA) enacted in 2005 have provided the national frameworks for change. However tradition has died hard in the fire service and this dissertation is about whether strategic human resource management has assisted with this change in modernising the Fire and Rescue Service.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research is to evaluate whether Strategic Human Resource Management is helping to deliver ‘modernisation’ in London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) and attempts to tease out whether strategic human

resource management was 'designed' into delivering the modernisation agenda or whether it happened by 'default'. It introduces the concept of problems associated with modernising an organisation which by its very nature, cannot be shut down whilst it reorganises. In essence, to see if LFEPA's comment that 'we believe that we have many of the building blocks to direct and successfully achieve the change that is required '(IPA 2004:2) is right.

Government has increasingly become aware of the fire service since industrial action in 2002 prompted them to commission a review of the fire service, which was led by Sir George Bain. The review commented that despite the fire service being 'a professional body deserving much credit for its performance ... modernisation is long overdue. The challenge is great. Action is required to legislate for the changes' (Bain 2002:3). As a result government intervened, identified the necessary modernisations and set local fire authorities (in this case LFEPA) the task of implementing those changes. A number of fire authorities were actively supporting and encouraging this change, LFEPA was one such authority. Bain noted that

Business needs will be the driven to a large extent by an Authority's IRMP. This will set out; when and where people and other resources are needed; how they will be used, in operational and non-operational roles; and what skills are required. Fire and Rescue Authorities should ensure that their HR strategy fully reflects the needs set out in the IRMP".

Whilst in theory this may sound simple, the words of the Head of HR sum up the enormity, "...we have recognised over the last 2 years that change management is a lot more complex and with a much broader set of interdependencies that perhaps we realised from the outset"

It is against this background and the research proposal (Rolph 2005) that this research has been conducted.

The research proposal identified that the research was viable, would contribute to the wider knowledge and in particular the focus is one, which has not been done before.

The research questions focused on three specific issues:

- 1 What is SHRM in the Public Sector and in particular, the Fire & Rescue Service (FRS)?
- 2 What is modernisation in the Fire & Rescue Service?
- 3 How is SHRM contributing to the modernisation of the Fire & Rescue Service?

LFEP is introduced in chapter 2 and sets into context the current operating environment for the Authority & Service and defines government expectations of the 'new' FRS. The literature review in chapter 3 attempts to weave together some leading thoughts on strategic human resource management and its ability to affect organisational change. Starting with an explanation of the differences between strategic management and strategic human resource management, this chapter then considers organisation development and performance management; finally moving to consider strategic human resource management in the public sector and its approach to 'new public management'. Also presented is the initial conceptual framework, which evolved from the literature review. The research methodology is described in chapter 4 and chapter 5 brings together previous chapters with the research findings assessed alongside the literature review. Chapter 6 presents the conclusions of this research and considers the question whether Strategic Human Resource Management is occurring by 'design or default' with the final chapter outlining practical recommendations.

CHAPTER 2. ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

This chapter introduces LFEPA, sets into context the current operating environment and outlines government expectations of the 'new' FRS. It sets the scene on the modernisation programme and the plans for implementation.

LFEPA and its history

In 1963, the London Government Act was passed which paved the way for the establishment of the London Fire Brigade (LFB) as it is today. The Greater London Council (GLC) took over control from the London County Council from 1 April 1965 and as a result there was a new fire authority that amalgamated fire services from London, Middlesex, West and East Ham, Croydon, and parts of Essex, Hertfordshire, Surrey and Kent. The new fire service consisted of over 5000 firefighters and was by far the largest in the UK, and still is today.

Local Government re-organisation in 1986 saw the abolition of the GLC and responsibility for political control of LFB passed to the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority (LFCDA) on 1 April.

The LFCDA was composed of one councillor from each of the 32 London boroughs and a representative of the City of London. In tandem with the political change LFB was restructured into five Area Commands to cover its 620 square miles of responsibility.

The next two decades saw a number of developments, which radically changed LFB; their traditional black-clad appearance gave way to new high visibility uniforms and the wheeled escape and hook ladders gave way to lighter, manoeuvrable alloy ladders. Over the years, the role of the Fire & Rescue Service has developed to include fire prevention and community safety in addition to the traditional role of dealing with actual fire and rescue emergencies. More recently, the role of the FRS has also

expanded to involve the provision of frontline responses to the risk of natural disasters such as flooding and from threats of terrorism. This is captured by LFEPA in its statement that the purpose of a modern fire service is “to *help build a safer society by working in partnership with others to reduce death, injury, damage to property and damage to the environment from fire and other emergencies.*” (LFEPA submission: Independent review of the Fire Service October 2002). From that time onwards government has been very ‘hands on’, first in identifying the necessary modernisations and then in insisting that local authorities (in this case LFEPA) implement those changes. These expectations are outlined in the following. ‘Although Fire and Rescue Authorities should, in future, place greater emphasis on preventing fires from happening in the first place, the need for an effective response to incidents that do occur is not diminished. Fire and Rescue Authorities will need to develop their capacity to respond to new challenges such as terrorist incidents in accordance with the emerging needs of the national New Dimension programme’ (ODPM National Framework paragraph 3.2). In order to reflect the Government’s expectations the national conditions of service for fire fighters have been re-negotiated with the Fire Brigades Union (FBU). The changes include increased flexibility, revised shift patterns, alternative ways to crew fire appliances, pay formula based on competence and not experience and new promotion systems. Whilst the impact and effect of these changes largely directly affect firefighters, the ramifications touch all of the Authority staff.

These changes are significant in that they heralded a new order that was to see a fire service steeped in tradition forced to modernise more than its equipment and procedures, but tradition has died hard in the fire service and this dissertation is about whether strategic human resource management has assisted with this change.

LFEPA and the Greater London Authority

On 3 July 2000 the LFCDA became the London Fire & Emergency Planning Authority. The London Fire & Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) is one of the functional bodies of the Greater London Authority (GLA)¹. Elected Members of the Authority are appointed by the Mayor of London from the London Assembly (nine members) and the London boroughs (eight members) reflecting the political balance of each. The Mayor appoints the Chair of the Authority. The mayor's vision for London provides a framework, which LFEPA is expected to work to, along with the other functional bodies that make up the GLA (appendix 1).

LFEPA in Context ²

LFEPA is responsible for The London Fire and Rescue Service (known as the London Fire Brigade LFB), which provides a variety of services across the whole of the Greater London area. It remains the largest FRS in the country with over 7,000 staff of which 5,850 are operational fire fighters. The revenue budget for 2005/06 is £403.4m plus £13.3m capital programme. Allowing for government grant and business rate income the budget represents a notional precept on council tax payers (band D) of £44.15: a 4.4% increase on the previous year (2004/05) There are 112 fire stations (plus a river station on the Thames), all of which operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The fleet consists of 170 fire engines plus 63 specialist vehicles including vehicles that are specifically for terrorist or other catastrophic emergencies.

LFEPA and the wider Context

Whilst LFEPA is a sub committee of the GLA, government has a nominated minister for Fire within the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) with a responsibility for *“fire issues includes fire safety and prevention, national policy, developing*

¹ Also includes the Metropolitan Police Authority, Transport for London and the London Development Agency

² Extracted from the London Safety Plan 2005/2008

legislation and guidance, advice and support to fire authorities and Brigades, arson reduction, research and statistics. The aim is to reduce death, injury and damage relating to fire and other incidents” (ODPM website accessed 05/04/2005). In trying to move the fire service’s primary role to preventing fire rather than suppressing it, the government has set a considerable challenge to fire service managers. In particular such a change cannot be achieved by shutting down the industry, as so many great giants of British manufacturing were able to in the 1980’s. Revolutionary/transformational change (Burke 2002:76) has to be achieved without the revolution.

LFEPA and its organisational structure

An organisational structure can be found at appendix 2. The most senior LFEPA officer is the Commissioner for Fire and Emergency Planning; he is also the statutory Chief Fire Officer and chairs the Corporate Management Board. The Commissioner's role is to:

- provide overall coordination and promotion of the highest standards of management and operational practice throughout our organisation
- ensure the effective, efficient and economic discharge of our fire and emergency planning responsibilities
- provide leadership and direction through the provision of sound strategic plans to meet our objectives
- take ultimate responsibility for advising LFEPA on business decisions
- chair the Corporate Management Board (CMB)

The CMB meet fortnightly and take decisions or make recommendations to LFEPA about policy and resource planning. The Commissioner and the three Directors make up the board. The Head of Legal Services, Head of Democratic Services, Head of Finance, and the Assistant Commissioner (service delivery) are standing advisers to the board. The Head of Strategy, Performance and Planning is Secretary to the Board. The Director of Resources provides information, advice and expertise to help LFEPA meet strategic objectives through the optimal use of resources, in providing direction

and strategy for each of the areas of resource to enable them to contribute to the achievement of overall corporate strategy. Five heads of service report to the Director (see appendix 3), one of is the Head of Human Resources (HR). The Head of HR manages and develops the human resources function including local personnel services, employee relations, organisation and human resource planning, recruitment and selection, counselling and advisory services. The post holder is also responsible for the provision of advice, information and technical expertise on personnel matters to the authority, its members and senior management. An analysis of the HR function undertaken in 2004 (Popoola) found that the HR strength within the organisation was as a strategist and employee champion³. Gratton and Truss (2003) contend that for any HR function to be truly effective vertical alignment with business strategy, horizontal alignment between HR policies and high quality implementation needs to be present.⁴ Popoola (2004:6) found weak alignment both vertically and horizontally.

³ Using Ulrich & Connor role assessment strategy, the areas of change agent and administration expert scored low by comparison

⁴ 3 d model based on longitudinal study in the NHS

LFEPA and its modernisation programme

LFEPA began its journey in 2001 when a top management review was launched which culminated in the LFB having a presence in the London boroughs and redefining its role in the wider community safety agenda. It also created new performance management arrangements in order to drive and consolidate the change, and measure progress. During this period, LFEPA have been mindful of the impact modernisation had, and continues to have on its people “...upon the morale of firefighters who felt pilloried....it has left a low morale legacy.” (LFEPA IPA 2004:1). In 2003, the Audit Commission performed an initial performance assessment (IPA) of the GLA, which included LFEPA. IPA is based on the same principles and methodology as the Commission’s programme of comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) of councils throughout England. LFEPA has been judged as a “good” authority ⁵ with the Commission noting its strong ambition to make London safer underpinned by the London safety plan which sets out how London intends to deliver its services. However it cautions that target setting is not always realistic and some staff are not clear on what the priorities are and the future challenge is to continue to deliver its promised improvements and the wider change agenda. (Audit Commission 2004:4).

⁵ There are 5 categories, excellent, good, fair, weak and poor.

CHAPTER 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Strategic Human Resource Management

The previous chapter had identified key issues within the LFEPA and the wider fire service by introducing the previous and current operating environment and defining expectations for change. The modernisation programme and the plans for implementation were also explored.

This chapter attempts to weave together some of the leading views on the understanding of strategic human resource management and its role in taking organisations forward or assisting with change. It starts with a short explanation of strategic management and introduces strategic human resource management. The chapter then considers organisation development and performance management before moving to consider strategic human resource management in the public sector, presenting views on, what is now coined as, the 'new public management'. Also presented is the initial conceptual framework (see figure 3.1) which links eight themes considered necessary for human resource management to be strategic. These eight themes have evolved from the literature review and assisted in developing the lines of enquiry with the focus groups.

Classical strategic management suggests that organisations needed long-term goals and objectives within a framework of choices around the nature and direction of the organisation (Stoney 2001). One weakness with this approach is that the outside world is increasingly in a state of change and therefore management too must be flexible enough to respond (Stoney 2001). This challenge to the classical view suggests that all goals need to be subject to constant reappraisal and adjusted as circumstances demanded. Boxall and Purcell (2003:23) note that strategic managers

are concerned with explaining significant differences in business performance and then using HRM to influence performance.

Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) has therefore come about to manage people to achieve a goal that may in itself be in the state of flux. (see Beer et al 1985, Guest 1987, Storey 1992, Legge 1995, Purcell 1995 & 2001). The goal can be profit, moral/ethical, political or service driven, but it is essential that the goal is clear and achievable. Importantly everyone needs to be appraised as goals change to achieve current expectations and modernisations. However, the strategic human resource manager should always try to stay in front by having long term plans to achieve business objectives (Beer 1985; Guest 1987; Storey 1992; Tyson 1995; Ulrich 1997).

A framework for SHRM is provided by Walton's (1985) concept of "mutuality" to coordinate mutual goals, influence, respect, rewards and responsibility.

Sisson and Hope-Hailey contend that having the HR Director on the board is particularly important, whilst Purcell argues that as long as the Chief Executive or other senior members are attending to the strategic aspects of HRM, the precise functional composition of the board might be regarded as a secondary matter (Grattan et al. 1999:51).

Therefore, Sisson and Hope-Hailey view seems appropriate for the fire service. In this highly complex and political environment, where forces are at work to stall change, it is possible for SHRM to be marginalised and left as a 'side show'. It is therefore necessary for SHRM to be directly represented at board level to indicate the fire service has a commitment to working with its staff. This view is supported by Storey (1995:5)

“Human resource management is a distinctive approach to employee management which seeks to achieve competitive advantage through the strategic deployment of a highly committed and capable workforce using an array of cultural, structural and personnel techniques”.

There are also two views on how HRM should be managed which has particular resonance given the unique culture of the FRS. Hard HRM emphasises quantitative, calculative and business-strategic aspects of managing people as for any other economic factor; soft HRM traces its roots to the human relations school, emphasising communication, motivation and leadership. Whether ‘hard’ or ‘soft’, recognising that people management is strategic and that it is too important to be left for personnel managers lower down the management structure is perhaps a key to success.

SHRM is not without its critics or reservations. People cannot be managed in simple economic terms because they are not just numbers who will behave as predictably as two plus two, and it is important for managers to remember this (see Armstrong and Long (1996:31; Keenan and Anthony (1992); Ulrich (2001:2).

Organisational Development

Unquestionably, just as organisations fail, organisations can also develop; organisational development therefore, is a key aspect. However, evidence taken from trade unions, councillors and leading academics indicate the difficulties in trying to change the FRS. Ulrich (2001:18) comments that high performance work systems operate best when there is no union interference to achieving proper performance management, which would include compensating the workforce. It is questionable as to the extent which compensation/performance related pay could ever fully be part of

the Service culture given the stance of the FBU in relation to its desire to maintain collective, rather than individual agreements.

In recognising some of the barriers to change, the FRS has a number of organisational characteristics to build on, notably its renowned 'can do' approach. There is a body of opinion from authors such as Beckhard, Bennis, Blake and Mouton, Schein & Walton (cited in McCalman and Paton 1992) who regard organisational development as a process by which the members of the organisation can influence change and help the organisation to develop its goals more satisfactorily. Ulrich (2001:36) was also quite clear in this too when stating: 'The key thing is to state the firm's goals in such a way that employees understand their role and the organisation knows how to measure its success in achieving them'. However, Baigent's⁶ research on how firefighters actively resist changes adds an interesting dimension to how change could be actively delivered in an organisation where the managers (who want to lead on implementing change) have not convinced the firefighters (who seek to keep their job as it is) of the need to change. By seeking to tease how the people issues are managed, Ulrich suggests "*...that strategy implementation rather than strategy content differentiates successful from unsuccessful firms*" and to date the fire service has been strong on policy but lacked the ability to implement it. However in the light of findings in chapter 5, there is little challenge to Baigent's view and until managers recognise they are not convincing the workforce of the need to change, and lacking the ability to shut down the organisation to achieve it, there remains a considerable challenge. Beadwell and Holden (2001) note "*...that if you develop the manager, you develop the organisation*". This links neatly with the findings of the Tavistock studies (1979: taken from McCalman and Paton 1992:123), which highlights "*...the important role*

⁶ Baigent (2001:5) does not see firefighter's resistance in straightforward class terms, or solely in defence of their ethos.... Instead presenting a view that it is the way the fire service operates, as a life saving organisation is the means by which they understand themselves and through which they construct their identity and masculinity.

managers play in making decisions about work organisation, job allocations and the formation of the groups, and the amount of discretion allowed to workers". Despite Beadle and Holden's view (re)organising the workforce is not guaranteed just because the scheme looks good on paper. People are not (as suggested earlier) simply numbers, nor as mentioned in the methodology chapter can people be simply forced to fit with the theory because it is convenient.

Of particular interest are the elements of increasing trust and dealing with confrontation rather than 'sweeping it under the rug'. Trust has been a common word through out the interviews, the Commissioner highlights that there is a serious gap of trust between the leaders of the LFEPA and the workforce, "*...so its building that trust, a trust which has ownership and more confidence that are an organisation that can change with confidence, and have enthusiasm about the change*"

When this sentiment was presented to the firefighters, they agreed but surprisingly felt that "*the only way you'll get trust is to have a complete new intake⁷, which is never going to happen*". A middle manager commented, "*I don't think there is enough trust instilled in management to think they could tell us really what's going on*"

However again it is necessary to caution that building trust is not like applying an academic or accountant's formula, people are people and they do not always do as expected or respond as predicted.

Performance Management

Mabey & Salaman, 1995 as cited in Beardwell and Holden 2001:388).

state that Performance management can be conceptualised in the form of a cycle consisting of five elements; setting objectives, measuring outcomes, feedback of results, rewards linked to outcomes and reviewing and amending objectives.

⁷ It is understood that Intake referred to the CMB.

Shawcross ⁸(2001) commented that where 'staff were managed within a rigid controlling hierarchy with activities prescribed to them and supervised by officers who wanted to constrain them to a rigid framework results were rarely seen, as opposed to where people had been granted relative freedom to identify priorities, achieve outcomes and a chance to be creative and develop communication skills'. Others support this view and those interviewed all expressed views that goal setting and targets would be welcomed. Nonetheless Baigent cautions us to be mindful of how fire fighters arrange their free time to organise their informal hierarchies to resist rather than assist change.

This extrapolation of the literature was the basis for the initial conceptual framework in diagram 3.1 and was used in the development of the research questions, and sub questions.

⁸ Leader of LFEPA and member of GLA

Initial Conceptual Framework

This model picks out the key elements of initial literature review

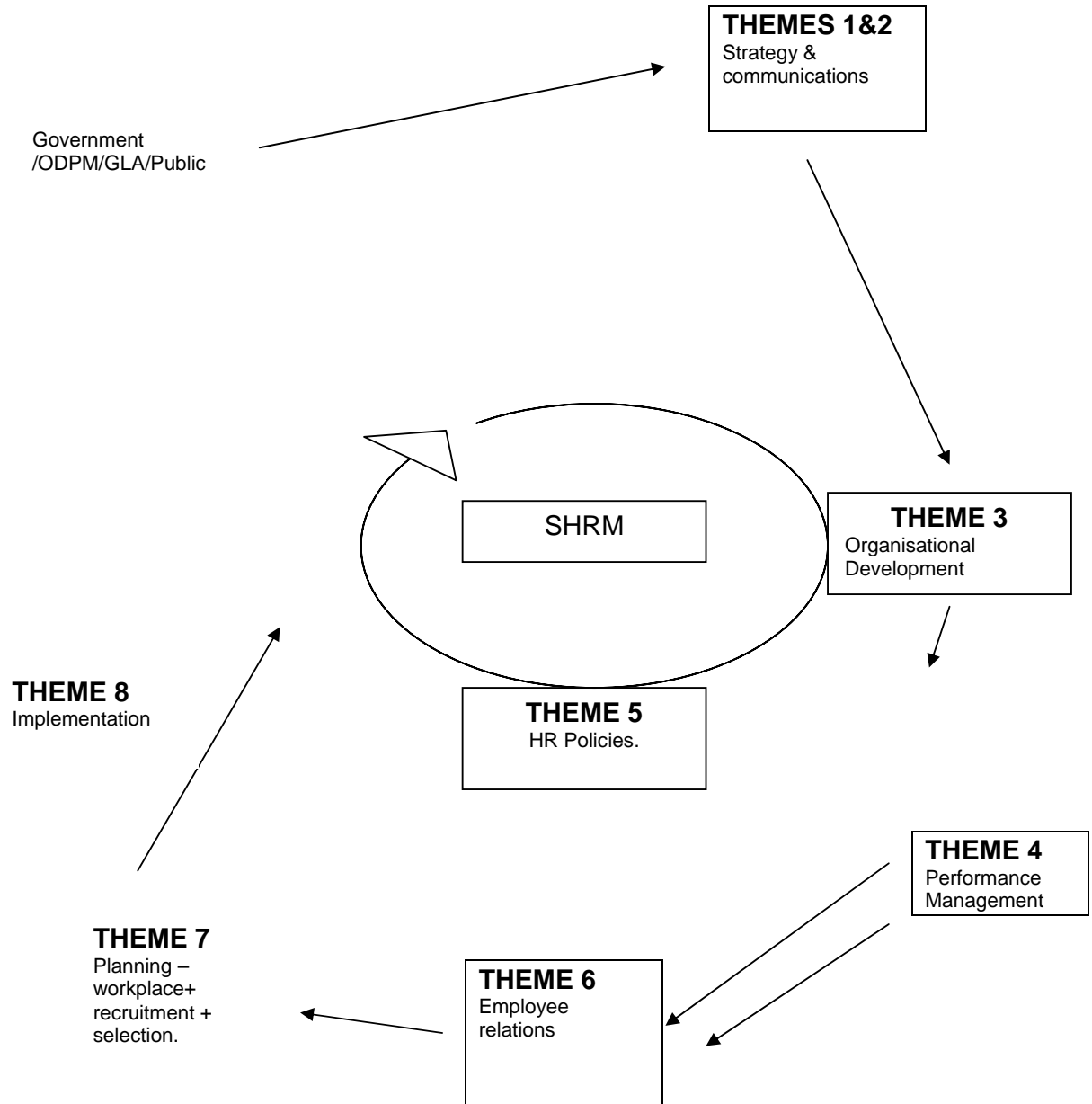


Diagram 3.1: SHRM at work? Design or default

Strategic Human Resource Management in the Public Sector and the FRS

The data requirements matrix (appendix 4) indicated an absence of comprehensive literature around SHRM in the FRS. This is also to some extent true for the public sector generally. An analysis by Farnham and Horton (1996) identified that there are a number of primary characteristics of conventional HRM in the public sector, for example, paternalistic style of management, standardised employment practices, industrial relations were collectivised and aspirations to be model employers. Boyne et al (1999:9) comments that the new public management agenda would appear to have shifted: “...*economic strain on the public sector has increased the demand for greater efficiency and better quality in delivering public sector programmes and services, often with a smaller public service workforce as a result*”

The force of change was experienced in those parts of the public or government sector that could not be privatised and which have no significant independent source of revenue beyond taxes. Birchall notes that modernisation, part of the political and economic context, can be equated to what Walton and McKersie (1965) refer to as “tightening up programs that can shift cooperative relationships toward competitive ones”. The import of the ‘new public management’ (Ferlie, Ashburn, Fitzgerald, Pettigrew 1996) sought to replicate private sector competitive strategies. Farnham and Norton commented in the 1990’s that the overarching issue appears to be government’s goal of reducing spending on public services. Whilst forcing employers to utilise the people they employ more intensively in ‘customer orientated, cost effective public businesses (1996:41). This was part of the, then, Government’s cornerstone strategy to maintain tight monetary control over the public sector which continued when Labour came to power in 1997. As Hood & Peters (2004:271) noted

‘...so best value, performance indicators, comprehensive performance assessment, strategic plans, efficiency review and the continuance of capping (or threats to) all heralded a new style of public management with a focus on efficiency, effectiveness, targets and performance measurement, underpinned by the bedrock of tight fiscal control’.

Applying business models within the public sector is not restricted just to the UK. Llewellyn (2003) identifies similar trends in the USA, (see also Ingraham et al) and as Fitzgerald and Stirling (1999) commented “...public sector organisations have been subject to a sustained pressure for change and reorganisation”.

However, Government intervention can often be a barrier to change. Boxall and Purcell 2003:178 comment, “where change is not part of the organisation’s agenda, or when it is forced, not through the market forces (the invisible hand) but by political dictat, the union role can remain one of defending worker interest. This has been seen in recent years in the UK in the...fire brigade”. The result being that when workers do not recognise the economic imperative, seeing only government dictat they can as in the case of the fire service resist formally through their unions and informally through challenging change.

Storey (1992:56) comments on politicians’ influence by arguing that successful human resource management in the public sector requires that politicians support top managers, particularly as managers lack the checks and balances provided by the hidden hand of the market (including the ability to shut down to reorganise). In these circumstances of overt political intervention politicians should set out a clear political programme (goal) and retain the authority to achieve it. The researcher wanted to test this using a structured observation (see page 29), however whilst this did not happen the following comment taken from the LFEPA self assessment suggests a positive

starting point – ‘no political group has overall control of the Authority. However there is agreement on the key issues of modernisation. For example, LFEPA’s first draft IRMP, the London Safety Plan’ was unanimously approved by all members.’ (IPA 2004:2)

Within LFEPA, the Leader Valerie Shawcross clearly signalled the intentions to change when in 2001, she commented, “...*firefighters have hidden behind the red door for too long and our traditional rather one dimensional engagement with the community at incidents must change*”.

The political interface will have particular resonance in this study given the central and local control over the long-term plans and goals for the FRS.

Fitzgerald (2005) in his description of ‘corporatism’ highlights traits of the FRS which fit the characteristics identified by Farnham and Horton (1996), in particular an industrial relations model that involves both unions and managers sitting together on joint bodies. Paton (2003:22) argues that the white paper (ODPM 2003) identifies that fire service modernisation requires “overhauling a service in which many of the working practices date back to the 1930’s, and in some cases seem positively archaic to the modern observer”. LFEPA’s Head of HR referred this as “*a period of total stability or stagnation whichever word one prefers*”. However given FRS’s relatively low cost to the public purse and the high level of public sympathy for workers doing a ‘dangerous’ job, stagnation may have continued if firefighters had not tabled a pay demand that drew government attention to an industry that had had relative industrial peace for over 20 years. Seifert (2002) comments “what started as an ordinary pay dispute between a well organised group of workers and their employers has become a watershed struggle between two completely different notions of modernisation. The government’s approach is based on modelling public sector efficiency on the private

sector and market competition”. As Baigent (2001 and 2001b) argues ‘efficiency’ can be about saving money/working to an always-decreasing budget (the managers’ view), or about being efficient in providing the greatest weight of attack at a fire with little understanding of the economic restrictions (the fire fighter’s view). As one firefighter described it, *“I don’t see anything wrong with the way it used to be because it worked. Practices went on that wouldn’t happen nowadays. As far as putting out fires is concerned, the public doesn’t care what happens behind the scenes. As long as when they dial 999 we turn up and do the job. As far as I can see, in the last 10-15 years with the training we are not doing our job as well as we used to. We don’t get the amount of fires we used to”*⁹

Supporting Baigent’s argument, Fitzgerald notes that the fire service has now moved away from cosy corporatism towards a new era of modernised public sector management.

A key area is emerging that change hinges around the communication of the terms ‘modern’ and ‘efficient’. Seifert (2002) argues that there may be misunderstanding about definitions but that government is clearly looking to achieve a pseudo market in which the fire service must *operate “as IF it were a private service with customers – rather than what it is, a service with users and potential users.”*

In seeking to achieve these (pseudo) market forces government has provided strong leadership through a new Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. This allows Government to set the outcomes

“Although Fire and Rescue Authorities should, in future, place greater emphasis on preventing fires from happening in the first place, the need for an effective

⁹ This is the point of the modernisation agenda, in that it is shifting the emphasis from prevention to intervention. However, psychological contracts with the majority of the workforce have been broken, or damaged and in some cases, both.

response to incidents that do occur is not diminished. Fire and Rescue Authorities will need to develop their capacity to respond to new challenges” (National Framework paragraph 3.2).

Fundamental to achieving government direction is the IRMP, which is the strategic plan that each fire authority must produce and will be the ‘bible’ for their individual modernisation. This is the rulebook that will set the goals as mentioned earlier. The basis for this is explained by Bain (2002:33)

“Business needs will be driven to a large extent by an Authority’s IRMP. This will set out; when and where people and other resources are needed; how they will be used, in operational and non-operational roles; and what skills are required. Fire and Rescue Authorities should ensure that their HR strategy fully reflects the needs set out in the IRMP”.

Bain’s comment triggered a question about the significance of HR and is compared to views of the Morris enquiry where it was commented that ‘The HR directorate must be at the heart of the organisation with HR planning and management fully integrated into the overall business planning process. It must ensure that management information plays its proper role in the organisational development and that the organisation maximises the potential of its most valuable resources, its officers and staff’. In hand with new public management, new people management has evolved. Farnham and Horton define this as those recent developments in the people management process, taken largely from the private sector to make the public services more efficient as the political and economic demands placed on the state change and are re-defined (1996:316). The overriding aim of making public service reform of

slimming down size and making it more efficient and customer centred and quality driven is now being felt in the Fire Service. One way of doing this is by utilising people as productively and cost effectively as possible so requiring an appropriate people strategy. This takes us back to Bain's point that "an improved programme of HR management must be in place as a matter of priority" (2002) because unless people are convinced, the organisation is unlikely to change.

As this literature review has moved from an introduction of SHRM to identify the key issues of the new public management and its impact onto the public sector the intention has been to set the scene for the primary research which looks at how SHRM can play an important role in pursuing and delivering change, or in this case study, the modernisation agenda.

CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the overall methodology to be applied to the research and will also act to introduce a greater understanding of the fire service and the particular problems associated with change in a traditional organisation which cannot be shut down to re-organise. The chapter starts with a reminder of the research questions

- 1 What is SHRM in the Public Sector and in particular, the Fire & Rescue Service?
- 2 What is modernisation in the Fire & Rescue Service?
- 3 How is SHRM contributing to the modernisation of the Fire & Rescue Service?

The data was examined in relation to the research aims and research questions with a particular emphasis on the ‘modernisation’ programme and a data requirements matrix produced (see appendix 4).

The strategy has been qualitative research and a combination of interviews and one focus group used to collect the data. A total of 5 interviews were carried out in July and August 2005. Those interviewed included the Commissioner, the Director of Resources, the Head of Human Resources and an operational manager. The interviews took place in the interviewee’s offices and the interviews were recorded¹⁰ and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

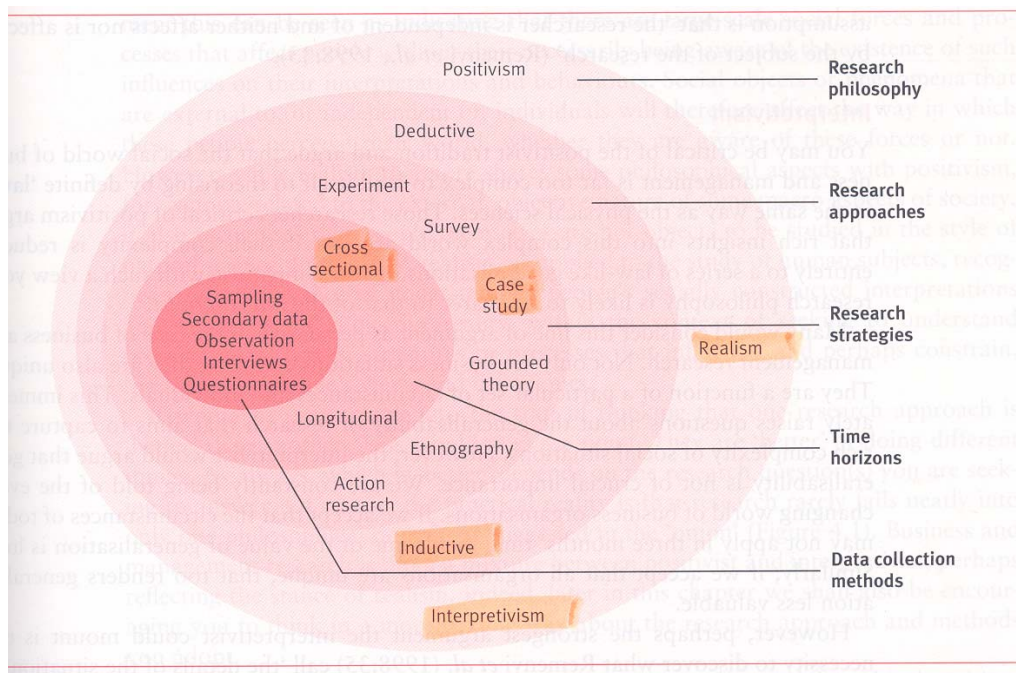
Research philosophy

The overall philosophy adopted for this study has been very much an iterative approach; thinking, planning, reading, carrying out primary research and then the process repeating itself. A schematic at appendix 5 attempts to set out the thinking process (see Mason 2002:54) and Figure 1 highlights to process that should unveil

¹⁰ The voice-operated function on the tape truncated the beginning of sentences on 2 interviews, however the researcher had made notes during the interview so not all data was lost.

itself like an “onion” (Saunders, 2003:83); although research is a messy business and frameworks do not work in practice as well as on paper as this research will show.

Diagram 4.1



The interpretivism origins derive from the stance that the world and ‘reality’ are not objective facts but are socially constructed and given meaning by people’s actions (Husserl 1946). The task of a ‘social scientist’ (Easterby-Smith et al, 1991:24) is to appreciate different constructions and meanings that people place upon their experiences and to comment how the unintended consequences of action may go

unrecognised (see Giddens 1979). In this sense, the research philosophy which underpins this study is that of an ‘interpretivist approach’ supported by qualitative research. This type of “interpretivist sociology” (Mason 2002:2) with its flexible and sensitive approach should help to understand respondents’ views and is particularly suited to firefighters (Baigent 2001 and 2001b).

Research approach and strategy.

There are at least 2 schools of thought in relation to a research approach. For example, Sanders, (2003:85) suggests “the deductive approach owes more to positivism and the inductive approach to interpretivism”¹¹. Deductive reasoning (Mason 2002:180) in simplistic terms is where the theory comes first and then the data tests the theory. However, social scientists became wary of the deductive approach, having concerns that people interpreting their world was an important part of the wider understanding so as to better understand the nature of the problem (Saunders et al 2003:87). People are not numbers; therefore theory should follow what people do (the data) rather than expecting the theory to act as if to dictate people’s actions treating them as if they were automatons incapable of reflexive thinking. Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss 1966) is a good example of how to facilitate a closer understanding of what is actually happening and the importance that respondents attach to events; it also allows the researcher the flexibility to respond to any emerging themes.¹² This flexibility has been important in this research.

The research strategy planned is a case study approach of the largest FRS in the country. Yin (1989:14) notes that case study allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events – such as individual life cycles, organisational and managerial processes. This view is supported by Robson

¹¹ Although goes on to comment that such labelling is potentially misleading

¹² FBU General Secretary elections, IRMP implementation plan, political changes and subsequently terrorism following the 07/07/2005 bombs in London.

(Saunders et al. 2003:93) who suggests a 'case study' as a strategy for doing research, involving an empirical investigation of the fire service within its real life context, accommodating a more flexible modus operandi and fits neatly with the inductive approach.

The study would benefit from a longitudinal approach, as this would provide an opportunity to study the path of modernisation, which is the key issue of this research. However, practical constraints are a barrier, so a cross sectional study technique is employed to take a snapshot in July & August 2005 as a benchmark for other researchers to follow and hopefully, add to.

Data collection methods

Saunders et al (2003:289) identify that a helpful way to ensure that data collected will enable the researcher's questions to be answered and objectives achieved, is to create a data requirements table. Mason (2002:52) notes that it is more accurate to speak of generating data rather than collecting data. This links with the interpretivist view that the researcher is part of the process and not distinct, or removed from it. The data requirements matrix (appendix 4) highlights the following methods:

Interviews focus Groups, structured Observation and literature.

The following sections consider these methods more fully and how well this operated.

Interviews

'Interviews may be highly formalised and structured using standardised questions for each respondent or they may be informal and unstructured conversations' (Saunders et al. 2003:246). Semi structured and in-depth or non - standardised interviews may be used in qualitative research so as to place emphasis on exploring the 'why' (Saunders 2003:248). Mason (2002:62) asserts that the term 'unstructured' is a misnomer because no research interview can completely lack structure. As Mason suggests

research requires a great deal of planning and as this research illustrates plans do not always come to fruition. Easterby-Smith et al (1991:72) comment that whilst interviewing is often claimed to be the best method of gathering information, its complexity can sometimes be underestimated.

Whilst acknowledging the challenges this type of approach presents, it should facilitate greater levels of understanding of the issues and allow a more flexible and dynamic approach to the study.

Focus Groups

One focus group took place, at their place of work, testing the skill of the researcher, both as an initiator and facilitator. This was not unexpected as Lowe and Nilsson (in Easterby-Smith et al. 1991:93) suggest that these skills go with the territory of being a good researcher. Experience indicates that it is important to establish a rapport prior to the focus group interview and ensure that the objectives of the research are carefully explained so as to avoid any conflict with the 'watch'. The watch broadly are a group of workers who fit-in together to enjoy a similar status and similar work experiences and interviewing such a group will provide a good cross section of how firefighters think (Baigent 2001). The remarks of one firefighter illustrates the extent to which rapport was achieved "...*I wouldn't say to the commissioner what I am saying to you. ...That will be right across the board of all the stations*".

An understanding of what was important to firefighters, for example by providing biscuits, facilitated an early acceptance and there was a steady flow of information throughout, despite the interruption of fire calls. The researcher's understanding of the culture and the language and having appropriate contacts facilitated a smooth data collection process. However, the flip side is that the researcher may put meaning and/or interpretation to the data, based on own experiences, values or beliefs. Mason

(2002:113) cautions researchers about this and suggests developing techniques or mechanisms in systematically recording the analysis.

Modernisation has a different meaning to each group in the Fire Service and the watch raised a variety of practical examples of how they saw modernisation affecting them. One issue appears to dominate firefighters' current thinking, and this relates to how 'grandfather rights' (the way informal male hierarchies currently operate to maintain the status quo in the fire service) were being challenged by a competency-based system. As one firefighter explained, "*There is no short cut to experience, on paper it looks like you are fulfilling but on the fire ground you cannot.*" A further example is provided by how firefighters choose to interpret LFEPA's attempts to overcome a shortage of drivers within the Service¹³

Another firefighter told me that, "*I'm now told that recruits are on stations for about a month and then they go to a driving course, and as soon as they drive they will never see a fire. Which is scary. If they haven't been to a couple of good jobs, it's frightening because one day they will have to and it will all go horribly wrong. Their policy will come up and slap them in the face*". It is important to note that the driver shortage is caused by peer pressure on firefighters not to take driving courses.

Structured observation

The third collection method planned was that of structured observation so as to identify if the data obtained more formally was supported. The intention being to test (triangulate) what the authority were saying against the data from the focus groups and to observe the Authority in action (particularly, the work of HR committee).

Whilst this would have proved to have been a challenging and rewarding part of the research, particularly in the development of the researcher's skills, it became difficult

¹³ Fire fighters achieve a competence when they meet all elements of their role map. This includes driving. See Baigent 2001 for cultural understanding of the relevance.

to get this planned in and subsequently did not take place: a part of the research onion did not come to fruition.

Conducting the research

A timetable for the interviews was agreed and they took place in July and August at the interviewees' place of work. A briefing was provided for each interview (appendix 6) and the ethics statement discussed: interviews ranged from one to three hours. During the interviews, the researcher made notes to support the final transcripts, which proved to be invaluable given the problem with the tape machine during at least one interview. The taking of notes placed additional pressure on the researcher who was juggling writing, listening, linking issues raised to questions and continually checking the tape machine to see if it were working. Once the interviews had taken place, the tapes were transcribed¹⁴ and the notes taken during the interview were added to the transcript. Whilst this process has been systematic and provides an accurate record of the responses to the questions, it should be noted that these are only partial reconstructions rather than the total reconstruction. Other emphasis, particularly with the focus group, where individual body language (and looks, glances and non verbal signs etc) and collective body language sometimes revealed other issues going on.

Research questions

A topic statement approach was used to assist with the formulation of the research questions, which were changed and amended during the research proposal stage. Four questions became three, focussing on the concept of exploring modernisation.

The research questions were:

¹⁴ Not by the researcher

- 1 What is SHRM in the Public Sector and in particular, the Fire & Rescue Service?
- 2 What is modernisation in the Fire & Rescue Service?
- 3 How is SHRM contributing to the modernisation of the Fire & Rescue Service?

The sub questions to the main research questions are contained within appendix 7.

Access and Ethics

Access and ethics are critical aspects for the conduct of the research (Saunders 2002:118). Obtaining permission for the research was a relatively straightforward process. A formal letter requesting permission, pre-ceded by a telephone call explaining what the research was about was the starting point. A lead officer at LFEPA was provided and the research proposal submitted in full once the Supervisor had approved it. Interviews with the Leader and the Chairman of the HR committee were unable go ahead due to ‘research fatigue’. Those interviewed appeared keen and eager to contribute to the process. The focus group was selected by the operational manager who assessed watches across 2 stations¹⁵ and then asked one of the watches to participate. The criterion applied was to select a watch that would openly, honestly and constructively participate in the process. This was therefore a highly subjective process. However during the interviews it was clear that the watch had high regard for the operational manager: When asked if they wished to see the transcript of the interview, responded that they had complete trust in their manager and this extended

¹⁵ This is a relatively small sample and therefore caution needs to be expressed in relation to the findings

to me. Denzin and Lincoln (1994:365) highlight the importance of ‘getting in’ making reference in gaining trust and establishing a rapport.

A ‘contract’ in the form of an ethics statement clearly set out the relationship between the parties and the boundaries of the research. Implicit in all of this is a responsibility for the researcher to consider their own capabilities, to produce good quality research and to protect the informants. An ethics statement extracted from the RESPECT code of practice for socio economic research is attached at appendix 8 and was shared with LFEPA prior to the research commencing, and with each individual and the focus group.

Literature Search

Careful planning of the literature search is important, as it is time-consuming process.

An essential part of the planning process is to define the parameters of the search, generate key ideas and discuss ideas widely. (Saunders et al. 2003:55). Once this is settled the researcher undertook a comprehensive trawl of the literature to indicate the books/articles that were required (Selvin & Stuart 1966 in Easterby-Smith 1991:145).

Whilst the research approach being adopted for study is an inductive one the collection of secondary data in the form of the literature is an important step to guide the research (Saunders et al, 2003:46). Literature sources largely came from two areas:

Primary documents that are those particular to the research organisation. These documents include, LFEPA London Safety Plan 2005/06, LFEPA initial performance self-assessment, LFEPA training and development strategy, Audit Commission reviews, LFEPA and associated committee reports. These provided the overview of the strategic direction and vision for LFEPA. In addition the ODPM National Framework 2005/06 and the Morris report provide national and local context.

Secondary literature sources came from books and professional journals and material located from the *Kingston Library*, www.fitting-in.com¹⁶ and the Fire Service College library¹⁷. This was guided by a number of sources (Kingston notes & reading lists, CMPS reading lists) and further authors identified from *the bibliographies*. One early concern was whether sufficient academic material in relation to the FRS would be a barrier doing the research. This has proven not to be the case and after sourcing the Fitzgerald, I., Stirling, J. (1999) article, further contacts established at Northumbria University and additional articles and documents were located. Whilst the specific interest is of industrial relations and governance, this work was of considerable benefit. Overall the absence of material provides an opportunity for this research and study to make a contribution to the field of SHRM in relation to the FRS and in turn provide more insight for those who choose to complete further research. One final but important note is how often the researcher came back to the complex arrangements for formal and informal culture in the FRS (See Baigent 2001, 1996, HMFSI 1999). It is likely that this issue will continue to dominate the progress, or otherwise of the FRS.

Timetabling and Contingency

The Gantt chart (appendix 9) outlines time scales for completion of the study and highlights the total available weeks and allowed for a 2-week contingency. Whilst the timescales proposed were reasonable when they were drawn up, the reality was that some parts of the research took more time than expected and the cut off point for data collection arrived before the observations took place. One proof that research is never predictable, the events of the 7th July and 21st July 2005 meant that time with some of the officers was restricted. Having laid out how the research was undertaken, the next chapter will introduce and analyse the research findings.

¹⁶ Website which holds research on the Fire and Rescue Service

¹⁷ National library holding research on the Fire and Rescue Service

CHAPTER 5. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The previous chapter identifies the FRS as a small part of the wider public sector modernisation and that material assists to indicate SHRM has a role to play in achieving government's wishes. Specific academic research related to SHRM is limited but examining literature around public service reform and the new public management agenda has allowed for a clear, but limited, theoretical stance. Material relative to the concept of 'modernisation' (new public management) and changes within the NHS and Police has provided useful and helpful sources (Farnham and Horton,). There is also much written about the fire service (Bain, Fitzgerald, Baigent) and these materials greatly contribute to the academic view

Given that government has clearly indicated the goals (change from intervention to prevention and the modernisation of working practices) that they require the fire service to achieve (through the ODPM national framework and new legislation) and that fire authorities have set out their strategy to achieve these goals, there is a clear purpose in identifying how well SHRM has been able and may be able to achieve this. As previously identified, interviews were carried out with the Commissioner, the Director of Resources and the Head of HR. A focus group interview was also carried out and consideration was given to earlier research carried out on the HR function by Popoola (2004).

This chapter brings together the work from the previous chapters and primary data to analyse the findings alongside the literature review. In doing so, data is collated into the themes (following the conceptual framework - see page 16). The final chapter presents the conclusions of this research and attempts to answer the question whether Strategic Human Resource Management is occurring by design or default.

Theme 1: Strategy & vision

LFEPA has a clear overriding ambition to make London safer and the London Safety Plan (IRMP), its corporate plan and a training & development strategy support this vision. Independent assessment¹⁸ confirmed LFEPA was ‘good’ and weaknesses outweighed strengths in its focus and its future direction setting.

The London Safety plan sets out how LFEPA will deliver its business of reducing the number and severity of fires, deaths and injuries, reduce the economic and social impact of fires and others emergencies and how it will safeguard the heritage of London. Overall it is acknowledged by the Commissioner that there is currently little confidence in the direction of travel by the Authority... ”*staff are currently not at peace with its community safety role*”. Firefighters echoed this when interviewed, “*They are increasing council tax each year, they don’t know about our morale. A lot of the public don’t realise all the changes, and they don’t care as long as when they dial 999 we turn up*” and in June 2007 it was reported in the Financial Times (Jun 7, 2004, pg.4) that “*the dispute was about firefighters not wanting to be ordered to attend a range of medical emergencies for which they will not necessarily be trained, at the expense of providing a proper fire service*”¹⁹.

In essence by rebalancing and redeploying LFEPA’s services from prevention to cure, and extending the traditional role of the Fire Service (as perceived by firefighters) the Commissioner is placing the Authority and the workforce at odds with each other, despite the fact that there is a general understanding and agreement about the overall ambition for the Service. The Director believes “*that the workforce are shell shocked and not yet clear with only some seeing the whole picture*”.

¹⁸ Audit Commission Initial Performance Assessment 2005

¹⁹ Taken from article entitled London fire crews to vote on action, Ballot papers were despatched over plans to extend firefighters duties outside of their traditional role.

The Commissioner described the vision and ambition as the Service being “*much more about people, firefighters having a much wider and broader community safety role and not reverting to type, reverting to a macho fire fighting response*”, the Head of Human Resources saw the number one issue as being “*...our ability to influence the agenda inside those national institutions to enable them to provide the framework that we need*” adding “*that the vision is that we will have increasing degree of control direct over our destiny. We will want to have seen ourselves having made fundamental difference in our employment relationships, with our managers and our people, how we manage and how we look*”. A middle manager saw it as “*Change would be the biggest thing, change to do with cost and value for money and making more of the resources we’ve got. My hope is that it is change for the sake of improving our service and being more customer focused and opening our doors more*”. The watch, however, saw it as “*So no matter what they throw at you, you still feel a bit of contempt ... you see it everywhere, NHS, Police, trying to run an emergency service as a business. It is an endemic problem, but the way they are going about it is causing the problems. They are imposing it on the work force rather than doing it with the workforce*”. When asked to summarise in one word a definition of modernisation, firefighters said “*confused*”, “*risky*”, “*pointless*”, “*cuts*” and “*dangerous*”. This accords with the views of firefighters from another Service who when asked the same question replied “*in a mess*” and “*imploding*”.

Whilst there is no overarching document, which sets out the HR strategy for LFEPA, the Training & Development Strategy (2004 – 2008) could be interpreted as meeting this function. Its 31 objectives are related to meeting the needs of the London Safety Plan in relation to people and performance...”that the performance of people in the organisation is a key factor in delivering a top quality service” (2004:1). This

sentiment is also matched by the strap line on the Authority's intranet system, which asserts

“Developing our people, if you're successful, we're successful.”

LFEEPA acknowledges that achieving change in the fire service is both complex and challenging, but firefighters see attempts to pursue the modernisation agenda as LFEEPA being run as a business “...its just looking at it as a business as a financial exercise, and everything has a £ sign attached to it.”

“General trend possibly opened up by strike action the whole emergency services are now being run like the NHS, because they are trying to look at personnel, manpower and the reasons behind it. But at the end of the day it's an industry that needs grandfather rights. If you haven't had the years and the experience of attending fires you can't be taught that and pick it up in a month”

When interviewed by independent sources²⁰, it was noted, “Fire Station staff did not have a detailed understanding of the London Safety Plan or all of London's priorities (Audit Commission 2005:12). This theme was echoed in interviews conducted in August 2005 as an operational manager observed, “*They have borough plans that they work to but they are borough plans and they are not individually accountable for them and actually they are a bit piecemeal and there for the sake of proving they are there without being there for a real reason*”

One firefighter commented that generally firefighters knew the vision and ambition, but added, “...*maybe the way it's being sold has given us the lack lustre and demotivated workforce.*” However, overall staff found their jobs to be enjoyable and satisfying. (Audit Commission 2005:14). When asked to pick a word that described how they felt about their job, firefighters said “*rewarding*”, “*enjoyable*”,

²⁰ Audit Commission inspectors

“teamwork”. Keeble (2001) commented that it is evident that these two groups²¹ are commonly committed to the delivery of good services. The difference appears fundamentally to be around how this is achieved

Theme 2: Communications

This research did not consider external communication and consultation but LFEPA acknowledges that it needs to undertake more communication and consultation with the public (IPA 2004:16). In addition LFEPA acknowledges that good communication is essential to the effective running of every organisation as reputation depends not just on organisational performance but how much its staff, public and other stakeholders know and understand it. (LFEPA BVR 2005). However public compliments exceed complaints and in 2002, 68% of citizens were very or fairly satisfied with overall services (IPA 2005:19).

Internal communications was seen as a major issue by all parties interviewed, the Commissioner commented that *“open and honest communications which inform and empower people and managers”* was needed *“acknowledging that you can’t do it on the cheap but whilst it costs, its worth it”*; the middle manager commented that *“We do have reasonably regular, once every 8-9 months briefing sessions with Principal Management that is supposed to tell us where we are going but they aren’t very satisfactory”*. *Communication being that 2 way street that we don’t seem to get.* Firefighters said. *“A lot of it’s down to communication. There is no explanation as to why or the benefits of what we are doing. No attempt to buy in to what was intended so you’re not getting the motivation and the real reason behind it which is may be where you come back to the individual side, as managers and senior officers they need to be man managers and people managers as well. They need to be motivating*

²¹ Senior managers and “the workforce”

the staff, which is a crucial aspect of any job and more so now as it is developing into a career". The middle manager noted that "I don't think there is enough trust instilled in management to think they could tell us really what's going on. I have gone to service delivery and learnt some of the things that are in the pipeline that we don't tell other people, even our Borough Commanders and I think the firefighters ask questions of them (Borough Commanders) and they say no that's not happening and we don't know anything about it and then zebedee comes out of the box 6 months later and the firefighters think we are all lying to them, but actually its because we've not been told". This sentiment was mirrored by firefighters when they stated that "There are so many rumours going around and you can't instil confidence with rumours," "Rumour mill. Things just happen and the information doesn't precede it". What became apparent throughout discussions with the firefighters and the operational manager was that the range of documents which outlined the future direction, and plans of LFEPA were easily available on the intranet site. Firefighters by nature are very practical individuals working in a culture which has traditionally 'spoon fed' them; creating a more resourceful workforce which actively seeks out information (and from more than one source) is essential if comments like this are to be a thing of the past

"...the decisions that are being made may be good and necessary but the lines of communication to the workforce is very poor". Plans to improve communications are well developed and in July 2005, LFEPA approved a number of recommendations²², which included team briefings, newsletters for staff and managers' briefing (noting that it is vital the organisation improves how it communicates with its managers), both face-to-face and written.

²² The report noted that "staff would like more 2 way communication and operational staff are keen that communications are not just delivered on line

However, if Baigent (2001) is right that firefighters are selflessly constructing their identity around their conservative views of the fire service, then all the communications in the world are unlikely to break into the cell like structure of the watch from where they resist. There is a need for a deeper understanding that theory will not work because it should, and that change may only be available through SHRM that understands the fundamentals of this organisation and in particular the ability of the informal culture to resist.

Theme 3: Organisational Development

Wide range of training and staff development opportunities, which is being encouraged by the move towards competency-based structures, exists. The Training and Development Strategy and associated action plan is extremely detailed and comprehensive with over 31 objectives as noted previously. A significant number of these objectives are related to people and their development, specific mention is made of development of the trainers, but no references to the development of HR professionals could be found. The Head of HR seemed clear that self service was an important part of the overall direction (in reducing processes for his HR staff and making individuals more responsible for themselves) but was *“not convinced that we have the necessary support, given the imbalance in terms of skills and confidence...it is around making sure that we are advising and up skilling the line so they will be increasingly confident with decisions”*. The Commissioner was also clear *“that middle managers needed empowering”* and cited a recent example of where a communications session with all the managers had been an extremely successful initiative in the start of this journey.

The Director confirmed, *“the Service needed to be more clear about the role of managers”*. LFEPA also acknowledge that ‘managers in a modern fire service will

need to develop the highest levels of leadership and management skill. They will need to be flexible and adaptive; resilient and responsive to change; be able to respond with skill confidence and composure...to lead an increasingly diverse workforce through change of both emotional and professional support' (LFEPA undated document Leadership and Management Development). However, both the middle manager and the firefighters were critical of the management development processes.

"I think that we lack terribly training our middle and senior management.

We have different training inputs at different levels when you've done the station command programme they have different things they give you coaching skills etc. But actually there is very little input we give people to being managers and how to manage. Most of it you do on the hoof, you learn and the people that get it wrong tend to end up working in departments without people in them. But there is very little to develop us as people managing people which is what we are here to be. A lot have terribly poor people skills". The middle manager also felt that the training for watch managers was even worse than for the officers..." *No we give the watch managers even less training. We may give them some basic training when they first become watch managers. After that any continuation training or any training for assistant watch managers is zero.*

Firefighters felt that this was an issue too... *"Not necessarily more people managers but as an aspect of their role. As officers progress they are developing from a firefighter rank all the way through and then they are expected to be man managers but they are not trained as man managers, so that is one issue.*

Theme 4: Performance Management

LFEPa has a corporate planning system, which extends to borough/station level.

However by their own admission the borough and authority process are not fully integrated (LFEPa BVR 2005:7). Whilst each Borough has its own HR adviser, this is seen as assisting in driving down sickness rather than contributing to the borough plan, and therefore the London Safety Plan. For example the role of this person is described as “...will arrange to see a station commander and review sickness on the station... will do an analysis of sickness and analyse the return to work interviews... will then say this is where you are doing well this is where you are failing, this is what you may need to pick up on. It’s a really good prompt... does all the background trawling, and prints off the data”. The Head of HR was clear that the HR objective at the moment “...is actually focusing on HR development of self service so that we can create the gateway to genuine front office, back office environment. Its part of our 3 year strategy”.

In relation to the broader objectives of delivering the London Safety plan both the operational manager and the watch felt that expectations and standards needed to be communicated clearly along with proper responsibility, “and that’s about telling management what you expect of them and giving us some form of standard to perform to but we don’t do that, we actually promote people and once promoted you just get left. We pay our managers a lot of money and we don’t let them manage. We don’t give them any levels of responsibility and we assume if we give them responsibility then ...one of the best things I could say to my watch is these are the tasks that we need to achieve by the end of the day take them, manage your day and do them. The worst thing is to say do that then come back to me when you have done it, now go and do that because they don’t respond to that, they respond to being able to manage

themselves and if we said this is the target, this is the plan, this is what we need to do, there would have to be some structure, some management from the station manager but if we did that I think they would respond far better than saying 1800-1820 do this, 1820-1830 have a cup of tea and that's what we do at the moment. What we do is give everything ...write down how the day works and we wonder how they take no responsibility for the job they are doing. Treat them as people not morons". A firefighter said "...we were given some targets of things to do at borough, station and watch levels, we do them, but there should be more transparency, information and incentive". On this point there is no dissension between the middle manager and the Leader of LFEPA (see page 14)

Theme 5: HR policies

LFEPA has a comprehensive suite of HR policies which line managers are able to use. However line managers are not involved in the development process and they are usually unaware of the policies until they are published, most commonly via LFEPA intranet. As one manager commented, *"We've got some pretty good HR polices, its just translating them into what happens in the work place that I find really difficult that isn't happening. You can look here and see that we have some great new HR policies but actually making it work in the workplace doesn't happen"*

Bain (2002:7) states 'that personnel policy, procedures and practices in the Fire Service give cause for concern' going on further to add '...lip service is paid to policies laid down by managers and that the leadership needs to recognise the urgent need for an action plan to be in place and improved programme of HR management for HR management'. The implementation of HR policies and processes is very much dependant on line managers implementing them. Firefighters confirmed that they knew where to look, or knew who to ask on their watch, for the policies. Comments

were made about the policies being traded as family friendly but because of shortages of personnel; they were unable to make use of them.

Theme 6: Employee relations

Staff found their jobs to be enjoyable and satisfying. (Audit Commission 2005:14).

When asked to pick a word that described how they felt about their job, firefighters said “rewarding”, “enjoyable”, “teamwork”.

The Head of HR said “*our relationship with the workforce will be very different, much closer relationship between the service, but more specifically shift that relationship to a partnership approach where both parties understand the big changes*”

However, Shaw²³ claims that LFEPA’s new proposals²⁴ “...belies the Authority’s statement in the Annual Safety Plan that we will do all we can to develop a positive and constructive industrial relations climate so that staff and managers can work together to improve community safety.”

The Head of HR said “*on the industrial relations front we have probably covered most but not all of that in that we now have employment relations procedures...and extend to involve non-uniformed support staff, so that we have an integrated approach to policies and procedures*”. This view is not shared by Shaw, (15/6/05) said, “*The Fire Brigades Union considers that the two reports that are being submitted to the Authority represent part of a conscious strategy by the political leadership and the management of the Authority to undermine the Fire Brigades Union and to prevent it from effectively representing the workforce of the London Fire Brigade*”.²⁵ He goes on to further say that “*The tactic of unilaterally issuing notice*

²³ FBU Executive Council Member for London

²⁴ To provide forums where formal discussion can take place between management or Authority Members (as appropriate) and the relevant staff side representatives on matters relating to the employment and work of the relevant Authority staff to supplement regular informal discussion between management and trade union representatives’ (LFEPA FEP/10 16/06/05:5)

²⁵ LFEPA assert that the FBU stance is in relation to the new procedures recognising the Fire Officers Association (FOA). FOA claim 60 members from LFEPA’s workforce now belong to their association.

of termination of joint agreements is not a helpful way of conducting negotiations and is indicative of an increasingly hostile and confrontational attitude on the part of management". Resistance and adversarial confrontation were hoped to be part of the past (see Baigent, 1996 & 2001, Keeble 2001, Fitzgerald & Stirling 1999). Language of communications during June 2005 might suggest it could be part of the future. In an interview with Baigent he suggested, *"The one part of the fire service that really works is the watch at an incident – they self manage and know how to do the job. Therefore, if the authority of the FBU were to be reduced then the cell like structure at watch level, which allows firefighters to successfully operate their informal hierarchies that make them so successful at emergencies, would continue to resist change. Then, without the FBU's ability to influence firefighters, managers may be unable to manage - anarchy may reign."* He adds, *"the fire service is a self managing organisation at ground level, which has set and achieved its own goals since at least the 1960's, its just that managers have been unable to colonise that to their own agendas."*

Theme 7: Planning, recruitment and selection

At the time of the interviews, LFEPAs were still awaiting the national guidance on recruitment, assessment and development. However the Head of HR plays an important and significant role in advising the national employers and therefore is in a position to know what the future plans are. He did confirm that *"...we have spent the last 2 years making sure that the information base is accurate to do rank to role and implement assessment and development centres"*. Ensuring that the systems are in place with accurate data will place LFEPAs in a strong corporate position in understanding whether they have the right people in the right place to deliver the service. as he further noted,

“building a successful system to address skills shortages....workforce planning is a fundamental tool for us assessment and development centres. However new recruitment and development practices run the risk of existing firefighters not trusting the training provided, as they continue to contend “that standards are dropping and trainee firefighters are not being trained to deal with fires”.

Theme 8: Implementation

Popoola (2005) noted that HR in LFEPA will continue to develop good initial ideas which will not be effectively implemented unless HR develops the consultancy skills to handle customer focused relationships with line managers. Evident from the middle manager’s comments (see page 44) this supports Popoola’s assertion. Another comment was *“The first is to treat managers as individuals and recognise individual training needs. I have been sent as part of just accessing the group managers process, a group managers training needs analysis form that I am supposed to sit down with my manager and determine various things, but actually it’s.....so I haven’t opened it and read it and we haven’t got a lot of time to do that kind of thing. What they want to stop doing is sheep dipping everyone whereby everyone gets the same training”*

The Head of HR queried whether empowerment was actually what was wanted, he felt that *“...managers will resist and continue to resist management responsibility and there is no evidence that this is changing.”* This is a disappointing reflection but indicates the journey still to be travelled, which is acknowledged by LFEPA that says that *‘... systems alone are not enough. Commitment to improvement, ideas and innovation come from people, not systems.’* (LFEPA 2005:7)

Public sector organisations face critical challenges in providing modern services that are relevant to communities. Keeble (2001) notes that good leaders and good

leadership are the vehicles by which policy objectives are successfully translated into front-line action. They are the keys to the success of the government's commitment to modernisation. The Head of HR commented that "*...of getting line managers to understand their part in an appraisal scheme which works and having line managers responsible for it is a pretty fundamental outcome*", adding that "*fire fighters and administration staff will have a much better understanding of what they are doing and why they are doing it and how they are seen to be doing it*".

This chapter has presented the research findings according to the eight themes: all of which have an interconnection with the other. The next chapter presents the conclusions.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS

This final chapter presents the conclusions of the research and attempts to answer the question whether Strategic Human Resource Management is occurring by design or default. The aim of this research was to evaluate whether SHRM is helping to deliver 'modernisation' in London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) and attempts to tease out whether SHRM was 'designed' into delivering the modernisation agenda or whether it happened by 'default'.

The findings indicate at a strategic level HR is connected and engaged with the development of the corporate strategy and vision, and through management development with active participation with change programmes. There is a clear vision and understanding of what 'modernisation', at corporate level, is and what it means and strategies either in place or being developed in order to confirm the direction. However, the firefighters interviewed are not signed up to the direction and will need strong persuasive and convincing arguments presenting in order for them to engage in the discussion. Communications are a fundamental issue for LFEPA and this has been recognised and improvements are being implemented. This is a positive step and provided long term commitment in both effort and budgets are maintained, this should help to ensure that information is presented at the right place, at the right time and to the right people. Presenting information in different ways to different audiences is a significant acknowledgement of this. It is also evident that there is a clear strategy and pursuit, and commitment to develop the organisation. A comprehensive strategy exists with resources (people and money) to support it. However the firefighters do not see that management development is being given the attention it needs (or if it is, then the results are not being seen). Clear statements exist which confirm the importance of developing the trainers, yet the researcher could not find evidence, which would support the development of the HR professionals.

However, this needs to be supported by appropriate and sufficient development for both the HR Group and the Managers. The absence of the Head of HR on the CMB indicates a weakness in the vertical alignment and suggests that the role of the HR is not truly seen as the business partner.

Proper use of metrics, which measure both hard and soft issues, direct the focus on outcomes rather than inputs. A Performance management framework will be considerably helpful in this respect. Currently the arrangements for LFEPA are weak in this respect, although the Authority has recently approved resources to implement a framework to support a change in direction and implementation has now commenced. A comprehensive suite of HR policies exists in supporting LFEPA deliver its objectives. Weaknesses exist however in involvement and with implementation. A clear role for professional HR personnel exists in relation to advising and assisting managers in applying them. A significant issue is that of employee relations; the inability to close down operations and rebuild the organisation to deliver the new agenda adds a dimension and challenge to agenda, which other organisations have not had to contend with. This, along with the strength of the major trade union, and the watch's ability to resist change through a highly developed and strong culture makes the journey even more difficult. Attending to issues of trust, constructive confrontation, communications, morale and increasing the levels of self and group responsibility in planning and implementing would ensure that SHRM is designed into the fabric of the organisation. Whether this is enough to fundamentally affect the culture of the FRS remains to be seen and would certainly be an interesting and revealing piece of research.

The above analysis and interpretation of the findings, together with the discussions and conclusions have addressed the research questions shown on page 2. This leads

to the conclusion that whilst a number of the themes, as identified in the initial conceptual framework, are in place with appropriate connections and resources, currently there are still significant issues in 4 key areas. The overall vision and pursuit of modernising the Service is not accepted by those who manage the delivery of LFEPA, nor does it have support by the deliverers of it (the firefighters).

Implementation of the strategy through effective and workable policies will not come about if the managers and trade unions are not involved in the development of them. There is a challenging agenda for communications; which whilst recognised by LFEPA does not seem to consider the culture of fire stations and their ability to resist initiatives which they don't like or support. Overcoming the resistance by those who represent the firefighters is another huge obstacle for LFEPA. Finally, in the absence of an effective and workable performance management system, and in its own words, LFEPA will not be able to realise its aspirations and improve and maintain good performance.

The literature review confirmed that SHRM has come about in order to manage people to achieve something which is in a state of flux and ensuring that long term plans are in place. Conclusions were reached which emphasised the concept of mutuality and the need for managers to be developed if the organisation was to be developed. The final conclusion links Storey and Baigent, of whom the former recognises the importance of cultural techniques within SHRM and the latter who has provided grounded research in the unique culture of the FRS.

As a final footnote I would add that this research has allowed me to stand back from my role as a strategic manager. I have heard what the leaders say and I have heard how this is received at ground level. I am now clearer about the problem and in part this is because managers believe that by setting goals and communicating them that

this will work according to the theory. I am however less clear about the outcome. In the methodology chapter I suggested that it is better to carry out qualitative research, rather than a study that sets out to prove the theory and this may equally apply to the fire service in its attempts to modernise. Research (based not on theory, but on data collected from firefighters and used qualitatively alongside theory) is there to indicate how firefighters will resist change. My qualitative research supports this view and has awakened me to think more deeply that it is people and not numbers we are attempting to manage. So my final words are that there is a very real case for SHRM to facilitate change in the fire service. However, it is equally clear that those responsible understand that the people they intend to change are unlikely to act according to the theory. Therefore there is a very real need to look to researchers and their findings to help the wider FRS in achieving change.

CHAPTER 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the analysis of the research findings.

Having concluded that culture is an issue and given its importance, the first recommendation is that FRS need to review the array of previous research carried out into the FRS and seriously consider how best the culture can be improved in order to reconcile the differences between the leaders of the FRS and those who deliver the Service. It may also be worth considering whether a more up-to-date view of the culture is taken.

One of the limitations of this research is its timing, as during the research it became evident that LFEPA have a number of plans coming to fruition addressing the issues of communications and performance management. Given the importance of these in the SHRM framework, it is vital that progress on these areas continue. Less obvious, however, is how LFEPA determine that these become a reality and as such it is recommended that an implementation plan with a clear set of objectives and targets is produced, with close attention paid to involving managers and staff and to overcome resistance (indirect or direct) at fire station level.

The role of HR and the head of function need consideration if HR is ever to become a true business partner. The absence of the Head of HR on the CMB should be addressed and a clear development programme outlined so that HR professionals can play their role in delivering the vision.

One of the other limitations of this research is that it has a narrow focus in one organisation and LFEPA whilst being the largest FRS in the UK is not truly representative of the UK FRS. However if this research were extended into the wider Service it might be possible to gain insights into how the role of SHRM can really

play its part in assisting with the management of change and delivering the business of an emergency service.

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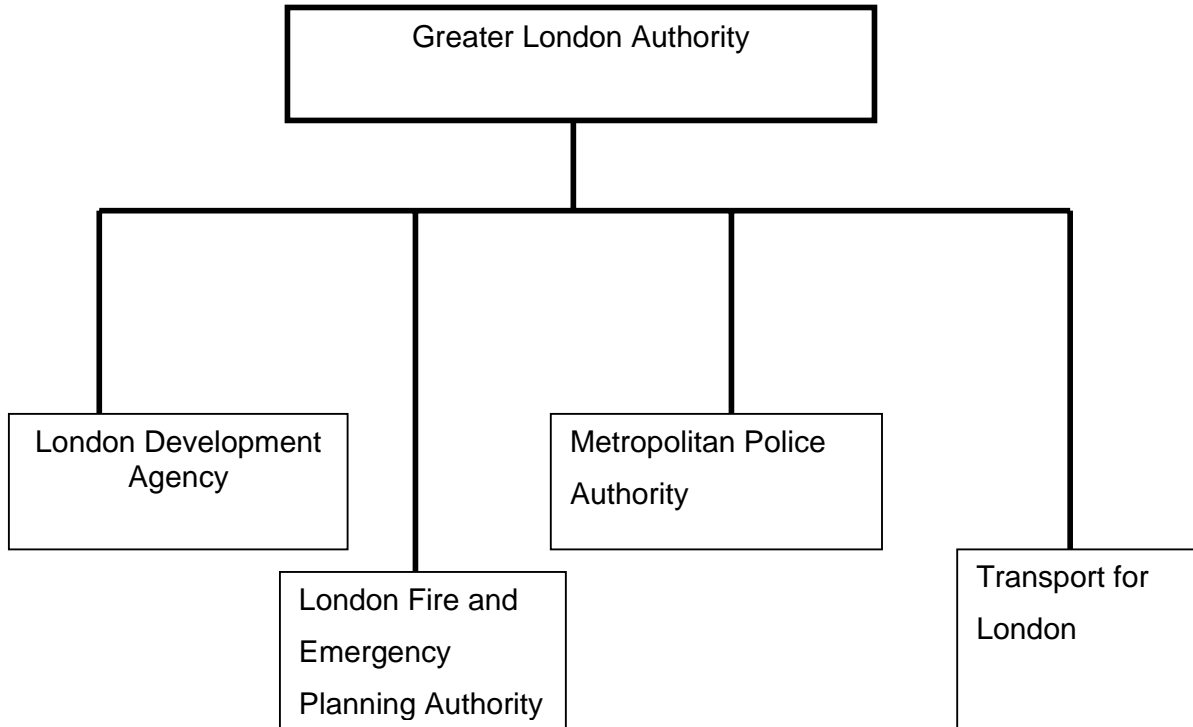
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Greater London Authority Organisational Structure



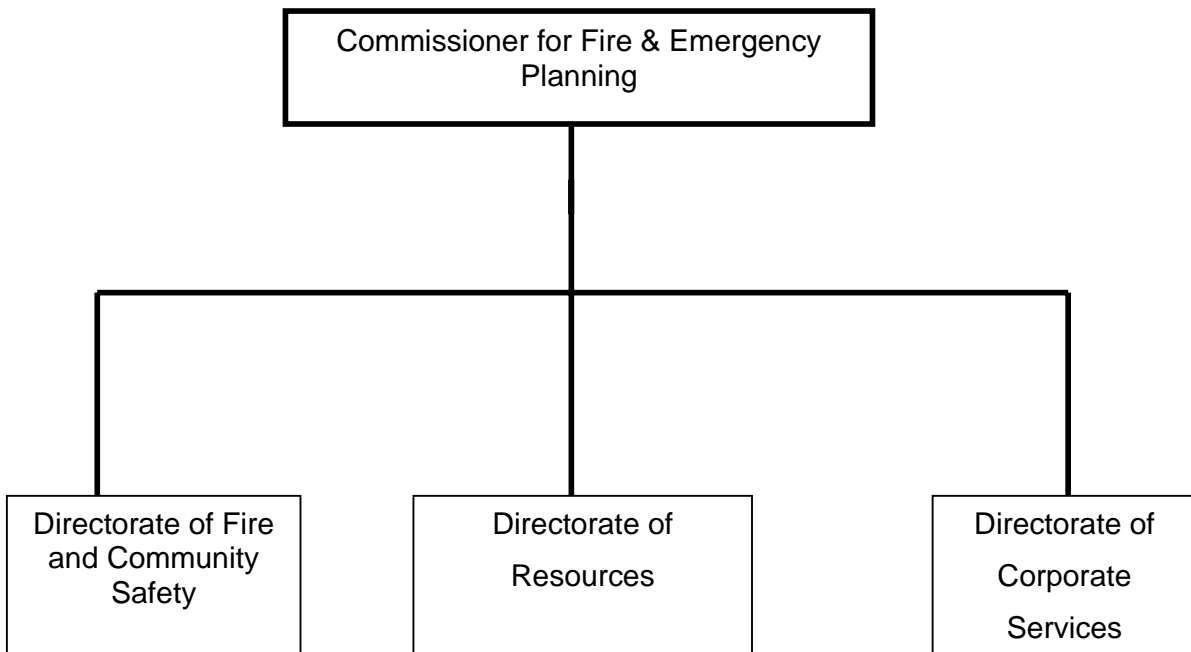
Greater London Authority is about government for London and gives Londoners a voice in all kinds of activities that are important to everyone living and working in London.

It makes decision about transport, police fires and emergencies, planning, health, the environment and leisure and culture activities.

Londoners who are 18 or over can vote every 4 years for a Mayor of London and for London Assembly Members.

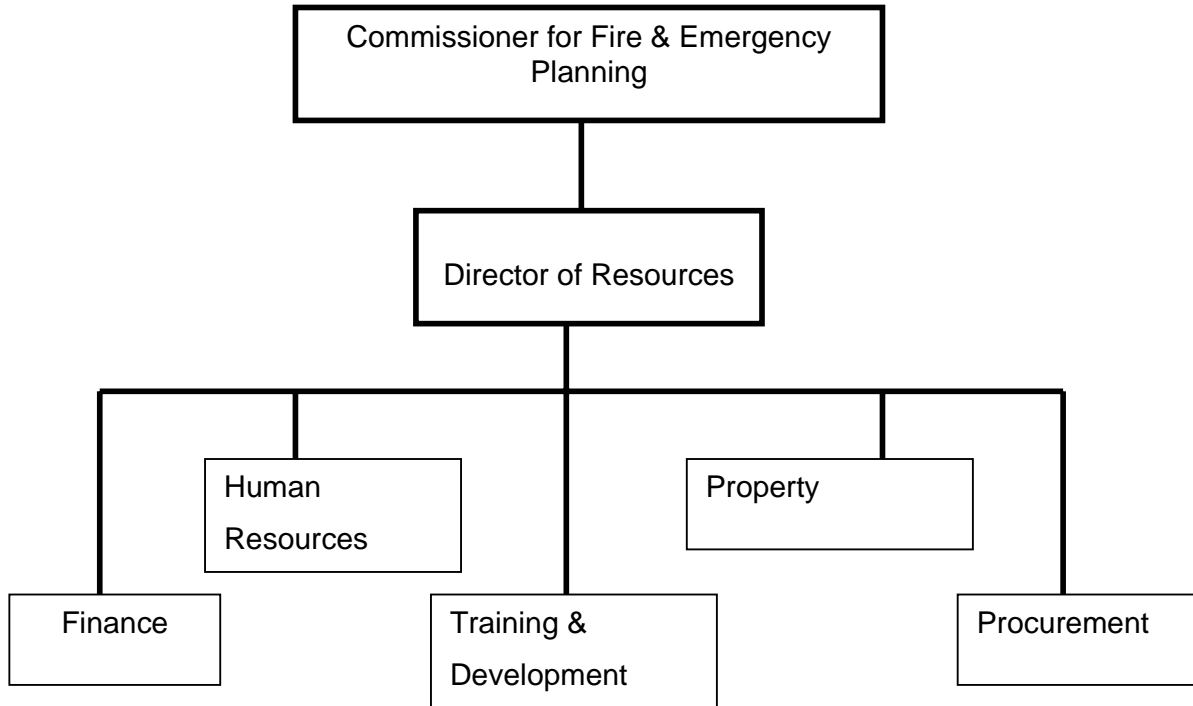
The Mayor draws up plans and decides how much money will be spent on these activities out of the monies given to the GLA by central government and some collected along with local council tax. Bus and tube fares also help to pay for improvements. The Assembly members look at the plans and their costs and ask questions about them. The Assembly can also bring up other things that Londoners think are important and make suggestions to the Mayor. They can also publish the things that they have found out and make their own recommendations as to what should happen.

LFEPA Organisational Structure



APPENDIX 3

LFEPA Resources Directorate



APPENDIX 4

DATA REQUIREMENTS MATRIX

Research Question	What is SHRM in the public sector, in particular the Fire and Rescue Service?
Data Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LFEPA Corporate Plan • Future Plans • HR Strategy • IPA Report • IPA Self Assessment document • Staff surveys (post 2004)
Data Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>People</i>, data collected by: observations, interviews, focus groups: • <i>Unpublished documents</i>, data collected by note-taking and summarising: • <i>Published documents</i>, data collected by literature, review, note taking and summarising
Collection Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with LFEPA Chair, Commissioner, HR Director and Senior HR professionals • Focus groups of Line Mangers and Watch personnel • Literature Review
Skills Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop one person dominating the group • Encourage quiet respondents to participate • Obtain responses from the whole group²⁶ • Ability to listen, interpret response and follow new lines of enquiry
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data rich • Inexpensive • Ability to probe new areas
Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to “get in” • Understand the language and culture of the respondents • How to present oneself (dress) • Locating an informant • Gaining trust • Establishing Rapport • Venue

²⁶ Denzin, N.K. Lincoln, Y.S. (1994) Handbook of Qualitative Research. SAGE (365)

Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange interviews with LFEPA contact • Briefing note for interviewees • Prior briefing from Station Manager • Seek recommendations from Station Manager • Make contact with Watch Manager prior to focus group meeting • Recommend their station meeting room
Analysis Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to make sense of results of research • Limited material on SHRM in relation to FRS
Methods of Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of interviews • Search data for patterns • Identifying link with component elements of SHRM x referenced to word pattern from interviews • Simply getting the facts • Analysing text
Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size of sample may impact onto anonymity • Potential Bias of interviews

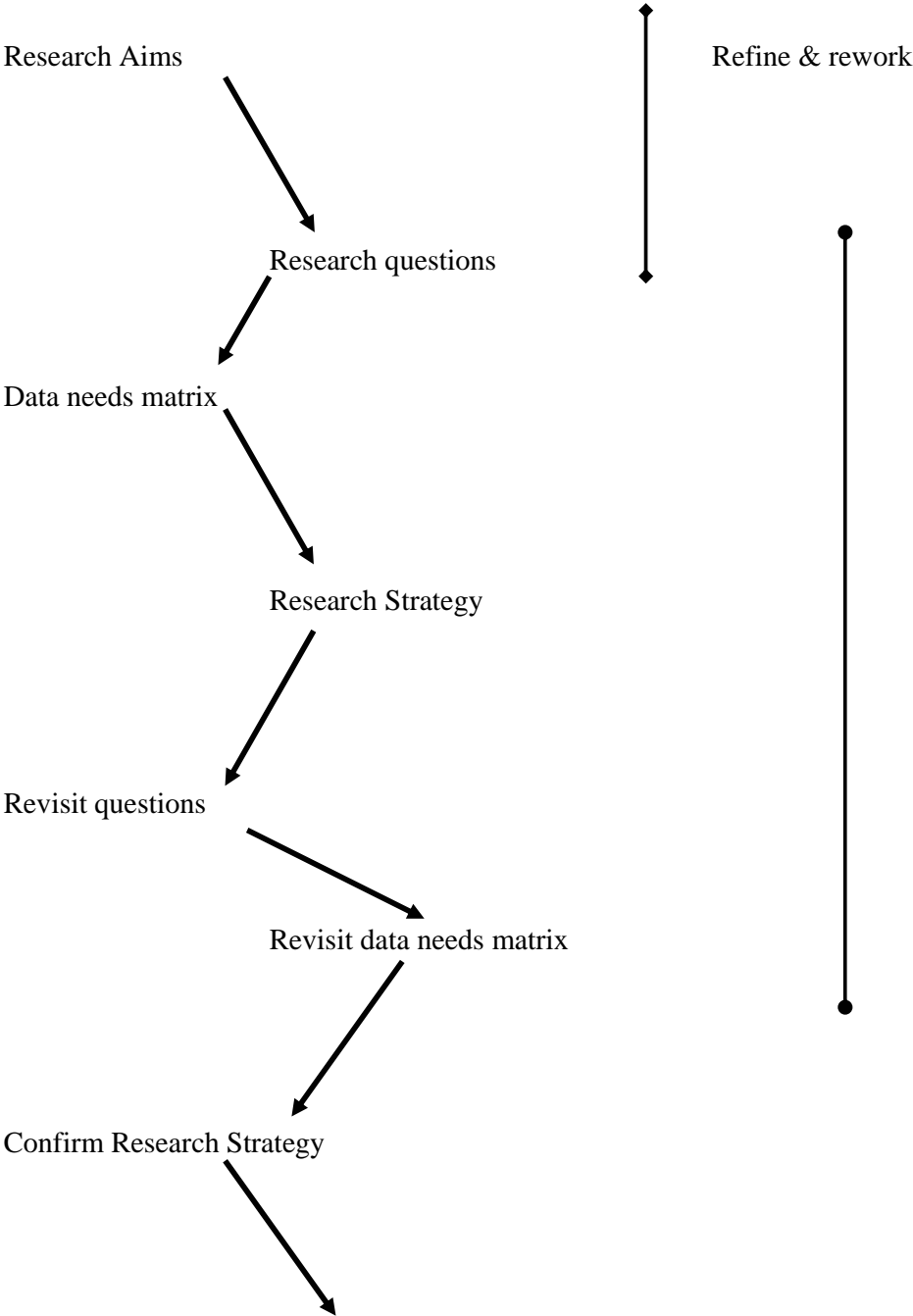
Research Question	What is “modernisation” in the Fire and Rescue Service?
Data Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent review of Fire Service • National framework
Data Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>People</i>, data collected by: observations, interviews, focus groups: • <i>Unpublished documents</i>, data collected by note-taking and summarising: • <i>Published documents</i>, data collected by literature, review, note taking and summarising
Collection Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with LFEPA Chair, Commissioner, HR Director and Senior HR professionals • Focus groups of Line Mangers and Watch personnel • Literature Review • Telephone interview with Head of Fire at ODPM
Skills Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop one person dominating the group • Encourage quiet respondents to participate • Obtain responses from the whole group²⁷ • Ability to listen, interpret and follow new lines of enquiry
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data rich • Inexpensive • Ability to probe new areas
Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to “get in” • Understand the language and culture of the respondents • How to present oneself (dress) • Locating an informant • Gaining trust • Establishing Rapport • Venue
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange interviews with LFEPA contact • Briefing note for interviewees • Prior briefing from Station Manager

²⁷ Denzin, N.K. Lincoln, Y.S. (1994) Handbook of Qualitative Research. SAGE (365)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek recommendations from Station Manager • Make contact with Watch Manager prior to focus group meeting • Recommend their station meeting room
Analysis Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of information at ODPM due to General Election (Civil Servant moves)
Methods of Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of interviews • Simply getting the facts
Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size sample may impact on to anonymity • Political bias for interviews

Appendix 5

Research Philosophy



Case Study
Using focus group/s and semi-structured interviews

APPENDIX 6

THEMES TO EXPLORE

Overall LFEPA strategy and Communications	1
HR strategy links to IRMP	2
Policies to support	3
Performance Management	4
Organisational Development (Training and Development	5
Employee Relations	6
HR Planning	7
Implementation	8

SCRIPT FOR INTERVIEWS

Introduction:

- Me
- Course
- Dissertation²⁸: What I am trying to explore/research.
- Discuss Ethics Statement and specifically cover points in relation to confidentiality.
- Ask if it's OK to tape the interview. Confirm that it will only be heard by me and the transcriber. Once notes have been transcribed the tape contents will be erased.
- Ask if interviewee would like a copy of the notes.
- Bring it back to the dissertation and explain:

Who else I am interviewing

²⁸ Commissioner and HoHR have seen the research proposal.

How long it will last

Show my framework as the simple explanation of SHRM

Start questions

APPENDIX 7

WHAT IS MODERNISATION IN THE FRS?

TO:

Commissioner	1
Director	2
Head of HR	3
Lead Elected Member	4
Focus Group	5

How is SHRM contributing to the modernisation of the FRS

TO:

Commissioner	1
Director	2
Head of HR	3
Lead Elected Member	4
Focus Group	5

OVERALL LFEPA STRATEGY

QUESTION	THEME	WHO
How will you ensure that the vision is communicated to LFEPA?	1	1 + 4
How do you involve LFEPA staff in developing the vision?	1	1 + 4
If not at all, why not?	1	1 + 4
Would you want to be involved in developing the vision and strategy for LFEPA?	1	5
Do you think LFPEA staff could make a meaningful contribution to the overall vision and strategy?	1	All
What is the vision for LFEPA over the next 2-3 years?	1	All
What is the strategy for LFEPA over the next 2-3 years?	1	All

IMPLEMENTATION

QUESTION	THEME	WHO
How effective are officers in implementing HR strategy?	8	4 + 5
How effective are local politicians in implementing HR strategy?	8	1-3, 5
How effective are managers in implementing HR strategy?	8	5
Does the HR function and structure support delivery and implementation in LFEPA	8	2 + 3

HR PLANNING

QUESTION	THEME	WHO
How effective is workforce planning?	7	

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

QUESTION	THEME	WHO
Are the Trades Unions involved in developing the HR strategy?	6	All
How does consultation work?	6	All
How effective is local political support for the HR strategy?	6	All

HR STRATEGY

QUESTION	THEME	WHO
IS there an HR strategy and how does it link to the business	2	All
What training and development is provided for HR professionals?	2/5	1, 2, 3
How is the HR strategy developed?	2	1, 2, 3, 4
How well is HR strategy supported financially	2	1, 2, 3, 4

HR POLICIES

QUESTION	THEME	WHO
Are policies developed to support the HR strategy and overall vision?	3	2, 3
How effective is the consultation process with LFEPA staff?	3	2, 3, 5
How meaningful is the consultation process with LFEPA staff?	3	2, 3, 5
Do you think that LFEPA staff want to contribute to developing HR policies?	3	1 + 4
If not, why not?	3	1 + 4

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

QUESTION	THEME	WHO
Are there clearly defined targets for all	4	All
If not why not?	4	All

How are targets and objectives measured	4	All
How are priorities determined	4	All
Are there plans to introduce	4	All

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

QUESTION	THEME	WHO
What are the plans for management development?	5	2 + 3
How advanced are they?	5	2 + 3
How do you evaluate their effectiveness?	5	2 + 3
How well is the management development embedded into the IRMP?	5	2 + 3
Are you aware of a management development strategy?	5	5
Do you think it is working?	5	5
If not, why not?	5	5
What do you think the LFEPA could do better in relation to management development?	5	5
How is leadership for LFEPA developed?	5	All
How is Member development achieved?	5	1 + 4

QUESTIONS FOR COMMISSIONER

OVERALL LFEPA STRATEGY

How will you ensure that the vision is communicated to LFEPA?

How do you involve LFEPA staff in developing the vision?

If not at all, why not?

Do you think LFEPA staff could make a meaningful contribution to the overall vision and strategy?

What is the vision for LFEPA over the next 2-3 years?

What is the strategy for LFEPA over the next 2-3 years?

IMPLEMENTATION

How effective are local politicians in implementing HR strategy?

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

Are the Trades Unions involved in developing the HR strategy?

How does consultation work?

How effective is local political support for the HR strategy?

HR STRATEGY

Is there an HR strategy and how does it link to the business?

What training and development is provided for HR professionals?

How is the HR strategy developed?

How well is HR strategy supported financially?

HR POLICIES

Do you think that LFEPA staff want to contribute to developing HR policies?

If not why not?

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Are there clearly defined targets for all?

If not why not?

How are targets and objectives measured?

How are priorities determined?

Are there plans to introduce?

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

How is leadership for LFEPA developed?

How is Member development achieved?

QUESTIONS FOR DIRECTOR

OVERALL LFEPA STRATEGY

Do you think LFEPA staff could make a meaningful contribution to the overall vision and strategy?

What is the vision for LFEPA over the next 2-3 years?

What is the strategy for LFEPA over the next 2-3 years?

IMPLEMENTATION

How effective are local politicians in implementing HR strategy?

Does the HR function and structure support delivery and implementation in LFEPA?

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

Are the Trades Unions involved in developing the HR strategy?

How does consultation work?

How effective is local political support for the HR strategy?

HR STRATEGY

Is there an HR strategy and how does it link to the business?

What training and development is provided for HR professionals?

How is the HR strategy developed?

How well is HR strategy supported financially?

HR POLICIES

Are policies developed to support the HR strategy and overall vision?

How effective is the consultation process with LFEPA staff?

Do you think that LFEPA staff want to contribute to developing HR policies?

If not why not?

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Are there clearly defined targets for all?

If not why not?

How are targets and objectives measured?

How are priorities determined?

Are there plans to introduce?

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

What are the plans for management development?

How advanced are they?

How do you evaluate their effectiveness?

How well is the management development embedded into the IRMP?

How is leadership for LFEPA developed?

How is Member development achieved?

QUESTIONS FOR HEAD OF HR

OVERALL LFEPA STRATEGY

Do you think LFEPA staff could make a meaningful contribution to the overall vision and strategy?

What is the vision for LFEPA over the next 2-3 years?

What is the strategy for LFEPA over the next 2-3 years?

IMPLEMENTATION

How effective are local politicians in implementing HR strategy?

Does the HR function and structure support delivery and implementation in LFEPA?

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

Are the Trades Unions involved in developing the HR strategy?

How does consultation work?

How effective is local political support for the HR strategy?

HR STRATEGY

Is there an HR strategy and how does it link to the business?

What training and development is provided for HR professionals?

How is the HR strategy developed?

How well is HR strategy supported financially?

HR POLICIES

Are policies developed to support the HR strategy and overall vision?

How effective is the consultation process with LFEPA staff?

Do you think that LFEPA staff want to contribute to developing HR policies?

If not why not?

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Are there clearly defined targets for all?

If not why not?

How are targets and objectives measured?

How are priorities determined?

Are there plans to introduce?

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

What are the plans for management development?

How advanced are they?

How do you evaluate their effectiveness?

How well is the management development embedded into the IRMP?

How is leadership for LFEPA developed?

QUESTIONS FOR LEAD ELECTED MEMBER

OVERALL LFEPA STRATEGY

How will you ensure that the vision is communicated to LFEPA?

How do you involve LFEPA staff in developing the vision?

If not at all, why not?

Do you think LFEPA staff could make a meaningful contribution to the overall vision and strategy?

What is the vision for LFEPA over the next 2-3 years?

What is the strategy for LFEPA over the next 2-3 years?

IMPLEMENTATION

How effective are officers in implementing HR strategy?

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

Are the Trades Unions involved in developing the HR strategy?

How does consultation work?

How effective is local political support for the HR strategy?

HR STRATEGY

Is there an HR strategy and how does it link to the business?

How is the HR strategy developed?

How well is HR strategy supported financially?

HR POLICIES

Do you think that LFEPA staff want to contribute to developing HR policies?

If not why not?

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Are there clearly defined targets for all?

If not why not?

How are targets and objectives measured?

How are priorities determined?

Are there plans to introduce?

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

How is leadership for LFEPA developed?

How is Member development achieved?

QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUP

OVERALL LFEPA STRATEGY

Would you want to be involved in developing the vision and strategy for LFEPA?

Do you think LFEPA staff could make a meaningful contribution to the overall vision and strategy?

What is the vision for LFEPA over the next 2-3 years?

What is the strategy for LFEPA over the next 2-3 years?

IMPLEMENTATION

How effective are officers in implementing HR strategy?

How effective are local politicians in implementing HR strategy?

How effective are managers in implementing HR strategy?

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

Are the Trades Unions involved in developing the HR strategy?

How does consultation work?

How effective is local political support for the HR strategy?

HR STRATEGY

Is there an HR strategy and how does it link to the business?

HR POLICIES

How effective is the consultation process with LFEPA staff?

How meaningful is the consultation process with LFEPA staff?

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Are there clearly defined targets for all?

If not why not?

How are targets and objectives measured?

How are priorities determined?

Are there plans to introduce?

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Are you aware of a management development strategy?

Do you think it is working?

If not, why not?

What do you think the LFEPA could do better in relation to management development?

How is leadership for LFEPA developed?

APPENDIX 7

Research Question	Is SHRM contributing to the “modernisation” of the Fire and Rescue Service?
Data Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LFEPA Corporate Plan • Future Plans • HR Strategy • IPA Report • IPA Self Assessment document • Staff surveys (post 2004) • LFEPA HR papers (2004/05)
Data Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>People</i>, data collected by: observations, interviews, focus groups: • <i>Unpublished documents</i>, data collected by note-taking and summarising: • <i>Published documents</i>, data collected by literature, review, note taking and summarising • HR committee
Collection Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with LFEPA Chair, Commissioner, HR Director and Senior HR professionals • Focus groups of Line Mangers and Watch personnel • Literature Review • Structural observation
Skills Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop one person dominating the group • Encourage quiet respondents to participate • Obtain responses from the whole group²⁹ • Observational listening
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data rich • Inexpensive • Ability to probe new areas • Linkage with interviews
Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to “get in” • Understand the language and culture of the respondents • How to present oneself (dress) • Locating an informant • Gaining trust • Establishing Rapport • Venue

²⁹ Denzin, N.K. Lincoln, Y.S. (1994) Handbook of Qualitative Research. SAGE (365)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dates of meeting meet project plans
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange interviews with LFEPA contact • Briefing note for interviewees • Prior briefing from Station Manager • Seek recommendations from Station Manager • Make contact with Watch Manager prior to focus group meeting • Recommend their station meeting room
Analysis Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key stakeholders not understanding SHRM • KS concerned about the modernisation agenda • LFEPA concerned about research being published • LFEPA does not agree to be the case study • Modernisation agenda is the result of industrial dispute (strikes 2002/03) • Implication of agreement now being implemented • Elections within FBU for General Secretary • Elections in London
Methods of Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of interviews • Search data for patterns • Identifying link with component elements of SHRM x referenced to word pattern from interviews • Simply getting the facts • Analysing text
Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially. Key Stakeholders and trades unions

Research Question	Who are the key stakeholders?
Data Required	Stakeholder analysis
Data Sources	Interviewee focus groups
Collection Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Focus Groups
Skills Needed	Analysis
Analysis Concerns	No
Methods of Analysis	Analysing text
Actions	Gather data
Ethics	Yes if papers confidential

Ethics Statement

This statement is extracted from the RESPECT Code of Practice for Socio Economic Research. For further details go to www.respectproject.org/code

The underlying principles are: -

1. **Compliance with the law.** The researcher acknowledges the need to comply with the law and that my work complies with any legislation. It is recognised that a wide range of laws may apply and in certain circumstances criminal behaviour may be discovered, in this event the researcher will: -
 - Raise the matter with the named LFEPA representative ³⁰
 - Ensure that full documentation is maintained to establish the bonafide nature of the research and,
 - Where necessary seek the advice of the relevant professional associates ³¹
2. **Avoidance of Social or personal harm.** The researcher will undertake to design the research to ensure that the methodology is appropriate, that no group is unreasonably excluded and that harm is minimised. The researcher will endeavour to ensure that participation in research is voluntary on the basis of informed consent and that views of all relevant stakeholders ³² are taken into account, where this does not conflict with other ethical or scientific principals. Furthermore those participants are protected from undue intrusion, distress, indignity, physical discomfort, personal embarrassment or psychological or other harm.

³⁰ To be confirmed by LFEPA

³¹ Either Chief Fire Officers Association or Association of Principal Fire Officers

³² LFEPA Authority Members, Corporate management Board, Station Managers/District Managers, Watch Members, Trade Unions

Finally, that the research is commissioned and conducted with respect for all groups in society regardless of race, ethnicity, religion and culture and with respect for and awareness of gender and or significant social differences.

3. **Upholding scientific standards.** The researcher agrees to take account of all relevant evidence and present it without omission, misrepresentation or deception. This will mean that researching with integrity and ensuring that the researcher will report trustfully, accurately and comprehensively. The researcher recognises that whilst objectivity is the goal; it is not achievable to enter into the research process without some preconceptions.

The researcher will therefore strive to balance the need for rigour and validity with a reflexive awareness.

This research project is in partial completion for a M.A in HR Strategy and Change, and should not facilitate economic gain or material advantage.

APPENDIX 9

GANTT CHART

	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32
Amend project proposal	█	█				Leave										Leave						Contingency	Contingency
Finalise research design			█	█	█																		
Arrange interviews and focus groups		█																					
Data collection							█	█	█	█													
Data analysis											█	█	█	█									
Evaluate validity of research														█									
Literature review	█	█	█	█	█																		
Write up Introduction							█								█								
Write up literature review					█		█								█								
Write up methodology																	█						
Write up results															█								
Write up analysis and discussion																		█					
Draft conclusions and recommendations																			█				

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