Governance, Leadership and a Personal Reflection:

A journey towards a safer, stronger and more resilient community

A critical commentary and public works submitted to

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Acknowledgements

Arriving at any destination is often filled with happiness, excitement and sometimes relief. It is with all of these emotions I reflect on my doctorate journey, a journey I would never have thought possible only a few years ago. It is rare in life that any one person can complete a journey alone; there are a whole host of people helping you on your way, engaged in a variety of activities. Some people will help you to decide to embark on the journey in the first place, others will provide support in the form of encouragement and advice, whilst the specialist few ensure you have the appropriate logistics in place. The motivation to keep going when the journey becomes too difficult and challenging is often provided by those who experience part of that journey with you or have trodden a similar path before. If anyone ever tells you they are embarking on a solo journey of discovery, tell them to remove the word solo; it is a collective endeavour that is impossible to complete alone.

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The review set out a broad framework that supports a blended approach to assurance and contained fifteen recommendations including the development of new resilience standards for London local government. On 18th April 2018, the Local Authorities' Panel endorsed my review report and the recommended assurance framework.

Appendix 8

Public Work 2 - Resilience Standards for London Local Government, Consultation Report and Annexes, April 2019

An extensive consultation phase followed the development of a draft suite of resilience standards. This phase spanned approximately ten-weeks and included interviews, workshops, meetings and the distribution of surveys.

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Public Work 3 - Resilience Standards for London Local Government, June 2019

The Resilience Standards for London comprise of eleven standards and were designed, with a London borough council focus, to lead to good outcomes and possible leading practice whilst supporting compliance with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. The standards were developed with the aim of continually improving performance across a council's emergency planning and resilience activities.

Glossary

Civil Contingencies Act 2004

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 is an emergency planning framework detailing roles and responsibilities for those involved in emergency preparation and response at the local level.

Combat Recruit of War

A derogatory term derived from the First World War, which refers to a new recruit or inexperienced soldier or Combat Recruit of War. The title is given to the newest members of a regiment.

Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974

The primary piece of legislation covering occupational health and safety in Great Britain. It's sometimes referred to as HSWA, the HSW Act, the 1974 Act or HASAWA.

Integrated Emergency Management

The concept on which civil protection in the UK is based. Integrated Emergency Management is a holistic approach to preventing and managing emergencies that entails six key steps, Anticipation, Assessment, Prevention, Preparation, Response and Recovery.

Local Authorities Panel

The Local Authorities Panel is the lead governance body for resilience across London's local government. It consists of local authority Chief Executives, central government representatives, interested stakeholders and emergency planning and resilience experts.

Local Government Association

A national membership body for local authorities who work on behalf of member councils to support, promote and improve local government.

London Councils

London Councils represents London's 32 borough councils and the City of London. It is a cross-party organisation that works on behalf of all of its member authorities regardless of political persuasion.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

A Government department whose job is to create great places to live and work, and to give more power to local people to shape what happens in their area. The department has been rebranded and is now known as the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Recovery Phase

The process of rebuilding, restoring and rehabilitating the community following an emergency.

Abstract

This context statement forms part of the Doctor of Professional Studies (by Public Works) programme and within it I will critically reflect on my public works. There are three elements to my public works, each of which relates to the emergency planning and resilience activities across London's local government. The first public work is an assurance review that recommended a framework for the assurance of resilience activities. The second public work is the consultation report that explored the views of multiple stakeholders through interviews, workshops and surveys. The third public work is a suite of resilience standards for London's local government published in response to the consultation report.

I focus on four specific areas related to my public works. I explore the subject of validation from a very personal perspective and how my life's experiences and events have shaped my views in developing my public works including the learning I have embraced from those experiences. I explore the role of leadership in the context of emergency planning and resilience and look at the role of a leader from an ethical, collaborative and challenging standpoint. This analysis is further developed to focus on the role of a political leader, including scrutiny and challenge and learning the lessons from past emergency events. The role of a community in preparing for, responding to and recovering from a major emergency event is discussed including the relationship between the local council and the citizens who live or work in that council area.

The summary findings of this critical analysis have resulted in answering personal questions about the need for validation as well as the production of a community development model and an organisational resilience and assurance model to support councils in developing and improving their resilience arrangements.

The Methodological approach that underpinned my Public Works

During the development of this context statement, I have reflected on the methodology used to develop my public works and whether I could have done anything differently to achieve the eventual outcome. During my reflection I have considered a number of factors that undoubtedly lead to my approach at the time. Firstly, there were practical considerations to consider which included the time constraints as I was commissioned, as a paid contractor, over multiple phases of work commencing with my initial assurance review.

Secondly, the standards were to be implemented across thirty-three organisations, each with their own individual structures and governance arrangements. It was essential, therefore, for me to engage with multiple stakeholders at various layers across those organisations, each with varying skills and experience in order to improve their understanding, get buy in and establish ownership. Some of those stakeholders were experts in the field of emergency planning and resilience whilst others would have responsibility and ultimate accountability for their organisation's performance.

It was also necessary to engage with people and organisations external to the London local government family including central government departments and local government organisations who would have a vested interest in the standards through day to day business interactions including the planning, response and recovery from emergency events.

My approach recognised two important factors, namely, the standards would not be accepted and effective unless a collective approach across London local government was adopted and that each layer within the individual organisational structures would have a different perspective on the standards and their use. This perspective would be down to people's role and responsibilities, their experience and their interest in the subject matter. In effect, there would be different communities and cultures across individual and multiple organisations. The issues of a collective approach and cultures within communities were, with hindsight, an early indication of my interest in transdisciplinarity and autoethnography.

My decision was to approach my public works using a mixed method approach combining qualitative and quantitative methods as discussed by Froehlich, Van Waes and Schäfer (2020). I wanted to enrich my research by collecting data from a complex environment that contextualised the subject matter and felt the use of both methods would strengthen the analysis (Malina, Nørreklit and Selto, 2011).

The design of my research was as follows:

Stage one - Desk based research

My research, throughout all phases of my public works included the review of secondary data sources, national and international, such as reports and publications, including those from reviews and enquiries, existing legislation and sector specific guidance. The reason for that was the resilience standards would have to reflect current and best practice and some would have to include mandatory guidance as existing legislation applies across many of the eleven resilience standards. I also wanted to ensure any recommendations from past or current enquiries, e.g., The Grenfell enquiry, could be considered. Although it is highly probable that the main recommendations and lessons learned would alter existing guidance and legislation, it is possible that the timing of that change would not meet my project timelines or that minor, yet important information would not be considered in updated publications.

Stage two - Qualitative research

The qualitative research I conducted was time consuming and more costly, as others have stated (Maher and Dertadian, 2018), given the number of people and organisations visited. However, this approach was critical in building confidence amongst numerous stakeholders through an iterative development process. Additionally, the vast majority of people I engaged would ultimately be the end-user of the standards and I wanted to ensure they felt they were part of the development process and had a vested interest in the quality of the product and the success in the implementation.

In order to gather the qualitative data, I used a variety of data collection sources including interviews, workshops and observation and participation in meetings. These forums gave me an opportunity to test and challenge my findings as the research progressed and to listen to the opinions of others.

Stage three - Quantitative research

An electronic survey was sent to 33 councils involving 120 people, including to managerial and political leaders across London's borough councils. The survey was sent during the early stages of the development phase and was designed to understand a broader range of views in developing the new resilience standards for London, rather than offering a detailed analysis. The survey also enabled me

to reach a more diverse range of people who may not have been able to attend other forums or who may have been uncomfortable in airing their views amongst their peers and more senior practitioners.

The survey questions were designed by me but pre-tested and quality checked by the consultation and engagement lead from the City of London Corporation. Excel was used as this was easily accessible to me and it also to enabled me to store the data, support the analysis of the responses by identifying trends and common themes and gave the opportunity to support update reports, to my governing body, with understandable charts and graphs. I have previously used SPSS software for my Master's dissertation but I decided the level of statistical analysis provided by SPSS was not required for my public works. The analysis of the survey responses and comments resulting from the consultation phase of the development of the Resilience Standards for London, can be viewed at Appendix 8 of my Doctorate submission.

Data sources

My primary data sources were the people across the organisations previously mentioned; practitioners, leaders, politicians, sector experts and those with a vested interest and connectivity to the emergency response and resilience capabilities of London's local government. The research population and size was chosen through a pragmatic approach; to reach out to political and managerial leaders, practitioners and sector specific experts at all levels of each organisation. This was because the resilience standards were designed to be owned and used by people across those organisational layers. I wanted to ensure the research population was representative of councils across London given the different risks and threats associated with inner and outer London boroughs.

During all phases of my research, I agreed the confidentiality conditions with the population group. During the interviews and workshops conversations were recorded with permission, comments were not attributed to individuals during the reporting process. All comments received through the survey process were included and were copied verbatim; survey response forms were included as an appendix to the consultation report and contained the names of the responder. This was agreed with the responder prior to publication.

Data Analysis

In the context of developing my public works, which was a commissioned work-based project with a clearly defined scope, I did not follow a formal set of guidelines on how to analyse qualitative research. My analysis was more organic in its approach and in order to ensure my findings were reliable and valid, my analytical approach included the identification of themes and the triangulation of evidence gained from my desk-based research, qualitative and quantitative data sources. Where themes emerged, I would test out the findings by presenting evidence to three distinct forums, all of which had experience, knowledge and expertise of the emergency planning and resilience environment. These forums included:

A specialist practitioner's group

Emergency planning and resilience professionals from across a diverse group of councils, including inner and outer London authorities with different levels of experience and exposure to significant events. Each would have their own priorities, objectives and ability to gain organisational buy-in and this was paramount in terms of my understanding the pressures and concerns faced by those who would be responsible for the day-to-day delivery of the standards work.

A strategic, independent and external stakeholder group

This group consisted of Government representatives (Cabinet Office), the Local Government Association (representing political leaders across the UK), London Councils (representing political leaders across London), Resilience Advisors Network (an organisation supporting governments and organisations in resilience matters globally), and the Care Quality Commission who are the health sectors regulatory body. The role of this group was to scrutinise and challenge the work I was developing.

The Local Authorities' Panel

This forum was the governing body for emergency planning and resilience matters across London. The panel commissioned my public works, received updates from me throughout all phases of the project including the assurance review, the development of the resilience standards and the consultation

period. The Local Authorities' Panel ultimately made the final decision on accepting my public works and their implementation across London.

This process of scrutiny, challenge and decision making was repeated numerous times throughout the development and consultation phases of my public works and enabled sector experts to scrutinise and challenge my findings and conclusions. Where it was deemed there was not enough evidence to develop a specific theme then it was discounted. In cases where there was a contentious issue where agreement could not be reached through discussion and compromise, I would present the issue to the governing body with my recommendation so they could make a final decision on its inclusion or exclusion from the final standards work.

Introduction

A career in the fire and rescue service and local government spanning 30-years has demonstrated to me that the best way to avoid an emergency is to plan for it; pre-empt what could happen, the foreseeable risk, and put in place measures to eliminate future threats or at least mitigate the effects of them. This emergency planning process will make the organisation, individual or community more resilient and will inherently provide contingency arrangements to allow the normal business as usual activities to continue in the face of life's most difficult challenges.

Emergency planning is a statutory duty placed on fire and rescue services and local government organisations, amongst other institutions, through the Civil Contingencies Act 2004[1]. These organisations will invest a significant amount of time, money and resources in preparing for an emergency and yet they still happen, which, some might say, is an inevitable part of life. Accepting that emergencies and disasters will continue to occur is a reasonable and positive starting point in planning for an emergency in an attempt to prevent those occurrences from happening, in addition to improving the resilience of an organisation and the safety of those people they have the responsibility of protecting.

When an emergency event does occur, the years of planning and testing of those emergency plans, which will include a range of partners and stakeholders, should mitigate the impacts of those events and enable an organisation to respond quickly and effectively and to assist those affected to return to normality or recover from that emergency in the rebuilding, restoring and rehabilitating the community (Cabinet Office, 2013b).

The following context statement will critically reflect on my public works that are supporting the emergency planning and resilience arrangements for London Local Government. My public works recognised that the process of emergency planning and resilience should reach much further than the organisation engaged in it; it is dependent on the role of partners and national institutions, such as national government and should engage and involve the people across the relevant community to ensure their aspirations, needs and concerns are understood and addressed appropriately.

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[1] The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 is an emergency planning framework detailing roles and responsibilities for those involved in emergency preparation and response at the local level. The Act divides local responders into 2 categories, imposing a different set of duties on each. London's Borough Councils are Category 1 responders and therefore have a greater level of responsibility in discharging the Act.

My public works are:

1. **An assurance framework for London Local Government - 'Providing individual and collective assurance' – February 2018**

A review was commissioned by the City of London Corporation on behalf of the Local Authorities' Panel[2] in January 2018. The objective of the review was to recommend the means by which London local government, comprising the thirty-two boroughs and the City of London Corporation (hereafter referred to as the thirty-three borough councils), can individually and collectively assure their organisations preparedness, particularly their capacity and capability, through a credible, transparent, efficient and cost-effective approach. The review set out a broad framework that supports a blended approach to assurance and contained fifteen recommendations including the development of new resilience standards for London local government. On 18th April 2018, the Local Authorities' Panel endorsed my review report and the recommended assurance framework.

2. **Resilience Standards for London Local Government, Consultation Report – April 2019**

An extensive consultation phase followed the development of a draft suite of resilience standards. This phase spanned approximately ten-weeks and included interviews, workshops, meetings and the distribution of surveys to the thirty-three London borough councils. I established a sounding board of national and international experts to act as a critical friend as I developed my work and this group was engaged during the consultation phase.

I engaged with a broad range of stakeholders across local government, national government and the private sector. These stakeholders included:

- Local government political leaders, senior managers and emergency planning experts from the emergency planning teams in each of the thirty-three borough councils
- The Cabinet Office
- The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
- London Councils – an organisation representing elected Councillors across London
- Local Government Association – a national membership body supporting local councils in improvement and development

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[2] The Local Authorities Panel is the lead governance body for resilience across London's local government. It consists of local authority Chief Executives, central government representatives, interested stakeholders and emergency planning and resilience experts.

- Care Quality Commission – the national regulator for health and social care services
- The Resilience Advisors Network - supporting national and public bodies across the world with expertise and capability in Civil Protection and Humanitarian activity.

Throughout my review and the subsequent work on implementing my recommendations, I was responsible for reporting on and evidencing progress to a Local Authorities' Panel which consisted of local authority Chief Executives, central government representatives and resilience experts.

3. Resilience Standards for London Local Government – June 2019

The Resilience Standards for London comprise of eleven standards and were designed, with a council focus, to lead to good outcomes and possible leading practice whilst supporting compliance with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. Where borough councils identify leading practice as part of their self-assessment or independent peer review process, it is expected, by the Local Authorities Panel, that this will be shared with other councils to enable them to learn and adopt the best available practices and consequently raise emergency planning and resilience standards across London.

The standards were developed with the aim of continually improving performance across a council's emergency planning and resilience activities. The Corporate Leadership Team, or equivalent, would be the accountable body and Services and Departments would be responsible for the resilience arrangements in their respective areas. Emergency planning teams would continue to provide expertise, advice and guidance.

Each standard contains a 'Descriptor' which is divided in to three parts (developing, established and advanced). The descriptor provides a framework for the council to reach a view on its current level of performance, based on the evidence. These are intended as food for thought and to promote honest consideration of how developed a council's approach is. It is not intended that the descriptor is used as a judgement, either within the council or by external bodies during any form of assessment, peer review or inspection.

Councils should be able to assess or measure progress against any standard (or part of it) at any time of the year as part of their business-as-usual arrangements. I was also commissioned to develop an independent peer review process to assess each council against the standards. This process is live and is being delivered by the Local Government Association.

I have named my public works, collectively, as the Assurance Framework for London's Local Government.

The work I have completed to date has already had a significant impact on the organisational resilience of local authorities across London and has been a driver for change in how they prepare for, respond to and recover from major events as evidenced in Appendix 1. The framework has provided improved protection and assurance for London's communities and their political representatives, and each organisation will be peer reviewed by the Local Government Association's local government improvement team; the programme for peer review commenced in January 2020. I was asked to lead the first peer review team in reviewing the London Borough of Brent's emergency planning and resilience arrangements. The feedback from Brent Council following that peer review has been very positive; they have developed an action plan and are making changes to their policies, procedures and operational practices as a result.

My initial research, as part of my Assurance Review for London Local Government (Public Work 1), included reviewing national and international best practice and drawing upon the experience and expertise in the emergency planning and resilience industry. There is an enormous amount of learning to be derived from researching and exploring historical events to further improve and enhance the resilience of local councils and their communities.

There is a significant role to play from within the local government family in ensuring organisations are prepared and resourced adequately to deal with future emergency events. However, emergency and resilience activities are complex and wide ranging, in planning and in execution. This requires a collaborative approach in the participation, coordination and joint leadership from a range of stakeholders and partners which is reflected in the design of the assurance framework.

A Personal Perspective

My experiences across the past 30 years have ingrained a passion and deep desire to help people. Throughout my career, as an operational firefighter, Chief Fire Officer and senior local government executive, I have experienced numerous crises and disasters. I have been impressed and proud of the response by the emergency services and local government bodies but equally concerned by the inability to learn lessons from previous events. We have seen on numerous occasions, a failure to implement and evaluate recommendations from post incident reviews and enquiries.

I have witnessed the carnage and misery caused by disasters throughout my career, more recently in August 2015 when eleven people were killed at the Shoreham air crash. I was involved in the emergency response phase and as an Executive Director, for West Sussex County Council, responsible for community facing services, including the Coroner's office; I also took a lead role in the recovery phase too. I witnessed first-hand the long-term impact on families, the community and the workforce involved in the aftermath. This experience has motivated me to help organisations plan for the future and to highlight the opportunities for communities to help themselves.

In the context of my public works with local government organisations across London, I was, and still am, concerned that without sustained momentum and learning, there will be an inevitable repeat of the tragic events at Grenfell Tower in July 2017. It is important to me to support the ongoing improvements in the resilience arrangements across London. I want to help maintain the momentum that will deliver improved governance and scrutiny of preparedness, enhanced response capabilities and to ensure the recovery phase is given the appropriate attention the residents of London should expect.

My public works are detailed and wide ranging; it is impossible to offer a critique of every element within those works. Over the next few paragraphs, I will provide the rationale for my chosen themes within this context statement.

My extensive experience and knowledge as a senior leader has informed me, that at a strategic level, there are critical factors that influence positive preventative outcomes and this has deepened my resolve to follow a philosophy of prevention and early intervention. Firstly, the structural elements of a council, through its leadership and governance arrangements, can influence the culture and the behaviours of the people who represent it. The vision and values set out by the leadership, can potentially, shape its decision-making processes, the development of policies and will determine how the council interacts with its key stakeholders including the most important of groups, the community it serves. This is dependent on a number of factors such as local context, leadership capabilities and the appetite for change as observed by Lowndes and Leach (2004).

Secondly, the community, the tax paying public, hold that organisation to account through the democratic process. However, the public largely rely on critical services provided by the council and often have little influence over the day-to-day decisions that may positively or adversely affect them (Brookes and Grint, 2010). In some cases, local people may feel remote from the council's leaders for

a multitude of reasons which may include bureaucratic processes, a different political perspective, or the lack of opportunity to access information and people. In the context of my public works I argue the importance of community engagement and involvement in developing a safer, stronger, and more resilient community.

Finally, I believe my life's journey has shaped my public works and I will be discussing this further in Chapter 5 (Personal Validation) of this context statement. It has influenced my thinking, decision making and my philosophy in how an organisation should be led, managed and the impact it should have on people's lives. I have accepted the enormous responsibility of a leader in a public organisation and I have always believed in myself through successful and difficult times. The need for validation has always been with me through those times and I want to explore why and what it means for my professional future. As a result of my conclusions above, my chosen themes are as follows:

1   Personal Validation

During this context statement I will explore the need for validation in my professional life including the academic rigour to support intuitive decision making and the importance, to me, of my work being recognised amongst my peers. The issue of personal recognition has become acutely apparent throughout my doctorate journey. Recognition that what I believe in and the action I take, the decisions I make, are seen as the right thing to do. I was struck by a quote I heard many years ago during a leadership programme and which has stayed with me since then, it is a quote I often repeat to others; **managers do things right, leaders do the right thing.** This is further clarified by Eli Harari in the quote below who picks up on the subtlety and significant impact of this change in order of words.

> This is one of the most excellent critical thinking questions and it is fascinating how a small change in the order of the words, can make such a difference in the meaning! It speaks of a major paradigm shift in thinking…But, you can feel it, can't you, "Doing The Right Thing", say it, it feels passionate, there's emotional intelligence that immediately kind of joins these words (Eli Harari, 2022).

The issue of 'doing the right thing' as an ethical leader and having the moral authority to lead has always been important to me throughout my career and I will explore these subjects in more detail during this context statement.

2   Governance Arrangements, Managerial Leadership

The role of a leader in a local government setting is critically important in setting the tone and embedding a culture across an organisation which I will evidence in Chapter 6 (Governance Arrangements, Managerial Leadership). The values and behaviours the employees live by and the services they deliver will reflect the leadership of the organisation. Great leadership can lead to the delivery of excellent services, even in challenging times as we have seen through the recent financial constraints placed upon local authorities through a period of austerity and the response to a global pandemic. However, although a leader in one organisation can achieve great success, I assert that it is the 'pooling' of leadership through what is described by Yeboah-Assiamah, Asamoah and Adams (2019) as transdisciplinary leadership that can achieve significant and lasting change and this will be discussed in Chapter 6.

3   Governance Arrangements, Political Leadership

The community elects political representatives to deliver improvements on their behalf. One of the fundamental requirements and a minimum expectation is to ensure the safety of each and every one of a community's citizens. An important role of a political leader is to engage in the emergency planning process including, where appropriate, to scrutinise and challenge the work of its council and to understand the importance of that role and responsibility. The duties, roles and responsibilities for councils and councillors are set out in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (II, 2004), A Councillors Guide to Civil Emergencies (Local Government Association, 2018) and specifically for London borough councils in the Civil Resilience Handbook for London Councillors (London Councils, 2019). There are clearly further improvements that can be made in the role of scrutiny and challenge, as I will demonstrate in Chapter 7 (Governance Arrangements, Political Leadership), particularly given the unstable nature of local politics where numerous changes in people and policies can be happen in a short political term.

4   Community Resilience

Residents and businesses are those most affected by a crisis or disaster, yet the engagement and responsibility bestowed to them, on a day-to-day basis is minimal. People living in communities can have a significant impact on their community well-being and development, through their ideas and with the support of appropriate resources, which may include local decision making, access to information and financial support. Community resilience is the least developed area across London, as identified throughout my public works, and this has been recognised across London's local government organisations as I will evidence in Chapter 8 (Community Resilience).

As a collective, political leaders, through their governance roles, managerial leadership across a system and community involvement and participation can be a powerful force in achieving great things for people. In the context of my previous professional life, it was life-saving, in my present and future endeavours it could also be life changing. There is an opportunity for councils, partners and communities to unite in preparing for future emergencies and in developing plans and mitigation measures as a cooperative. This collective ownership has the potential to build trust and lead to positive outcomes for a community.   There is also an opportunity to strengthen a partnership approach across other council and community activities, in addition to emergency planning and resilience, where there is a shared interest. I will be discussing these issues later on in this context statement.

Note Bene – National Resilience Strategy

In July 2021, the UK Government published a Call for Evidence (Cabinet Office, 2021) to seek public views to inform the development of a National Resilience Strategy, the consultation phase ran from 13 July 2021 to 27 September 2021. In addition to the call for evidence, the government conducted over 1000 stakeholder events involving businesses, academics and other experts and they will now consider the responses before the planned publication of the Resilience Strategy in the spring of 2022. Further details can be found on the Cabinet Office website.

Within the call for evidence 'Resilience' is defined as:

> The ability to anticipate, assess, prevent, mitigate, respond to, and recover from natural hazards, deliberate attacks, geopolitical instability, disease outbreaks, and other disruptive events, civil emergencies or threats to our way of life (Cabinet Office, 2021).

Throughout this context statement, I will use the words 'resilience', 'community resilience' and 'community'. I am aware there are a significant number of definitions for all of these terms (some of which can be seen in Appendix 2) and scholars will no doubt continue to discuss these issues in the future. For clarity, my use of the word resilience, in relation to my public works, will fall within the national government's definition as set out above.

In Chapter 8 (Community Resilience) of this context statement I will offer my view of what I consider to be a helpful definition of 'community' and 'community resilience' in the context of my public works. These definitions have been included to help the reader understand my broader narrative around this topic.

Myself as part of my context statement

I am what I am or am I what I am? I would like to introduce myself to me.

I do not remember moving into my new family home at the age of one but I do recall my brother's reflections many years later. Running into the new council house for the very first time and climbing the stairs to see what had been missing from his life for the previous 10 years, "Wow, it's got an inside toilet".

I was the seventh child of eight, born in 1967, to a father who was making a life in Birmingham after travelling from Dublin for work and to a mother whose main purpose in life, at this time at least, seemed to be producing children quicker and in greater numbers than anybody else on the street. I was born when my mother was the relatively young age of 34. I never really established why my parents wanted such a large family so soon, other than my father was a practicing Catholic and my mother had converted to Catholicism after meeting my father. Life was certainly difficult for my parents during their early days, demonstrated by the fact they lived in Salvation Army accommodation with three children under two years old.

My parents worked hard to feed and clothe the family; the name of the game was to feed the kids and pay the bills. They had no qualifications themselves, could not drive, our family holidays were in Devon or Weymouth, with coach and caravan and on-site entertainment; happy times for the most part, discipline and freedom in equal measure.

School for me was fun, primary and secondary. I did not mind the learning but loved going to see my friends. I always look back on my time at school with fond memories and reflect now on the good times I had; I think people are still surprised when I tell them how much I enjoyed school because of the laughs I had rather than the education and learning. Many hours were spent outside of the classroom rather than in it and that was when the lessons were going on! Teachers had a major impact on my school life – the ones who I could connect with, whether they were strict, relaxed, young or old, always got the best out of me. Where there was no connection there was failure and I could not learn in an environment where I did not like or respect the teacher regardless of where the blame lay.

I left school with few qualifications, two O levels and a few CSE's, I was suspended from school prior to the exams for goading a Maths teacher I did not get on with and who I had repeatedly clashed with over the previous two years. The breakdown in our relationship was detrimental to me as I barely

scraped a pass at CSE level. I was allowed back to take my exams although I had no academic ambition at the time. Pupils at my secondary school did not go onto sixth form or university, it was not a route available and I did not think twice about it. "Get a job and earn some money" was the path to follow. I enjoyed physical activity and recognised then, as I do now, the importance of this in a child's life.

My immediate ambition lay in a desire to test myself physically and to see if I could join the world's elite by becoming a member of the Parachute Regiment. It was probably the Falkland's war that fuelled my interest, as well as a brother-in-law who had also served with the Parachute Regiment and regaled me with tails of adventure and a life beyond the council estates and car factories of Birmingham, where my Dad spent most of his working life.

I was single minded and determined more than I had ever been to be successful in achieving my ambition to wear the famous maroon red beret of the world's finest fighting regiment, I believed that then as I do today. The following quotation, by Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, former Colonel Commandant of the Parachute Regiment, is well known to all Parachute Regiment soldiers and was often studied and repeated during training, and subsequently, to remind each soldier of the expectations and standards required.

What Manner Of Men Are These That Wear The Maroon Beret?

They are firstly all volunteers and are toughened by physical training. As a result they have infectious optimism and that offensive eagerness which comes from well-being. They have 'jumped' from the air and by doing so have conquered fear.

Their duty lies in the van of the battle. They are proud of this honour. They have the highest standards in all things whether it be skill in battle or smartness in the execution of all peace time duties. They are in fact - men apart - every man an emperor.

Of all the factors, which make for success in battle, the spirit of the warrior is the most decisive. That spirit will be found in full measure in the men who wear the maroon beret. (Support Our Paras, 2022).

On reflection, the structure and discipline of the armed forces probably defined my life in more ways than one. I was getting myself into trouble and could not seem to prevent it; I needed guidance and support, structure and discipline and although I did not necessarily realise it then, it was the gateway to the rest of my life.

I have no regrets about the path I chose, I think fondly with pride and a sense of enormous satisfaction that this has led directly to where I stand now. The path was long, the journey was adventurous, exciting and challenging and the destination is still to be reached.

From maroon red to yellow cork – army green to civvy street

I was thoroughly enjoying my time in the army and only left because I wanted to see if I could do something different. Had it not worked out, I was free to re-join my old platoon and would have happily carried on with my career with the Parachute Regiment.

My transition from the armed forces to 'civvy' street was relatively smooth, although it took me twelve months to begin my fire service training due to the elongated selection process. I was very much aware of my lack of academic ability and I knew I would have to do something about this to pass the entrance tests. The determination, commitment and willpower I had demonstrated in the army, held me in good stead for the challenges ahead and they would be qualities that endured throughout my leadership journey. I bought maths revision and 'test your IQ' books to help me through the selection tests which I passed. I knew I had landed in the right job as soon as I started; great camaraderie, a structured and disciplined service with exciting work each and every shift.

The fire service was a different employer then than it is today with a 'single tier entry' system meaning that everyone who reached the top would start their career as a firefighter. There were statutory fire service examinations to pass, both theoretical and practical, if a person wanted to progress in their career, through promotion, to higher ranks. In addition to these, there were optional fire engineering exams. I accepted this academic challenge with obsessive intent and completed them all before reaching the status of qualified firefighter almost four years later. I thoroughly enjoyed learning about my new profession and linking the theory to the operational application. The more I learned, the more I improved as a firefighter and the more confident I became at work; I spent my first five years as a firefighter applying for and passing examinations. This was my introduction to achieving the qualifications I had missed out on at school.

When I reflect on my early career in the fire service there are two moments that stand out in influencing the years that followed; one was the ability to be successful in 'learning' and enjoying the process too, I enjoyed the experience of learning and gaining knowledge. I was self-reliant with little classroom-based study or dependence on teachers for taught material; I enjoyed this mode of learning, having to solve problems myself and find solutions to difficult tasks. Being good at my job and having the underpinning theoretical knowledge to complement those practical skills was satisfying and an asset.

The second moment was being recognised for my potential by an experienced Officer who joined my team two years after I started there. He became an immediate influence on my career, continually supporting and encouraging me to improve and progress into more senior roles. It is a moment that has stayed with me throughout my career. I have often observed to others, whom I have mentored or line managed, that there will be one person or a small number of people who can have a profound impact on your career. This could be in a negative sense but in my case, it was a positive one, with life changing consequences.

I progressed, both in terms of career progression and through academic achievement. My ability to manage and lead needed, in my mind, to be supported by educational progression. In my early career, as a firefighter, I needed to understand water pressure and flow as well as how to practically apply water onto a fire. In my role as a leader, I needed to understand the motivation of people, through Maslow's hierarchy of needs, as well as guiding and supporting them through my actions and words.

My decision making always felt instinctive or intuitive, and I always felt there was something missing to validate those decisions. Of course, I used my experience in decision making; I assessed risk, analysed the impact of my decisions and their consequences and I had confidence in my judgement. My conclusion that I needed a form of 'validation' for my decisions clearly is not one everyone will reach, some of the best leaders in the world, in business, in sport, in a variety of disciplines will achieve success and even greatness without academic qualifications. However, I guess there is only one conclusion that mattered to me and that was mine.

In terms of my professional development, I went on to achieve the highest rank in the fire and rescue service as a Chief Fire Officer. I broadened my professional role to lead a diverse group of teams outside of the fire industry, as a Deputy Chief Executive of a large county council and for a brief period of time was appointed as the Chief Executive of the same council. This was the first time in the UK,

and still is to date[3], that a Chief Fire Officer was appointed as a Council Chief Executive. I received several messages from fellow Chief Fire Officers from around the country recognising my achievement. Many commented that it was an important milestone for the fire service and demonstrated that fire officers could utilise their skills in a diverse range of leadership positions. From a personal perspective, I initially had doubts about my ability to perform as a Chief Executive of a large county council; the range of responsibilities were enormous with many of them alien to me. The senior team offered tremendous support and encouragement and the messages from staff across the council were equally positive.

The fire service had always been seen as a 'can-do' service across the county council. A service that had a clear vision, could cut through bureaucracy and had a reputation for delivering good outcomes. I was passionate about the fire service being part of the county council[4] and believed it could be the partner of choice in delivering benefits to the community. It was, in my view, a model that offered the greatest opportunities for the public in terms of outcomes and value for money and a model that should be considered for the future.

My educational attainment kept pace, achieving a post graduate Diploma in Management Studies followed by a Master's degree, with distinction, in 2007. Achieving a degree was a proud moment and it **appeared** to give me closure on the need to gain knowledge through academia; on reflection, gaining a degree, had been my educational goal. I embarked on a Master's degree as part of my learning journey and I continued to undertake continual professional development as I progressed through the ranks in the fire service. Aside from my personal desire to achieve a degree, I was aware that promotion to the most senior roles within the fire service was unlikely without one, as every job advert was asking for degree level qualifications as part of their essential criteria.

At the time of commencing my master's programme I was leading the support services directorate with responsibility for training, recruitment and diversity issues amongst other functions. I was interested in the lack of diversity across the fire service and in particular in my own service in Surrey where the percentage of the workforce from ethnic minorities was at 1.1% (11 people) compared to the ethnic minority population of Surrey of 4%. The aim of my research was to establish whether people from the Asian community (the largest ethnic group) in Woking would consider Surrey Fire and

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[3] At the time of submission.
[4] Of the 50 fire and rescue services, in 2016, only 15 were part of a county council. The remainder were stand-alone fire authorities.

Rescue Service as a first-choice employer and the barriers and obstacles that may exist. The conclusion and recommendations from my Master's dissertation can be found in Appendix 3.

A model for success

Being a senior leader in the fire and rescue service, over the last eight years of my career, was extremely challenging against a difficult financial backdrop. Leading through austerity created significant pressure which led to stark choices about people's careers and livelihoods; tough decisions had to be made. However, out of adversity comes opportunity and senior leaders had to determine the most appropriate operating model for their organisation and the communities they served.

There were two fundamental approaches for senior leaders; do you focus your strategy on what is, essentially, the traditional role of a fire service which is emergency response, or do you opt for a preventative approach? I opted for the latter. I believed that prevention was better than cure and that every blue light seen hurtling towards an emergency could only mean bad news. It was always going to be the case that emergency response would continue but I was determined that our preventative resources would increase, day to day work routines would focus on partnership working and early intervention activities and the service would be seen as the partner of choice across the county council and its stakeholders.

As there was no new funding to deliver this strategy, the emergency response resource would have to be reduced and redirected; an approach that was not entirely welcomed by staff or the community. It was clear, from extensive engagement work, that many people would prefer to await the arrival of an emergency response service rather than preventing the emergency happening in the first place.

I was determined to see this preventative strategy accepted so I led consecutive change programmes of West Sussex Fire Service commencing in 2009, called 'Fire Redesign' and 'Future Fire and Rescue' which can be seen in my timeline on page 25. These programmes involved workshops, briefings, several internal and public consultations before I received the support of my political leaders. The change process was challenging and required a prolonged and detailed analysis of the services capabilities and potential opportunities. I also believed there was an opportunity, as part of a large county council, to collaborate with other services to deliver collective outcomes. Children's and adult services, public health and trading standards, amongst others, working together on the ground to protect people, prevent harm and develop community led solutions to local problems.

One example was to engage a small rural community of approximately 1000 people and to work with them to develop their community resilience. Under my leadership, the council provided funding, training and equipment to enable the community to be self-sufficient during an emergency event such as harsh winter weather conditions.

My preventative approach was accepted, and this became my unique selling point; the development of a strategy that delivered safer, stronger and more resilient communities. This significantly increased prevention and early intervention activity and delivered considerable budget reductions whilst improving the overall performance of the fire and rescue service across West Sussex.

Following a successful career in local government spanning almost 30-years, I set up Ashford House Consultancy in December 2017 and received my first commission in January 2018. I was approached by a recruitment agency who found my details on LinkedIn. Following an interview with the Chief Executive of the City of London Corporation, I was commissioned to conduct an assurance review on behalf of the 32 London borough councils and the City of London Corporation. The initial brief of the review was to recommend a means by which London's local authorities could assure themselves of their individual and collective ability to prepare for, respond to and recover from a significant event or major incident. Once I started my research, it became apparent that my review would need to delve deeper into the local government's resilience arrangements across London. It became clear there were gaps in governance arrangements, leadership, community engagement and capabilities amongst others.

The catalyst for my assurance review was the tragic event at Grenfell Tower on 14th June 2017 when 72 people were killed, many more were injured and over 200 people lost their friends, homes and possessions. It is fair to say that the local government family across London had recognised the need to improve and develop their approach to emergency planning and organisational resilience and had begun to implement processes to improve their arrangements. My review formed part of a broader programme of work that involved numerous public, private and voluntary organisations.

My review (An assurance framework for London Local Government 'Providing individual and collective assurance', Sean Ruth February 2018) made fifteen recommendations, all of which were accepted by the thirty-three London borough council Chief Executives and political Leaders. Following acceptance of my recommendations, an implementation plan was put in place and I was commissioned to deliver three of those recommendations.

The recommendations have been summarised as follows:

- Develop a suite of Resilience Standards for London
- Develop an independent and external process for peer review to independently and collectively assure London's local government's preparedness, response and recovery arrangements
- Develop a reporting mechanism to ensure the political Leaders of London can assure themselves of the ability of London's local government to collectively prepare for, respond to and recover from a major event.

To support my research and outcomes I used various research techniques including a literature review, interviews, workshops and surveys. I established a sounding board of national and international experts to act as a critical friend as I developed my work. Given the size and profile of London, I wanted to access a wide range of experiences and views from across the country and internationally. I felt it was important to learn from the experiences of a diverse group to establish the opportunities to improve and the options that could be available to implement across London. To provide credibility to the review process, an extensive literature review was conducted of relevant publications and papers to establish the current assurance frameworks and processes in place. I engaged with a broad range of stakeholders across local government, national government and the private sector. These stakeholders are listed in the introduction on page 7.

Throughout my review and the subsequent work on implementing my recommendations, I was responsible for reporting on and evidencing progress to a Local Authorities' Panel which consisted of local authority Chief Executives, central government representatives and resilience experts. I conducted an in-depth consultation process to collate further views and evidence before, in July 2019, the Resilience Standards for London and the independent and external peer review process were officially launched at the Guildhall in London. The resilience standards are in use across all thirty-three borough councils in London and the first peer reviews commenced in January 2020 led by Chief Executives and Council Leaders from across the UK.

On pages 24 and 25, I have set out a timeline of the key events of my professional life. Drawing up this timeline was a fascinating exercise and one I would recommend to any leader, or person in general, who questions why they adopt a specific approach or outlook on life. There are several key events within the timeline that I will explore throughout this context statement. The events are

significant occurrences for me; I may have been directly involved, such as the Shoreham air disaster, or indirectly involved as is the case with the Grenfell tragedy which ultimately led me into the hands of the City of London Corporation and my first commission as the Owner/Director of my consultancy business Ashford House. In other cases, the event may have been a person I worked with who had a considerable influence on my career, or a short but significant conversation, that changed my approach and outlook to my career.

The events and experiences throughout my life have undeniably shaped the person I am today and although, instinctively, I knew that to be the case, I had not thought about including and analysing my timeline until it was suggested to me by Professor Sarah Corrie as my Director of Studies. My context statement has taken a different and interesting direction because of that suggestion, it has put the 'auto' into the 'ethnography', which I will discuss in the next chapter, and I am very grateful for that.

TIMELINE

Born in Birmingham

Falklands War. Keen interest in the news.

Suspended from school. Allowed back for exams

Belize, Oman, Kenya, Morocco, Germany

Promoted for the first time – my path to the top had begun

Moved to Surrey Fire – promoted to Sub Officer. NEBOSH Distinction

| 1967 | 1968 | 1969 | 1970 | 1971 | 1972 | 1973 | 1974 | 1975 | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980 | 1981 | 1982 | 1983 | 1984 | 1985 | 1986 | 1987 | 1988 | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 |

I am struck by the absence of any significant life impact or influences in my early years. This may be significant in and of itself.

There was little encouragement to be successful in education or pursue education further at home or at school

There were no role models to achieve further educational qualifications. There was no one from school or at home who went to University.

Joined Parachute Regiment

Left Parachute Regiment

Studied for and attained Fire Service statutory and IFE examinations.

1992 – Station Officer Dave Brooks* joined Ladywood and had a profound influence on my career.

World travel – 4 months away from work A career defining time

Key

- Career History
- Personal History

24

First child born, Molly Elizabeth Ruth 19/02/2002

Married to Sue, 03/08/2002

Crucial conversation Dave Curry

DMS Kingston University

Master of Arts (Distinction) Kingston University

Executive Leadership, Warwick University

Led fire redesign programme

Delegate on first ICONIC Leadership programme (South East Councils)

Developed and lead Future West Sussex

Appointed Acting Chief Executive WSCC

Recognised in Queens Birthday Honours – Queens Fire Service Medal

Retired from Fire Service

Resilience Standards for London (RSL)

Recognised in Queens Birthday Honours – British Empire Medal

Second child born, Ben Matthew Ruth 19/11/2003

Working as deputy to Sir Ken Knight*, England's Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor at Central Government

Promoted to Deputy Chief Fire Officer, West Sussex

Appointed Chief Fire Officer, West Sussex

Appointed Deputy Chief Executive WSCC

Set up Ashford House Consultancy Ltd

Lead national peer review team for RSL

PPE Lead Officer – London Resilience Forum

Regional Convenor South East England - DHSC

Shoreham Airshow Crash 22 August 2015 11 fatalities 16 injuries

Grenfell Tower Fire 14 June 2017 72 fatalities 70 injuries

| 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |

25

My approach, Autoethnography and Transdisciplinarity
as an organising frame

Autoethnography

It feels to me as if my leadership journey, the reason I have embarked on this DProf, is deeply personal and has been shaped by my past experiences that can be traced back to my early years and onward throughout my career. My career to date has been extremely rewarding and interesting; I have devoted my professional life to public service through the armed forces, the fire and rescue service and local authorities in the form of county councils. My observation regarding the organisations I have worked for is they have shared characteristics which have attracted me to them. They are public organisations that serve the people, many of whom are vulnerable or rely on the services provided for their day to day lives to function. They are structured and disciplined services, particularly in the case of the Parachute Regiment and the fire and rescue service. Each organisation has attached to it a set of values and beliefs that reflect my own, these are based around the Seven Principles of Public Life and I will discuss these principles in more depth in Chapter 7, Governance Arrangements, Political Leadership. Those values and beliefs are essentially about putting communities first, acting with integrity and respecting a diversity of cultures, being accountable for one's actions and showing the responsibility and strength in leadership ensuring inappropriate words and actions are challenged and the highest standards are maintained.

Each organisation that I have worked within or group I have interacted with has had a sense of 'community' and with it a culture people have, in the main, identified with. Leadership has played a key role in shaping this culture and I will discuss this further in Chapters 6 to 8; however, my interest has been in how people across organisations can affect that culture to achieve positive change and great outcomes for people. This sense of 'belonging' to a community, for me, has been a key driver in how I have developed my public works. It is understanding the community I have been part of, their culture, behaviours, values and beliefs, through living with them, sharing experiences, observing customs and understanding context.

Given the above assessment, I am going to adopt an autoethnographic approach to this context statement to enable me to use self-reflection and writing to explore my own experiences through my personal and professional life and to explore how these experiences have shaped my philosophy and work-based approach, across political, leadership and cultural environments. I will further explore

how they relate to the development of my public works and what the impact may be on my professional life going forward. The adoption of autoethnography as an organising frame has given me a greater understanding of my approach towards my public works. It has helped me to make sense of my chosen methodology and why understanding the community and culture of London's borough councils, alongside my own lived experiences, have been integral to the success of those works in implementing new concepts and ideas as discussed by Farrell (2017). Similarly, and equally important, is how my new knowledge can continue to influence my industry and profession through connecting personal experiences to culture (Dunn and Myers, 2020).

Many scholars have defined autoethnography and each definition shares similar characteristics. Doloriert and Sambrook (2012) discuss the Greek origins of auto (self), ethnos (nation) and graphy (write) and concludes that essentially autoethnography is writing about of group of people and oneself. Poulos (2021) uses the term 'people' (ethno) and discusses how the researcher includes their own experiences into the area of work being studied. Adams, Holman Jones and Ellis (2021) define autoethnography as consisting of three characteristic's, auto (self), ethno (culture) and graphy (representation/writing/story). Given that each personal experience, area of study and style of writing is different and will include subjective analysis, (Adams, Holman Jones and Ellis (2021) observed a number of autoethnographers had not cited any academic research in their work), it is reasonable to suggest that the balance between 'auto', 'ethno' and 'graphy' in any given work will be variable in terms of their emphasis as concluded by Doloriert and Sambrook (2012).

In their publication 'Autoethnography' in 2015, Adams, Holman Jones and Ellis discuss the common priorities and concerns autoethnographers include in their research. They comprise of personal experiences, sense making, using reflexivity, insider knowledge of culture, describing and critiquing cultural norms and seeking responses from audiences. This puts the researcher at the heart of their own work, engaging with a community which provides a unique insight into the culture and environment of the group or audience they are interacting with and seeks to understand the "research as a socially—and relationally—conscious act, and attempt to cultivate reciprocal relationships with their participants, readers, and audiences." (Adams, Holman Jones and Ellis, 2015, p. 35).

In developing my public works, the observation by Adams *et al*. (2015) regarding cultivating reciprocal relationships with participants was crucial. As I have previously stated in Chapter 1, The Methodological approach that underpinned my Public Works, understanding the culture, working practices and beliefs of the different organisations from an insiders perspective was going to be

important for me in challenging existing norms and practices as others have discussed such as Adams, Holman Jones and Ellis (2015). Equally important was for people across the organisations I was working with to have confidence and trust in my approach and experience; connecting my personal experiences and understanding a culture to make sense of the situation was important to gain acceptance and to influence change.

The methodology I adopted in developing my public works helped, in my view, to achieve acceptance and ultimately resulted in all thirty-three councils implementing the Resilience Standards for London. The opportunity for me and a significant number of people across those councils to interact, observe, gather data, participate and challenge, created the environment for our mutual understanding and product development as observed by Poulos (2021).

From a personal perspective, once I embarked on the reflexive journey, I began to understand how incredibly difficult and emotional it was going to be. As Ellis (1999, p. 672) articulated in her keynote address from the first annual advances in qualitative methods conference, "it's amazingly difficult…honest autoethnographic exploration generates a lot of fears and self-doubts…the vulnerability of revealing yourself, not being able to take back what you've written or having any control over how readers interpret it. It's hard not to feel your life is being critiqued as well as your work".

There have been many times, throughout the writing of this statement, when I have had the feeling of self-doubt, vulnerability, self-indulgence and concern about the final publication, when other people will have the opportunity to read and judge my life and work. Feelings such as these have been highlighted by others such as Brigg (2010) and Ellis (1999) when writing about autoethnography and have provided me with the reassurance that I am not alone in feeling this way. However, in the context of my public works, understanding myself as an important part of what I am signifying, as described in the research by Butz and Besio (2009) has played an integral role in the shaping of those works. I am not, necessarily, attempting to demonstrate that my personal life's experiences have explicitly shaped my public works but I do contend that a person's experiences are significantly influential in the contribution to an ultimate outcome. So, in my case, the initial stifling of education beyond secondary school, the upbringing amongst a large family on a council estate and the apparent lack of options have led to a desire to achieve continual academic and professional development with a need for personal recognition and validation.

It is certainly the case that the major event of the Shoreham air disaster[5] influenced my public works. Shoreham was an event in which I was personally involved during the emergency phase and for a protracted period afterwards, as my organisation supported the community in the recovery phase. My interaction with the relatives of the deceased, the people who lived in the same community and the wider local population, demonstrated in sharp contrast, the devastation and conflicting emotions and responses an emergency can create. I, and the team I worked with, including paid officers and politicians alike, worked tirelessly to support the community. For me, I also wanted to satisfy them with the work I did and the decisions I contributed to; for the community to see I was doing my best for them and that it was important to me that they too were involved in the recovery process. It became apparent however, and it is a point I should have known from my years of experience within the fire and rescue service, that it is impossible to satisfy and galvanise all parties following such a tragic incident.

My experiences throughout Shoreham were emotionally challenging and the events will never be forgotten but as with every emergency event there is valuable learning which must be identified and translated into tangible outcomes that prevents or mitigates future emergency incidents. The need to learn and implement that learning was ever present throughout my public works emanating from my specific interactions and relationships with others (at Shoreham) and the environment in which I worked (Farrell *et al.*, 2015).

As Brigg (2010 p. 788) stated, "The objective of autoethnography is to (re-)introduce the self as a methodological resource…autoethnography places the researcher's experience at the centre of the phenomenon under investigation". My experiences and personal involvement during and following the Shoreham air disaster shaped my approach to my public works but it was not the only factor. My philosophy throughout my career, as an 'emergency responder', has been to prevent the emergency happening in the first place and that was my vision as a senior executive, where I felt a deep sense of personal responsibility, to keep the community I served, as safe as possible.

The phenomenon under investigation, illustrated by Brigg (2010) is, in the case of my public works, the requirement for an assurance process, a robust suite of resilience standards and the method by which those standards are reviewed in the field of emergency planning and resilience. My experiences and knowledge spanning many years, laid the foundation on which to build a structure to support

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[5] 11 people were killed on 22 August 2015 when a former military aircraft crashed on to the A27 at Shoreham air show

London's local government and its community in being more resilient in the face of future emergency events.

In my previous work, such as my Master's dissertation, I have maintained the traditional methods of research and academic writing to detach myself from that work to publicly demonstrate independence whilst presenting evidenced based conclusions and recommendations. I had not encountered the subject of autoethnography whilst undertaking my public works but on reflection, and through the research I have conducted throughout this doctorate, I understand the value of how my personal experiences, intuition and emotion has impacted my work which, in reality, is extremely important and legitimate.

Doty (2010) wrote about her experiences close to the American and Mexican border where she observed several migrants huddled on the side of the road and surrounded by border guards. She concluded the migrants had walked across the desert overnight as they were wearing winter jackets despite the searing heat. Doty stopped to take photos as a means of record to assist in writing her journal at a later time. Doty goes on to explain how she wrestled with the (perceived) distinction between private and public writing (Dauphinee, 2010); the divide between her academic writing and her journal entries. "I was troubled by the fact that they were so radically different, that I was clearly 'there' in one, but anonymous in the other" (Doty, 2010, p 1048). Exploring autoethnography has been a positive and enlightening experience; the work of Ellis, Dauphinee and Doty, amongst others, has for me, opened up a new approach to thinking about my leadership journey and style and how I can draw on my own experiences to contribute and enrich the work I do for others going forward.

"What expert am I?" A challenge put to Dauphinee (2010, p. 802) regarding her work in international relations in Bosnia. Dauphinee argues the case to use very personal motivations, in an autoethnographic approach, in her scholarly writing. In addition to Dauphinee's assertion, Doty (2010, p. 1050) concluded, and I agree with her conclusion that "autoethnography has the potential to create spaces that challenge the status quo, make our work more interesting, and connect in more meaningful ways to our subject matter and the human beings that inhabit the worlds we write about".

In the context of my own approach, I recognise I am not an academic nor am I an expert in autoethnography. However, I am an expert in my own thoughts, emotions and experiences and I can justifiably use these attributes and experiences, acquired through a private or professional context, to directly influence my work to achieve positive outcomes.

As I move forward into what is, currently, an unknowable future career, I believe my exploration of autoethnographic techniques gives me an excellent opportunity to develop my new knowledge. My public works involved research techniques common across other areas of research such as literature review, focus groups, interviews, workshops and observations; techniques utilised in the field of autoethnography as discussed by Leavy (2020) and Poulos (2021). However, the ability to involve my own personal experiences to connect with the cultural norms, beliefs and experiences of others through a reciprocal and engaging approach, changes the dynamic for me as a consultant to one of a facilitator with an insider's perspective. This facilitating approach provides a safe environment for people to speak freely, to think and to be together to discuss the issues that are important to them as discussed by Szwabowski (2022).

In the next section, I will discuss Transdisciplinarity as the other organising frame I have decided to adopt in writing my context statement and I will provide the rationale for doing so in that section. However, I think it is worth noting here how the two approaches combined have had a significant impact on my context statement. If feels to me that there is a connection between transdisciplinarity and autoethnography; the opportunity to put oneself at the heart of a project, interacting with different communities and cultures and to draw on past experiences to understand the impact on future occurrences and outcomes. Coupled with this is the ability to collaborate beyond disciplines and with organisations who I may not ordinarily, be involved with in a professional context, such as academia. An opportunity to explore the lived experiences, beliefs, values and customs of other stakeholders to develop new knowledge and find solutions to extraordinarily difficult problems in an evolving and complex environment.

Transdisciplinarity

I have challenged myself in exploring my public works through a different lens; researching new approaches that I had never encountered previously. My exploration of autoethnography and transdisciplinarity have opened my mind to new ways of learning and acquiring knowledge. I am a practitioner, rather than an academic but I recognise the importance of the techniques and opportunities autoethnography and transdisciplinarity can provide to workplace transformation and societal engagement. I will discuss in later chapters how my new knowledge has impacted on the collective work of myself and my partners and how the two approaches have complemented each other to deliver a positive solution focussed outcome.

When I reflect on my career with West Sussex County Council, I was often faced with difficult and complex problems that required the input of multiple stakeholders to find a workable solution. My work throughout the latter part of my local government career was to bring together people, organisations and systems to deliver a collective outcome. I recognised then that as our working environments grew in complexity and solutions were increasingly difficult to find that a different approach would be required. This is probably an early indication of my interest in a transdisciplinary approach as it enables the transcending of disciplines and has a transforming characteristic (Frodeman, Klein and Pacheco, 2017) that moves beyond collaboration. My interest developed as I embarked on my public works commission, I understood that delivering change across a capital city to address complex problems requires people and organisations to think and act differently.

In 2010, Brown *et al*. discussed the issue of 'wicked problems'. Brown articulates that wicked problems require a different approach, as they are so complex and challenging, existing in an environment of continual change, that existing modes of solving them are inadequate given there is no precedent for such a resolution. Each problem has its own context and "is uniquely grounded in its place and time" (Brown, Harris and Russell, 2010 p.63). Finding a solution requires the involvement of multiple stakeholders to create new forms of knowledge described by Brown *et al*. (2010) as a community of practice "which includes the knowledges of individuals, communities, specialists, organizations and holists" (Brown, Harris and Russell, 2010 p.272).

Martin (2017) observes that advocates of transdisciplinarity argue real-world problems are transdisciplinary by nature and that no single academic discipline, or even a group of related academic

disciplines, can possibly explain complex societal problems facing humanity today, much less craft solutions to these problems.

Maguire (2018) describes how a transdisciplinary approach enables the process of transformation to move beyond culturally accepted norms, being free to think and open to change through the removal of the obstacles of one's own knowledge, through collaboration and a reflexive approach to one's own experiences and the experiences of others.

A real world example of this is detailed in the Sustainability Journal in an article by Nyang'au *et al.* (2018) where a joint project between researchers, farmers, practitioners, traders and other stakeholders was established to test and introduce an affordable ecological pest and weed control to enhance the crop production of maize in Ethiopia. In this example farmers were always considered the recipients or users of a product and therefore were not involved in the design and had little trust in its application. The collaboration worked together, exploring each other's knowledge, experience and the practical constraints of the farmers day to day living environment, as Nyang'au *et al*. explained in the paper:

> The farmers' leadership was demonstrated by their ability to initiate, conduct experiments and take decisions with confidence… regarding the PPT implementation activities. For example, researchers recommend the establishment of the PPT using line planting where the seeds are sown in holes or drills using a straight line. However, the farmers preferred to use ox-drawn ploughs to drill the lines. These lines were not straight as required or recommended by the research or extension, but the farmers, thriving in a participatory and democratic learning process, could make decisions based on valid reasons on what they knew works best for them (Nyang'au *et al*., 2018, p.3).

This example demonstrates, for me, the need to explore the knowledge of others, who may have different priorities, values and expectations, to create new knowledge, in a complex real world environment. It also exemplifies the need for compromise and acceptance between disciplines to deliver success. This means that the situation can evolve which may ultimately deliver a different outcome as stakeholders develop trust and knowledge together (Boulton, Allen and Bowman, 2015).

Malcolm *et al*. (2019) discussed how moving to a transdisciplinary approach (from an interdisciplinary approach) enables participation whereby a collaboration can view complex problems through

transformational thinking. This citation, amongst others during my research, has helped me to understand my own working environment where I and partners have often collaborated to achieve a common goal; this has included pooling resources, funding, sharing and developing ideas, compromising and reaching agreement although not always achieving the best solution. My conclusion is that transdisciplinarity goes beyond the traditional meaning of collaboration which is the process or product resulting from working together or cooperatively. As Martin (2017) observed, it is an approach which seeks to address societal challenges by engaging multiple disciplines that do not usually interact with each other to produce new knowledge or a different solution that meets the needs of societies complex challenges.

When I think about my career in local government and compare that with the findings of Max-Neef (2005) in his article Foundations of Transdisciplinarity, I have concluded that the organisations I have worked for have been operating, primarily, through an interdisciplinarity approach which ultimately has required a political decision (across different local authorities) to take forward the work of several collaborating organisations. Interdisciplinarity is an approach characterised by integration and interacting between disciplines (Frodeman, Klein and Pacheco, 2017) and the transfer of methods from one discipline to another (Nicolescu, 2014).

This intradisciplinary approach of councils I have worked with was often coordinated through a lead officer, sometimes through 'pilot' projects in order to gather evidence and evaluate the success of the work undertaken. The involvement of politicians has been detached with only a basic understanding of the complexities, risks and benefits of the programme but with a more detailed understanding of the intended outcomes. This is unsurprising given the multitude of activities and disciplines present in a large county council where finances are limited and priorities are often based on central government directives or a political standpoint. However, if councils want to achieve a step change in the impact they have and the outcomes they deliver, they may wish to consider an alternative approach.

In developing my public works, the Resilience Standards for London and associated research, it has become apparent to me that many of the failings in the past have been due to people or organisations working in silos and failing, for whatever reason, to take a holistic approach. Given my experience of working with the London's local government organisations, I would contend that, in the field of emergency planning and resilience, many of them operate through a pluridisciplinarity model, cooperating without coordinating, whilst some will operate within an interdisciplinarity model;

coordination through hierarchy such as the Chief Executive or political decision making as shown in Figure 1 below (Max-Neef, 2005). The lack of coordination, collaboration and integration is further compounded when multiplied thirty-three times, which is the number of individual borough councils constituting London's local government 'family'.

Disciplinarity.
(Specialization in isolation)

Multidisciplinarity.
(No cooperation)

Pluridisciplinarity.
(Cooperation without coordination)

Interdisciplinarity.
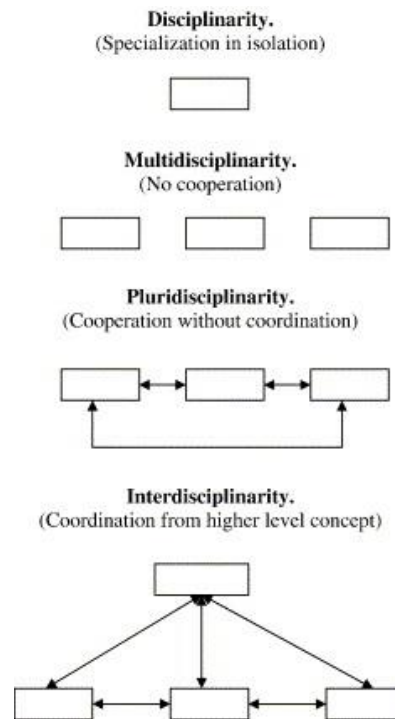(Coordination from higher level concept)

Figure 1 - Foundations of Transdisciplinarity. Max-Neef, 2005

In my own working environment, I have been thinking about how I move beyond the traditional approach of collaboration to embrace disciplines, experience and expertise I wouldn't ordinarily associate with a specific issue. A transdisciplinary approach recognises the importance of experiential knowledge from a range of stakeholders including those with non-academic backgrounds, who collaborate in tackling complex problems (Martin, 2017). An example would be my recent contract with a local authority where we were developing a scheme to provide refuge to Ukrainians fleeing the war in 2022.

I brought together a partnership group from different local government organisations, the voluntary sector and the business community. The group consisted of multiple disciplines ranging from social care, housing specialists, policy makers, emergency services and the NHS amongst others. One of the issues we discussed was the provision of housing of which there is an acute shortage for the existing population; this is in terms of supply and affordability. We discussed the need to think differently

about finding a solution, a collective approach which included the pooling of finances, sharing workplaces to free up buildings and land and sharing information and data.

This approach, although transformational for the area, was in retrospect, unlikely to meet the existing and future needs as we were only dealing with issues we already knew about; our existing knowledge. It was collaboration on a different scale and the model of housing provision would evolve, however, on reflection it lacked the broader input, free thinking and the removal of knowledge barriers that Malcolm *et al*. (2019), Martin (2017) and Maguire (2018) have been advocating. We also needed to recognise the 'wicked' nature of the problem and the paradoxical issues involved as discussed by Brown *et al*. (2010) such as the building of much needed housing against the opposing position of disruption and the preservation of open spaces. I believe our approach needed to be more radical in terms of the broader stakeholder group and our starting point in terms of our inquiry which recognised the opposing positions of multiple groups in order to understand and explore their experiences, culture, skills, knowledge and realities in the way described by Nyang'au *et al*. (2018) in my earlier example.

My research into a transdisciplinary approach has given me an opportunity to reflect on my past practices and to consider what I will do differently in future endeavours. Although I still believe I was an active and willing collaborator, I recognise I could have gone beyond collaboration and this is equally true of the organisations I have worked with.

In 2005, Max-Neef presented a model for a transdisciplinary approach that offers four levels of action from what exists, what we are capable of doing, what we want to do and what we must do or how to do what we want to do. I have adapted this model to demonstrate how an approach including the elements of part of my public works, the Resilience Standards for London, can be delivered through a local government organisation.

	Politics	Values	Leadership	

| Stakeholder collaboration | Community provision | Regeneration & economic development | Cross-border interaction |

| Culture | Partnership | Formal agreements Legal frameworks | Service integration | Resilient community |

| Risk | Capabilities, plans, procedures | Resources, roles & responsibilities | Training, exercising & evaluation | Recovery management | Business continuity |

Figure 2 - Transdisciplinarity in a local government context. Adapted from Max-Neef, 2005

The adapted model in Figure 2 is intended to show how a transdisciplinary approach can be applied to emergency planning and resilience in a local government context. The model is indicative and therefore the relationships between each of the activities could shift as a result of local context and circumstances. The model could be applied to any discipline or activity across the local government organisation and their stakeholders. To achieve a different solution in preventing future recurring disasters would require the top level of the adapted Max-Neef (2005) model to move beyond collaboration with multiple stakeholders operating in a way which will be unfamiliar to them.

The bottom row indicates what is already in place (*what exists*[6]) and each activity is taken from my public works (Resilience Standards for London Local Government). The standards are being utilised as a complete set to assess assurance and build organisational resilience or as individual activities to enable a specific focus on an area of interest, e.g., Risk Assessment. An independent peer review process periodically assesses the progress of an organisation following completion of their own self-assessment.

The next level up shows the activities that an organisation has the capability to achieve or develop to enable greater collaboration and integration (*what we are capable of doing*[7]). It is probable that these activities are in place but not to the extent that they enable a transdisciplinary approach. They are currently dependent on traditional hierarchical methods of leadership and governance. To achieve any shift towards a more integrated approach will require commitment from multiple organisations

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[6] Foundations of Transdisciplinarity, Max-Neef, 2005.

[7] As 6 above

to change their internal culture, compromise on historical priorities and practices to align with other stakeholder groups as well as formal agreements such as service level agreements, memorandums of understanding or legal contracts.

The second row from the top shows what the collective want to achieve or the shift they want to make from existing practices (*what we want to do[8]*). This level facilitates long-term thinking and involves the political leaders shaping the future approach for the organisation they govern. This may require a political approach different from the norm, in that political biases may need to be put to one side in favour of political alliances to achieve an alternative and improved outcome.

The top level is a fundamental shift in existing local government practices. It thinks beyond political terms of office and focuses on the legacy the 'collective' want to leave for society in years to come. The vision for the future is supported by strategy, plans and decision making alongside a changing culture, changes in recruitment and people development (*what we must do or how to do what we want to do[9]*).

The application of the adapted model to achieve a different solution, to what has been commonplace across London's local government, is more fundamental than collaboration. This approach when applied to real-world complex problem is what Schaltegger *et al*. (2013, p. 226) describe as transdisciplinary collaboration "where joint knowledge production is achieved by a mixed practitioner–academic group." Mallee (2020) also discusses the requirement for an extended peer community when there are system uncertainties or when decision stakes are both high. The challenge of navigating this challenging and complex environment is highlighted by Kok *et al*. (2021) who articulates the need for further work and engagement across disciplines to design, enact and evaluate transdisciplinary processes aimed at instigating societal transformation.

I do not underestimate the scale of the challenge discussed by Kok *et al*. (2021) but as I proceed through my context statement and reflect on my experiences, knowledge and the events that supported the development of my public works, I hope to determine that there is an alternative approach for community organisations to explore and adopt in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from a major emergency event; a transdisciplinary or transexperiential approach, whereby people across disciplines and cultures draw on their experiences derived from events, knowledge and

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[8] Foundations of Transdisciplinarity, Max-Neef, 2005.

[9] As 8 above.

learning. An approach where people listen, are receptive to the views of others regardless of their status or position in an organisation or the community "to arrive at what the particularity of local culture needs in order to thrive for the benefit of the individual and the collective in a world of complexity" (Maguire, 2018, p. 2).

Personal Validation

I have always been self-aware in terms of my strengths and opportunities for development, a point that has been repeatedly raised through my appraisals and 360-degree feedback. I have consistently believed in the decisions I made and the vision I had for the profession I worked in as a local government Chief Officer; this is also the case for the public works I have submitted as part of this doctorate. Despite this self-awareness, confidence and belief, I have always felt the need to support my vision, ideas and decision making with the legitimacy of academic attainment and rigour. I believed my decisions were intuitively derived from previous experiences in similar situations, as observed by Greene (2017) however, there was always a question I asked myself about what evidence, research and theory I could provide to validate my practical experience.

At times throughout this context statement, I have referred to my intuitive decision making and the need to support this intuition through the attainment of academic qualifications. I have used the term 'intuitive' in the context of making decisions when there has been limited information available and where speed was a limiting factor (Milkman, Chugh and Bazerman, 2009) as is the case during emergency situations. At other times during my professional career, I have had the time to consider substantial evidence through controlled processes over a significant period of time, in some cases months, before a decision is reached.

Of course, my conclusions on why I have continued to pursue academic qualifications in a bid to validate my decisions and work-based products are personal to me and may not resonate with others who read this. However, looking through my timeline and reflecting on my professional journey through this doctorate, it has become apparent to me that leaving school with a lack of qualifications has had a significant influence on my subsequent academic journey. As my career has progressed with moves into more senior positions, I have been in competition with others, many of whom had better qualifications than I did. The work and social groups I frequented, more often than not, consisted of people with university degrees; people who had experienced the university life and were rewarded with the appropriate degree to support their professional careers. The perceived gap in my academic qualifications has led, on occasion, to a feeling of inadequacy, self-doubt and a lack of confidence but the need to compete and be comparable in terms of qualifications throughout my professional journey has been both advantageous and motivating.

I have been fortunate that the requirement for professional qualifications to achieve promotion within the fire and rescue service has helped me enormously in awakening an interest in life-long learning. The fire and rescue service, at the time of my joining, did not require any formal qualifications for entry, requiring instead, an individual to pass a written test. It is fair to say the fire service has been an exemplar in supporting people through personal development and academic achievement and this has been a positive contributory factor for me.

In the context of my public works, it was important to base my findings and recommendations on robust research techniques derived from my experiences and learning whilst undertaking a university Diploma and Master's degree. I believed it was necessary to demonstrate an approach that delivered an evidenced based product rather than something written purely from my own knowledge and experience. In my view, my public works had a greater level of credibility as a result of that approach alongside my background and experience; it was a blended and complementary approach that has proved successful.

During my professional life, I have been seen as someone who is prepared to challenge the status quo, to stand-up for those who should be heard, found it difficult to speak for themselves or to speak truth to power, regardless of the consequences. In my earlier career, I believe my line managers recognised this and saw the potential in my leadership capabilities.

In the latter part of my career, I started to see the evidence of my ability to challenge and to have difficult conversations with those in authority such as more senior managers or political leaders. This was illustrated through mentoring and coaching sessions as part of the ongoing senior leadership development programme with West Sussex County Council and on reviewing my 360-degree appraisals[10] where members of my own organisation and some outside of it were able to anonymously articulate their views about my own leadership qualities and performance. The following extracts are a small sample of comments taken from my 360-degree West Sussex Council corporate leadership team report in 2017. The relevant pages containing the extracts can be found in Appendix 4 and the full report is available on request.

> Sean is driven by achieving improved outcomes…He is consistently challenging the status quo and drives performance through both challenge and motivation.

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[10] A 360 degree appraisal is a holistic employee review process. It involves gathering the anonymous views and opinions of colleagues, managers, and direct reports, which is used to give an employee well-rounded and constructive feedback (Reed.co.uk).

Makes time for colleagues, challenges appropriately and provides support. A good listener. Follows through well on his promises. Sean is very keen to listen to views from across the organisation and will ensure he reacts to the information received.

Sean…instinctively understands the value of constructive challenge, feedback and actively supports the concept of employee engagement, doing what he can as a leader to empower his staff.

Sean will never shy away from a difficult conversation and is adept at challenging positions and suggestions at all levels.

Has courage to speak out and is prepared to challenge received wisdom often in support of his staff.

Having colleagues and peers offering such positive comments (consistent with previous 360 reports) is incredibly humbling and inspiring. So, if I have the confidence and belief in my ability and intuitive decision making, and the self-awareness to adjust my style and behaviour according to any given situation, then this raises the question, for me, as to why, throughout my career I have required the approval and recognition from those around me, including the validation of my work or the recognition and approval of others? Of course, this is not the case in everything I do or decision I make but it is ever present; the need for someone to say, "that's a job well done".

Whilst reflecting on the question of why validation and recognition are important for me, I explored what others had concluded from their own research. McShane (2021) created 'A Coaching Power Tool – Self Validating vs. Approval Seeking'. In her article for the International Coaching Academy in April 2001, McShane describes a self-validating person as someone who is self-assured and trusts their own intuition, their values and opinions are consistent and they accept criticism and judgement being their own advocate and supporter. When describing an approval seeker, McShane observes someone who is concerned about how they are perceived, feeling insecure and worthless and seeking assurance from others. Throughout my career, I have seen traits of both self-validator and approval seeker in myself, particularly at times when I have been high in confidence and during periods of self-doubt.

Research by Teunissen and Bok (2013) discussed entity and incremental theory, with the former having a fixed view on personal attributes, concerned with performing well and making a good

impression whilst the latter are less focussed with performance and concentrate more on gaining improved knowledge and skills. Clearly, and in reality, the delineation between the various models in the examples above is not so well defined and this is acknowledged by the authors in their articles; it is undoubtedly the case that most people have traits of both during their life's journey.

There are numerous learning and coaching tools that determine learning and working styles, personality traits and role preferences, many of which I have engaged with throughout my career. These tools have included Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Hogan Development Survey and Personality Inventory, Emotional Competency Inventory (Hay Group), Insights Discovery Profile and several 360-degree appraisal reports (Nicholson McBride and Aspire Leadership). I recognise the importance of these in improving a person's self-awareness and providing mechanisms and strategies to enhance workplace performance. Whatever tool or model is used, it is not an attempt to define a person nor is it a single mode of working or behaviour one should adhere or even aspire to. For me, it is about self-awareness and learning and any single individual can display many personal qualities and attributes in any given situation although I accept there may be a particular bias to a specific way of working.

Having reflected on my own professional journey and the research I have done in this field of study, I am content that whatever my own strengths and insecurities, my inspiration and motivation in developing my public works has come from a desire to do the right thing based upon my knowledge, experiences and events throughout my professional life rather than any need for recognition or validation. However, the need for that recognition is still present and it is important for me that I reach a conclusion as to why, to satisfy myself of my own motivation to succeed. On studying my timeline on pages 24 and 25, I can draw several conclusions from the text I have written, and the lack of detail set out in my formative years. I am struck by the absence of any significant life impact or influences in my early years. This may be significant in and of itself. There was little encouragement to be successful in education or pursue education further, at home or at school and there were very few role models to inspire me to achieve further educational qualifications; there was not one single person at home or at school who went to university.

In terms of recognition or attention for the good things I was involved in, either in education or sport, this was limited. As far as my family are concerned, I am neither surprised nor resentful. I was the seventh of eight children, and my parents had a challenging life trying to make ends meet and to ensure the family were provided for. It is just a fact of my life, and I had a wonderful childhood.

Having satisfied myself that my motives in developing my public works were driven by a desire to do the right thing, I wanted to briefly discuss this issue further. I have used the phrase several times throughout this document having referred to a quote in my introduction on page eleven, that I heard many years ago, by Harari (2022). 'Doing the right thing' has been a guiding principle for me throughout my career. It has become particularly pertinent as I have entered senior leadership positions where I have had the opportunity to influence policy, procedures or organisational culture. It is difficult to define but I view it as my moral compass, the inner voice that motivates us toward ethically sound action (Moore and Gino, 2013, p. 54).

There have been many occasions where I have changed a policy or practice across an organisation because it was the right thing to do. In some cases, this has been about how an organisation recruits, promotes or manages people, other times it has been about changing operational emergency response procedures in the fire service. Changing organisational practices is not always straight forward, people often have opposing views or motivations, which can result in the need to take time to influence, persuade and sometimes compromise.

As I developed my public works, I believed the role for elected councillors needed to be more prominent in the field of emergency planning and should be clearly defined. Leaders should lead by example and develop a culture that embraces resilience activities giving the community, residents, businesses and voluntary organisations a stronger and more influential voice in planning their own futures. To me, these are examples of doing the right thing regarding the resilience of people and organisations across London and I will discuss these issues in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

Doing the right thing, as with making decisions in uncertain and complex situations, can often be challenging and difficult, it sometimes means taking risks and being involved in confrontation. It can be confusing, as the right thing is not always obvious and can take time to work out. The solution is not always perfect, as compromise is involved, but sometimes good enough is good enough. As Badaracco (2002, p. 8) observed the "leaders see the creating of creative compromises as an invaluable practical art and the essence of responsible leadership".

Badaracco (2002) also describes four key lessons, below, that he believes stands out for people who want to do the right thing. When I reflect on my public works and the discussions, challenges and decisions I was involved in, these four lessons reflect my experiences perfectly and I have summarised them as follows:

Lesson one   Have a bias for action. Do not get bogged down in endless speculation, interpretation, soul searching and naval gazing.

Lesson two   Do not think you are disqualified or exempt from exercising leadership because your motives are mixed and complicated. Leaders are driven by complex forces; some conscious, some not, some intellectual, some emotional. Sometimes it's a feeling of having to do something.

Lesson three   Trust yourself and your motives, especially if they pull you in different directions. Internal conflicts are often telling you something important.

Lesson four   Before taking on a serious ethical challenge, be sure you really care. Leaders need to get off the side-lines, take action and run risks because they care about helping others and because their interests, emotions, pride and aspirations are at stake. Their motives are not angelic but they are good enough and strong enough.

I recognise the potential for a contradictory narrative within this context statement. On the one hand I have provided evidence of being a successful leader who has made difficult decisions, spoken truth to power and challenged behaviours and the views of others; I have described myself as confident, self-aware and a person with self-belief (page 40). On the other hand, I have reflected on periods of self-doubt, a feeling of inadequacy and a lack of confidence (page 40). These feelings have, ostensibly, been related to specific events or situations. When I transferred to Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (from West Midlands Fire Service) and began working in a new environment, there were times when I felt out of my depth, inadequately prepared for my new role and lacking experience despite having served for eight years in a larger and operationally busier service previously. This at times affected my confidence and I began to reflect on whether I had made the right move. Conversely, when I moved to Buckinghamshire Fire Service, I felt supremely confident and believed in myself despite the difficult environment I found myself in (there had been a breakdown between the political and managerial leadership). I do not believe the latter situation above was different because I was more experienced; I would go on to experience a range of emotions later in my career.

I believe the emotions I have described are part of 'who I am', I have grown to accept that it is possible to experience differing emotions throughout one's life and career and my experience throughout this doctorate journey has helped me to accept this point. I have described this journey as enlightening which has enabled me to reflect on my previous experiences and events throughout my life and to better understand how they have shaped the person I am today. I have been able to make sense of 'who I am' as a direct result of my engagement with autoethnography as an organising frame for this context statement. Understanding and accepting my feelings of self-doubt and vulnerability in leadership, alongside my attraction to work-based communities with similar values and beliefs is an important step on my personal and professional journey.

Additionally, exploring my own experiences and the connections with my professional engagement with others across society and within the political context in which I have operated has enabled me to take an empathetic view and to recognise the feelings, beliefs and vulnerability of others. In doing so, my approach, particularly moving forward, will acknowledge the value of the relationship between people, their experiences and cultures in developing positive and deliverable solutions in a complex world.

My life's experiences have had, in my opinion, a profound effect on who I am now and how I have developed as a person and a leader throughout my career. The desire and drive to do the right thing, to better myself and develop both professionally and academically is intrinsically linked to the years when there was little motivation or inspiration to succeed or recognition for my relative successes. I understand now, and this point is important to me, that my life's journey has led to many destinations with one of those being my public works. If I had a different journey, perhaps if I had been more successful at school and gone on to university, then I have no doubt I would have reached different places; although this statement is self-evident, it is part of accepting and enjoying how my career and life have developed. I do not think about what I could have achieved in the past had my life been different, I think about what I can achieve, in collaboration with others, in the future. The journey continues and long may it do so but for now this destination is one worthy of celebration.

Governance Arrangements, Managerial Leadership

"Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other" (John F. Kennedy, 1963).

When I reflect on my leadership journey, I sometimes conclude that I am and have been a reluctant leader which, given the senior positions I have held, may be a surprise for many to hear. From the early stages of my career, other people have seen the potential in my ability to progress and to lead, instilling the confidence within me to achieve that potential. I have never asked those who have influenced my career as to what they saw, but I suspect one attribute, that I believe is required for a successful leader, is the ability to challenge. I will address this more throughout this chapter but two anecdotes spring to mind which probably set the tone for my leadership approach.

When I was in the Parachute Regiment as a relatively inexperienced soldier, we had a new intake of recruits to the battalion. I can recall my first few weeks in that new environment as a lonely and intimidating place amongst hardened veterans who had years of service across operational theatres. A new recruit is referred to as a 'CROW'[11] and is often left isolated until they have 'proved' themselves in a particular activity, whether that is fitness, soldiering skills or the strength of their personality. I challenged this approach when a new soldier joined us from the training college; he was trying to make a positive start in a new environment for him, whilst being deployed on manoeuvres and away from his familiar surroundings. Perhaps it was empathy on my part, however, challenging the accepted customs of senior soldiers rarely went down well and I too found myself isolated, at least in the short-term. Needless to say, he was eventually accepted, and we remain friends over 30 years later; it also earned me, in time at least, the respect of fellow soldiers who could see I had done the right thing.

The second anecdote relates to an overheard conversation between two senior officers, in the early stages of my fire service career, making derogatory comments about their own firefighters; "…give a firefighter two ball bearings in a sealed box and they'll lose one and break the other". Firefighters make up about 90% of the operational workforce in a fire service and they are the people who 'get things done', entering burning buildings whilst others run the other way, putting themselves in danger for the sake of others. It was a demeaning and spiteful criticism which has stuck with me through my career and a perception I consistently challenged. It is often easy to say nothing or worst still to adopt

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[11] A derogatory term derived from the First World War, which refers to a new recruit or inexperienced soldier or **C**ombat **R**ecruit **O**f **W**ar. The title is given to the newest members of a regiment.

the attitude and behaviours of one's peers, it is usually more difficult and challenging to step in and do the right thing.

The challenging leader

My point in describing these occurrences is that I have always believed it is a leader's responsibility to challenge; whether that is to challenge other people's views or behaviours, a policy or procedure or to challenge other people's decisions if I feel they are wrong. I did not see it at the time, although others probably did, that my ability to challenge and want to change how things were done were the early signs of my leadership potential. If my conclusion is correct, that a quality of a leader is to challenge then it follows that a quality of a leader is to learn; you cannot learn if you accept that the status quo should prevail.

The issue of striving to learn and to apply that learning is a key point for me in the context of my public works. In my experience, leaders, both managerial and political, continually search for the big new idea or innovative approach, this is commendable and should be encouraged. However, in the day-to-day reality of public sector organisations, experience tells me solutions can often be found by learning from what has gone before. To learn the lessons from the past and to apply that learning to future thinking is essential and is particularly important in the field of emergency planning and resilience where lives are often lost, or people have suffered through a major emergency event. It is unforgiveable to repeat the same mistakes and to suffer similar consequences when the learning from previous foreseeable events has not been applied.

Throughout my public works I have been keen to use my experience to repeat the concept of identifying lessons learned and applying those lessons to inform future approaches through policy, procedure, and organisational practices. I have continuously stated, throughout the development of my public works, that the standards were designed so that an individual standard could be used as a stand-alone product. I was challenged, through the consultation process, why there was repetition across the standards. I was of the view, as I am now, that specific issues of importance should be repeated across multiple standards so that the principle would be captured and implemented regardless of the team, department or service reviewing their area of work against the standard; the principle of learning and applying lessons was one such specific issue of importance.

To learn the lessons from the past, a leader is required to do many things but fundamentally two issues stand out for me; one, is to actively listen to those around them, whether they are experts in their field, the recipient of an event's outcome or a holder of new information. The second thing a leader should do is to challenge; challenge themselves against their own assumptions or experiences and to challenge the views of others. A key motivator for me, as I developed my public works, was the knowledge that many leaders during the lead-up to emergency events, which can be months and years prior to the event occurring, have steadfastly relied on their own knowledge and experiences. This could be down to ego, arrogance, or inexperience but the outcome has been the same; a failure to challenge. This inability or unwillingness to challenge leads to unwanted consequences which are further exacerbated by an unwillingness to actively listen, therefore failing to heed the lessons from the past. Listening is a key skill for leaders. According to Keyser (2012) great listeners typically show respect, keep quiet, and challenge assumptions.

Hoppe (2007) also highlights the need for leaders to hear and to understand and goes on to say that leaders need an open mind, be receptive to new ideas and perspectives and to resist from jumping directly to problem solving. He also observes that in a complex and high-pressure environment, there is a temptation to neglect the views of others, by active listening, and to focus primarily on how they can effectively get their message out.

The words of Hoppe (2007) resonate for me for two reasons. Firstly, the role of leaders (political and managerial) in the context of my public works, is to ensure they and their organisations are assured that their emergency planning and resilience arrangements are the best they can be. Once they have assured themselves of their organisation's position against the standards, they should then seek to achieve leading practice, using the standards as an aid to achieve this. To achieve the above outcomes, the scrutiny role for councillors and the senior leadership role for executives is crucial in challenging assumptions, engaging, listening and understanding the concerns of their employees and their communities. In doing this they will be in a good position to learn the lessons from the past and be able to apply them as they develop their vision for the future.

The second reason is more personal. Throughout my public works and in writing this context statement, I have been reflecting on my own leadership journey and challenging myself on how I have adjusted, and will continue to adjust my own thinking, behaviour and leadership approach as a result of my own learning and development.

If I am advocating the need for leaders and people across their organisations to learn the lessons of the past through challenging their own assumptions and active listening, then it is reasonable to expect at least that from myself. My primary focus during my final years as a senior executive in local government was predominantly occupied with delivering essential services with diminishing funding. Not only was I focussed on my own set of front-line teams but as a member of the corporate leadership team, I had a responsibility to ensure other directorates such as Children's and Adult Social Care could deliver effective services to the communities across West Sussex.

I was under pressure from my own teams and residents to protect the frontline, particularly the fire service, and to let others (also essential services) fend for themselves. There was a feeling that I should compete for funding with my senior colleagues rather than establish how we could collectively, provide a holistic offer to the eight hundred thousand plus residents of the county. On reflection, I realise now that my leadership approach was, on occasion, top-down, focussing on getting my message out as described by Hoppe (2007). This was usually during times when we, as a senior leadership team, had agreed on a course of action or when a quick decision was required. I was comfortable with my approach and I understand that in certain circumstances an autocratic approach is required as there is not always time to hear the views of others and to reach a consensus. Starting my own business not only gave me the opportunity to reflect on my past experiences and to adjust my leadership style where appropriate but it also gave me greater freedom and flexibility when applying my approach in the context of each new assignment.

In my most recent assignment (DHSC Regional Convenor 2020-2021), I commented to a colleague that if, through the benefit of hindsight, I had the opportunity to experience my public works, including my studies within the doctorate programme, and then return to my role within local government, I would be a more effective and inclusive leader as a result. The following paragraphs will outline why I have reached this conclusion.

The collaborative leader

In developing my public works, it was essential I adopted a collaborative approach if I was to deliver a workable assurance framework for thirty-three local councils. I do believe I adopted the role of being an active listener, understanding people's concerns and issues, challenging my own assumptions, reflecting, clarifying and holding judgement (Hoppe, 2007) (Keyser, 2013).

Listening to and understanding the concerns of emergency planning practitioners, senior leaders and political leaders, which were often conflicting in their views, helped me to empathise with the difficulties and barriers they faced. These issues included the lack of capacity within emergency planning teams to practically deliver an increasing workload, whilst senior leaders wrestled with the decreasing budgets year on year with a requirement to deliver essential services with less funding. Politicians, although recognising the importance of the assurance of their emergency planning and resilience arrangements and offering positive support to my work, particularly in light of the Grenfell tragedy, were understandably concerned about publicising areas of their councils' performance that were less positive; there are clearly some political and ethical difficulties to overcome in all public sector organisations where public expectations are extremely high.

In summary, a collaborative approach with an emphasis on influencing and persuading and a willingness to listen, understand and compromise helped me to deliver and implement my public works across London's local government family.

The issue of collaboration across London's local government and its stakeholders was significant consideration for me in developing my public works. There was a realisation that in tackling complex problems, particularly in an extremely challenging financial environment with the population having a diverse range of needs and aspirations, required a different way of working for local councils. The concept of one local council, alone, delivering services whilst simultaneously planning for and responding to challenging issues and events is unachievable in my view.

Given the pressure on local government leaders to continually tackle complex service delivery problems, it is unsurprising that putting a specific emphasis on preparing for events that may never happen does not get the attention it requires. Emergencies are often seen as a short-term obstacle to overcome before returning quickly to normality. Despite the volume and scale of emergency incidents across London and the impact they have, the planning and preparation for such events is often left to the emergency planning professionals. My challenge was to ensure people from across an organisation, at all levels, would see emergency planning and resilience as their responsibility. This requires them to take a longer-term view and to accept emergency planning as core business and to broaden their network to involve a wider set of partners and the community in the planning and design of emergency planning solutions as set out in figure 2, on page 37, adapted from Max-Neef (2005).

Residents and people who live in communities across a city of almost 10 million people do not necessarily recognise boundaries and arbitrary lines drawn on a map. They want quality services delivered at affordable prices and to feel they are being treated fairly and have the opportunity to succeed, whatever success looks like to them. It is difficult for a person to comprehend that someone living across the street from them is the recipient of superior services or has access to a broader range of opportunities by virtue of the fact they live in a different council area. I believe, and it is my experience, that people want to be and feel more engaged; have their voices heard and to believe they are part of a solution, being involved, rather than being on the end of decision resulting from a faceless consultation. During my time leading the Communities and Public Protection Directorate in West Sussex County Council, I did a lot of work in helping communities to help themselves as part of my strategy 'Safer, stronger and more resilient communities'. I held workshops, meetings and engaged with a range of stakeholders including residents, parish councils, employers and other partners and my conclusions above are drawn from these experiences.

It is well documented, through the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and numerous associated guidance papers published on the gov.uk website, that any response to an emergency event requires a multi-agency response and this is also true in the planning and testing of those plans prior to an event. Leaders across councils will approach this planning by looking at various scenarios including the worst-case planning scenario. They will draw on experiences from across the world to determine what is a foreseeable risk and plan accordingly. It is clear, from events of the past, that major emergencies require the system of responding organisations to collaborate to achieve a reasonable outcome.

In developing my public works, the concept of collaborative, shared and systems leadership was central to it. In the field of emergency planning and resilience, thirty-three councils across London, working in isolation from each other and their broader range of stakeholders, including the community, can only lead to poorer outcomes. It is incumbent on the leaders of any organisation involved in emergency planning to accept collaboration across multiple sectors and disciplines, this, in my view, is key to a successful outcome.

Debbie Sorkin, the National Director of Systems Leadership at The Leadership Centre captured this approach perfectly for me in the following extract:

> System Leadership is about how you lead across boundaries – departmental, organisational or sector. It's how you lead when you're not in charge, and you need to influence others rather than pull a management lever. It describes the way you need to work when you face large, complex, difficult and seemingly intractable problems; where you need to juggle multiple uncertainties; where no one person or organisation can find or organise the solution on their own; where everyone is grappling with how to make resources meet demand which is outstripping them; and where the way forward therefore lies in involving as many people's energies, ideas, talents and expertise as possible. (Sorkin, 2016).

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 does set out an expectation that organisations will work together by defining their roles and responsibilities. Moreover, Local Resilience Forums (based on Police Force areas) have been long established to support co-ordination, co-operation and efficiency across designated responders. Two of the seven responsibilities are explicit about the need to share information and cooperate as follows:

- Share information with other local responders to enhance co-ordination
- Co-operate with other local responders to enhance co-ordination and efficiency (II, 2004)

The Civil Contingencies Act has been extremely valuable in providing a single civil protection framework. I also recognise that following major civil emergencies, further improvements are made through public enquiries, Coroner's hearings or legal proceedings to enhance the planning and response to emergencies, and this often includes stricter regulation on issues such as cooperation, training, equipment and products. However, I contend that to achieve the desired outcome, which is to keep people and the environment safe, the issue is more fundamental than introducing new legislation. It is about leadership; shared leadership and the responsibility for leaders (managerial and political) across multiple organisations to create the environment for a collaborative culture.

In a local authority context, it is the leadership that enables a culture that can demonstrate a high level of partnership working between itself and all emergency responder and supporting

organisations, as a means to ensure an inclusive, collaborative approach to Integrated Emergency Management[12] (Ruth, 2019b).

As I have previously stated, the latter part of my career was spent tackling challenging problems and finding innovative solutions against a difficult financial backdrop. Funding was being reduced across local government organisations and leaders were being asked to deliver more for less. I recognised that one organisation alone would not be able to deliver the required level of service to the public that offered effectiveness, efficiency and safety. My approach was to adopt a collaborative model; bringing together partners to deliver collective solutions, sharing resources and finances where possible and supporting the community in helping them to help themselves – delivering a safer, stronger and more resilient community.

The adoption of a collaborative approach to delivering local government services is supported by Bolden (2020) who articulates four main arguments in favour of a systems leadership approach: effectiveness, efficiency, engagement and equity. Bolden recognised the impact of reduced spending in public services and the need to share resources, particularly when tackling complex issues where the traditional hierarchical leadership approach would be ineffective. This approach includes the principle of developing a vision and codesigning services with the community; an approach I will discuss further in Chapter 8 (Community Resilience).

This approach to leadership, collaborating across a system to address common problems for mutual benefit (Isaac Mbeche Nyang'au *et al.,* 2018) requires the leader, along with their teams, to put egos, organisational bias and political loyalty to one side; this means deviating from long-standing practices and the traditional hierarchical structures often found in local government organisations. To support this cultural shift from institutional working to transdisciplinary learning, I engaged all thirty-three London councils throughout an extensive engagement and consultation process. This engagement process began during my initial assurance review, throughout the development of new resilience standards for London, culminating in the consultation and decision-making phases of my public works.

Meetings, workshops, interviews and surveys, across and including multiple organisations took place to build confidence and trust (Hornidge, Ul Hassan and Mollinga, 2011). The workshops were particularly important in promoting the sharing of ideas and enabling people from different

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[12] Integrated Emergency Management (IEM), the concept on which civil protection in the UK is based. IEM is a holistic approach to preventing and managing emergencies that entails six key steps, Anticipation, Assessment, Prevention, Preparation, Response and Recovery.

organisations to challenge other's assumptions in a safe environment. Additionally, the leaders who would be responsible for implementing and utilizing the standards would feel they had contributed to their development and therefore have a vested interest in the success of the assurance process in collaboration with other stakeholders.

Seeing the perspective of others is incredibly important for a local government leader, given the complexity and diversity of services they are managing and the people they are delivering services to. This requires the leader to listen, build relationships through a broad network and to have trust in the ability of others to succeed (Senge, Hamilton and Kania, 2015).

Senge, Hamilton and Kania (2015) observed three leadership capabilities required in order to foster collective leadership, which are of significance when gaining the full benefits in applying an assurance framework such as my public works. The first capability is to recognise the larger system outside of their specific area of work resulting in a shared understanding of the problems facing the collective and supporting the co-design of a solution. In the context of my public works, this capability is vital in recognising a specific threat, such as a terrorist attack, that could impact on multiple communities across several boundaries.

The second capability involves reflecting on one's own assumptions and being prepared to listen and understand the perspectives of others. Not only is this important in developing joint longer-term preventative and response strategies, but it also facilitates a conversation with the council's community in order to understand their concerns with the potential to involve them in future planning and decision-making processes.

The third capability is about thinking longer term, as a collective and moving away from reactive solutions. My public works emphasises the need to learn from past events and to work with other stakeholders, including the public, to develop a stronger, safer and a more resilient community.

In terms of the capability and the organisational culture that I believed was necessary for my public works to succeed across London's local government, there was one issue I felt very strongly about; this was the issue of collective or shared responsibility. I am not referring to the philosophical definitions of collective responsibility (Lewis, 1948) (Feinberg, 1968) or the parliamentary definition applied to Cabinet Ministers within the UK government (Everett, 2016). In the context of my public works, I argue that every council should develop a positive culture towards emergency planning and

resilience which is embedded across the organisation and is seen as 'everyone's business' rather than leaving the responsibility to a small number of emergency planning professionals. Capacity and resilience should be developed ensuring the responsibility for plans and decision making is at the appropriate level, which in turn will build knowledge and experience across each organisation and the London local government family (Ruth, 2018, p. 31).

My contention throughout the development and engagement of my public works was that leadership and ownership of the Resilience Standards is required at all levels of the organisation, both managerial and political, and it is this collective responsibility that will provide the necessary foundation for successful assurance.

A number of themes began to emerge during my public works including one that the responsibility for emergency planning was owned by a very small number of people, there was a lack of capacity within the organisation. There was a lack of access to senior managers, including Directors and the Chief Executive, which led to issues of visibility, time and sign off for emergency plans, training and other resilience activities. There was also a lack of confidence in the existing assurance system in place which led to senior managers insisting assurance assessments were delivered positively to the organisation even when these were not a true reflection of reality.

My challenge was to persuade and convince leaders, managers and practitioners that to achieve the assurance they, and the public required, was to embed a culture of emergency planning and resilience across the organisation in a way that reflects the health and safety culture; it becomes everyone's business. Implementing and utilizing the Resilience Standards for London in isolation cannot guarantee assurance, especially when confined to a small group of emergency planning practitioners.

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004, the primary legislation covering emergency planning and resilience activities is still relatively new compared to other safety legislation such as the Health and Safety at Work etc Act[13], which was introduced in 1974. It is widely recognised there is still more work to be done in the field of health and safety despite this legislation being introduced in 1974 and the formation of national regulatory bodies such as the Health and Safety Executive.

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[13] The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 is the primary piece of legislation covering occupational health and safety in Great Britain. It's sometimes referred to as HSWA, the HSW Act, the 1974 Act or HASAWA.

I challenged London's local government leaders to seize the opportunity to create and develop their emergency planning culture. My contention was that in doing so will build capacity and resilience across the local government system, ensure responsibility of plans and decision making is at the appropriate level and this approach would build experience and knowledge within each organisation.

I recognised the challenge of the work required to put emergency planning and resilience on the same footing as 'health and safety' and I articulated that the cultural change, leadership, and transparency required should not be underestimated (Ruth, 2018). This was a mantra I consistently repeated throughout my work with London's borough councils.

On reflection, the need for me to listen more, engage a wide range of people across multiple disciplines, accept a contrary view and change my approach or the content based on these findings was good for me as a person starting out in a new profession and it was ultimately a more positive outcome in terms of the final product. I have commented to others since my work was completed that had I the opportunity to undertake this work as a consultant and then return to my previous profession, then I would be a more productive and positive leader as a result of it. I believe I would have been even more open to people's views, a more collaborative leader and less stubborn about implementing my own ideas.

During the development of the Resilience Standards for London, one of the first issues that I needed to understand was the complexity of London's local government family. Would I be able to bring together thirty-three organisations consisting of Chief Executives, political leaders, emergency planning specialists and senior professionals across multiple organisations to agree and have confidence in a common approach. I needed to be aware of the ability to deliver the standards – in that I mean that each organisation would take ownership of them and be responsible for their implementation; look at the results of an assurance review, be prepared to be challenged by peers through the national peer review process I had helped to develop and to learn from the process and implement change as a result of it. There were numerous factors to consider including the cost of delivering the standards by ensuring appropriate structures and resources were in place, concerns about their own organisation's reputation if they were found to be wanting in a particular area of work or activity and having the confidence and political will to accept this publicly and be committed to learn from their own findings.

To be able to get all thirty-three organisations into a position of acceptance and delivery I knew there would be elements of compromise and that I would need to take a pragmatic view. There were times throughout the work where I faced difficult conversations with individuals or groups about what should and should not be included, some favoured a more detailed and specific approach concentrating on actions, where others wanted a broad set of principles to follow so they could decide how to achieve an outcome. At times the process was frustrating for me as I was having my judgement and beliefs questioned and challenged, however, I knew I would need to gain the general support of all those people and organisations involved to deliver a positive outcome. It was a learning process for me, operating as a consultant and not having the ability to direct my teams to 'get on with it' if I believed the course of action was the correct one; something I had the scope to do throughout my role as a senior executive and which, on occasions I did.

I made two key decisions at the start of the development of the standards programme that stood me in good stead and contributed significantly to a positive outcome. The first was to set up a specialist practitioner's group; emergency planning and resilience professionals from across a diverse group of councils, including inner and outer London authorities with different levels of experience and exposure to significant events. Each would have their own priorities, objectives and ability to gain organisational buy-in and this was paramount in terms of my understanding the pressures and concerns faced by those who would be responsible for the day-to-day delivery of the standards work.

Secondly, I brought together a strategic, independent and external (to the London local authorities) group whose role it was to scrutinise and challenge the work I was developing. This group consisted of Government representatives (Cabinet Office), the Local Government Association (representing political leaders), Resilience Advisors Network (an organisation supporting governments and organisations in resilience matters globally) and the Care Quality Commission who are the health sectors regulatory body. The issue of whether a new set of resilience standards for London should be a set of regulatory standards set within a Government led inspection framework or a voluntary local government approach supported by a sector led peer review process was an issue I explored and addressed through my initial review; the latter was the agreed approach.

Collective leadership across London's local government would be a key component in a successful outcome regarding improved organisational and community resilience. In many ways, collective leadership was fundamental in developing, agreeing, and implementing my public works. Coalescing

leaders and experts from a broad range of disciplines and experiences to offer their vast knowledge, ideas and opinions laid the foundation for a successful programme of work.

The ethical leader

Notwithstanding this collective endeavour, there was still a significant responsibility resting on the shoulders of individual leaders. I want to touch on the dilemma faced by these leaders in accepting and implementing my public works in the way I had envisaged. I have asked them to publicly present an open, transparent, and honest appraisal of their council's performance and to be more public about where they are vulnerable and unable to deliver specific responses. I recognise the issues this may cause and the challenge, by others, to a leader's ethics and values given I have experienced similar myself as I will describe later in this chapter.

It is the nature of local government organisations that leaders, both political and managerial, are frequently sharing their views and decisions in a very public way. Whilst this is clearly a good thing for democracy and local accountability, it places the leader in a vulnerable position particularly where there are competing and increasing demands that need to be balanced against shrinking resources. It is, perhaps, when leaders find themselves feeling vulnerable that their ethical behaviour becomes even more important. At times of high pressure and in a difficult working environment, such as periods of reducing budgets, leaders can offer guidance and comfort to their teams by modelling ethical leadership as described by Stouten *et al.* (2013).

Leaders will often feel, as I did on many occasions, that they are in a no-win situation; no matter what the outcome or the extensive volume of evidence supporting a particular decision or proposal, there will always be public criticism from multiple sources, this, in my experience, is the nature of being a public sector leader. It is therefore unsurprising that leaders will face many situations where their ethics and values will be challenged by others, often in the public domain and across the media.

I recall one such situation where I was presenting controversial proposals to a public meeting of approximately 200 people. The essence of the proposals was to reduce frontline operational response resources and to invest in a preventative approach. The audience included, members of the public, councillors, my own firefighters, the local MP, who was a government minister at the time, and of course representatives of the media. My role, as the organisation's operational leader, was to present the rationale and evidence supporting the proposals (in which I firmly believed) whilst knowing they would be unanimously opposed and angrily rejected. Over the following two hours, which included

an extensive question and answer session, I presented the case for change whilst being barracked, insulted, and shouted at; barely a single person in the room supported my rationale. The highlights were subsequently reported across the local media which created a lot of unwanted attention from my perspective.

This was a very difficult time for me, and I was under considerable pressure; my integrity, values and beliefs were being publicly questioned and I feared I would lose the trust and faith bestowed on me by my own teams. Regardless of the pressures and difficulties I felt at the time, I believed it was important to address the issues publicly and with the local community engaged in the process, I believed it was the right thing to do. In my view, it is unreasonable and unfair to shy away from public discourse and difficult conversations with one's own teams based on personal discomfort and external challenge. Notwithstanding my own views and fears, research by Sharif and Scandura (2014) has shown that involving people through transparency and discussion can actually reaffirm the leader's ethical values as well as engaging people in the change process. This is an approach I practiced during my career, and I found that even if people disagreed with my views, then at least they would respect my intention to be open, transparent and involve them in the process.

Leaders in public organisations, including myself, frequently make decisions and statements about future plans or conduct media interviews that shine a public light on their principles, values and behaviours. Therefore, multiple audiences, such as those within their workplace, the community and the media will make a judgement about their ethical leadership and whether they actually care about others or are concerned primarily with themselves (Treviño, Hartman and Brown, 2000). This continuous demonstration of one's own values and beliefs in the public eye requires a leader to be consistent and authentic. Any deviation from what has been done against what has been said will be identified by someone and the credibility, as an ethical leader, can be called into question as discussed by Yukl *et al.* (2013).

The approach of openness, transparency and leadership were central to the development of my public works. I believed, and still do, that the community you serve should have access to information that may affect their futures and to the people who develop and make decisions on such proposals. I wanted councils to be transparent and to share information, even where the information could be seen as contentious or controversial. In terms of my public works, I urged council leaders to be honest about what they, as a council could realistically deliver in the times of crisis (what they can do) and what they would need external support for (what they cannot do). This is an approach espoused by

O'Malley, Rainford and Thompson (2009), in recognising the need to build public trust during a public health emergency during their communication, decision making and priority setting.

I also encouraged council leaders to publish their self-assessments against the framework along with the independent peer-review report following external assessment. I understood the dilemma this created for leaders, as I had adopted this approach for assessments and reviews within my own organisation knowing it would invite comments and opinion, from a variety of audiences. My conclusion is that sharing information is an enabler for a more open and honest dialogue with people, thereby creating a more positive can-do culture, to deliver improved longer-term outcomes for a safer, stronger, and more resilient community. Transparency from public sector leaders during an emergency is ethically and strategically important in building trust as concluded by O'Malley, Rainsford and Thompson (2009), however leaders need to take the step to ensure this transparent approach happens in reality and this can be achieved by creating the right environment across their own organisations.

Developing an enabling culture for emergency planning and resilience by the example a leader sets and the decisions they and their teams make became a key facet of my public works. This is concerned with how the leaders behave themselves and how they proactively influence others, such as their own teams within the workplace (Brown and Treviño, 2006).

The issue of engaging staff within a positive open and transparent culture was discussed numerous times with emergency planning experts during my public works. The previous assurance framework created a system of inaccurate and over-inflated assessment results where emergency planning teams were expected to present self-assessments to show better performance than there was in reality. As Bazerman (2020) observed, giving people the 'permission' to challenge authority leads to better outcomes through improved decision making. Telling truth to power or delivering bad news to leaders is possible when the leader is open, approachable and a good listener, all of which are traits of an ethical leader (Treviño, Hartman and Brown, 2000).

The paper, 'Moral Person and Moral Manager' (Treviño, Hartman and Brown, 2000) is particularly pertinent to the successful implementation and use of my public works. It is not only about leaders doing the right thing and being seen to do so, it is also about setting the example as a role model, communicating, and engaging the workforce about what needs to be done and setting the standards accordingly. In my 'Personal Validation' chapter starting on page 40, I have given examples of what

my teams and peers have said about me in relation to challenging the views of others and having difficult conversations. I hope my approach acted as an example to others and enabled people to air their opinions and concerns to leaders at every level of the organisation. My public works are wide ranging in scope but at the heart of them is the role of the leader in achieving the appropriate governance and organisational culture to enable effective outcomes and positive impact, doing and being seen to do the right thing as described by van den Akker *et al.* (2009).

It is the political leaders who are the ultimate decision makers in local government organisations and I will discuss the issues around political leadership and governance in more detail in the next chapter. Their reputation, and political careers rest, not only on the confidence of the voting public but also on their ability to keep their own party members (other councillors) onside to prevent any leadership challenge. Additionally, the party-political rivalry within public organisations can create further ethical challenges as concluded by Downe, Cowell and Morgan (2016) who further articulate the need to engage with opposition councillors in an appropriate and respectful manner by demonstrating good conduct.

The above point is pertinent in the field of emergency planning and resilience, where cross party cooperation is extremely important, particularly during the emergency response phase. However, during the planning phase (day-to-day council business), political cooperation can prove far more difficult to achieve. It follows then, that having the foresight and vision to plan for events yet to occur can provide difficult challenges for the political leader and I acknowledge this point. The work required here forms part of developing the organisational culture and within that, the need to demonstrate transparent and ethical leadership as discussed previously.

My hope is that the tragedy of Grenfell will prove to be a watershed moment for councils across London and the wider UK. This will require a cultural shift in how councils engage with their staff and their communities, how they learn lessons from the past and the steps they take to implement that learning. Ultimately, it will be the decisions council leaders take that will make the difference and how those decisions demonstrate objectiveness and fairness, concerns about the broader society and community (Treviño, Hartman and Brown, 2000) reaching moral decisions without regard for self-interest and avoiding tribal behaviour whilst providing the potential to create more value for society and good outcomes for the community (Bazerman, 2020).

Governance Arrangements, Political Leadership

Throughout the second half of my career, particularly when in senior leadership roles, I have held a firm belief in democratic accountability. Public sector organisations, including those county councils I have worked in, exist on the basis that members of the community, its constituents or voters, have voted for specific individuals to make decisions and spend their contributed taxes on their behalf. The authority vested in these elected individuals is to serve the community regardless of the political party or person any one individual has voted for.

Elected councillors, at all levels of politics, set policy and make decisions on behalf of all those they represent and as such are accountable to the public. It is the public who decide whether the politicians deserve to represent the people for a prolonged period; the public invest their trust and will ultimately hold politicians to account. The aforementioned description is a simplistic view of the political landscape and it is not intended to be an analytical assessment of the UK's political environment. However, the motivation for including governance and political leadership as one of the key strands of my public works is the firmly held belief that those who occupy positions of authority as either an elected individual or serving official, are merely custodians of an organisation rather than owners of it. People who work for public organisations are there to serve the public who have either elected them to do so or who pay their wages through their tax contribution. This is my firmly held belief.

Roles and responsibilities

The role for councillors in emergency planning and resilience activities became a key focus for me throughout the development and implementation of my public works. If democratically elected public representatives set the policy and strategy for local authorities and officials are employed to deliver on those policies, then the role for councillors should be recognised accordingly. Within the 'Governance - Political Leadership' standard of the Resilience Standards for London Local Government (Ruth, 2019) I set out six key actions, amongst others. Those six actions are set out in Table 1 below and set the foundation for a council's and councillor's approach to emergency planning and resilience activities and I will explore my rationale and motivation for some of these in more detail throughout this chapter.

a. Define roles and responsibilities for political leaders and ward councillors, which is supported through induction, training and development and exercises.
b. Make key policy decisions and consider recommendations from senior officers prior to, during or following a civil emergency.
c. Discuss with the Chief Executive and senior officers the main risks to communities so key actions can be promoted and supported, which will increase resilience.
d. The council has appropriate arrangements in place to enable political scrutiny of emergency planning and resilience arrangements.
e. Elected Members assure themselves that the council has the staff resources, to not only support the response and recovery, but also maintain the delivery of front-line services.
f. Elected Members are assured that lessons from incidents and exercises are identified, addressed and shared with appropriate partners and the community.

Table 1 – Resilience Standards for London Local Government, Governance Arrangements – Political Leadership (Ruth, 2019).

The role of political leaders, in an emergency planning and resilience context is, in my view, equally as important in preparing for an emergency as it is during the response and recovery phase. The ability to scan the horizon, or anticipate events, is essential in preventing or mitigating the effects of an emergency event when it happens. Emergency planning activities for councillors start at the earliest opportunity. Often, these opportunities may not be recognised at the time, as the activity may seem far removed from an emergency, such as the building of new homes, construction of a new road, the development of a retail park or the refurbishment of a high-rise tower block. However, emergencies and disasters are inevitable, and the governance body requires the foresight to think ahead and the hindsight to learn the lessons from the past.

The principles of accountability and leadership are set out in the seven principles of public life, known as the Nolan principles[14], introduced in 1995 (Committee on Standards in Public Life, 1995). They sit alongside integrity, selflessness, objectivity, openness and honesty and are the ethical standards to which public servants should adhere to. They have since been embedded in policy, contracts and codes of conduct across the public sector and remain as important today as they have ever been.

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[14] The Seven Principles of Public Life outline the ethical standards those working in the public sector are expected to adhere to. They were first set out by Lord Nolan in 1995 in the first report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life and they are included in a range of codes of conduct across public life.

The Nolan Principles apply to anyone who works as a public office-holder, including those who are elected or appointed to public office. In the context of my public works, the Nolan Principles would apply to all political and managerial leaders. All public office-holders are both servants of the public and stewards of public resources (Committee on Standards in Public Life, 1995).

Throughout the development of my public works, specifically during the assurance review of 2018, I was challenged multiple times, at all levels of London's local government from emergency planning officers through to Chief Executives, on the emphasis and importance I consistently placed on the role and responsibilities of elected representatives; the requirement of elected councillors to scrutinise the work of officials and to hold them to account. This point is supported by the work of Leach and Copus (2004), who observed that councillors were to become the advocates of local communities, channelling their opinions to the council, which remains the most crucial check and balance on executive activity and the most important process for holding the executive publicly to account.

My assurance review[15] of 2018, submitted as part of my public works, devoted a complete chapter to the role of governance and the political leadership of elected councillors with three of the fifteen recommendations relating to this. These recommendations included the need to clearly define the role for councillors in a civil emergency, appropriate induction, development and training and mentoring from more experienced councillors. The following paragraphs are extracts taken from my review:

> The role and responsibilities for elected Members needs to be clearly defined and understood by officers and Members across every organisation. It was apparent through this review that this is not the case in many incidences. It was surprising to hear of the lack of involvement of elected Members in virtually all but a small number of cases and even here, Member involvement has been more recent, within the last 12 months, or has become more prominent following the Grenfell tragedy. In other cases, although there has been some comprehensive work done with Members it has taken a degree of prompting to reveal this work which leads to the conclusion that Member involvement isn't common practice or proactive.
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> There was a widespread view that it is sufficient to provide an update or a brief for Members. Members are often seen as having a 'community liaison' role passing information between the council and their community. Clearly, community leadership is an important role for a

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[15] An assurance framework for London Local Government, 'Providing individual and collective assurance'. Sean Ruth February 2018

councillor however, at the very basic level it should be understood that councillors set the strategic direction and agree the policy framework of the council; officers are responsible for delivering the council's policies and for the day-to-day operation of the organisation (Ruth, 2018).

My public works, and the previous chapter on leadership, have identified governance and leadership (political and managerial) as key elements of the assurance framework for London's local government, both of which are contained within the Nolan principles 25 years after they were first published. The previous extracts demonstrate there is more required to fully understand and exploit the role of elected councillors. This is the case across London and will almost certainly be replicated across the UK as observed by Lord Evans to mark the 25th anniversary of the principles:

> While organisations from local councils to NHS trusts and schools have published codes of conduct, the Committee's reports in recent years have frequently identified weaknesses in **scrutiny** and insufficient education in organisations about the expected standards of behaviour. Good conduct is just as much about **organisational culture** as it is about formal rules and structures. Building and maintaining a strong ethical culture requires constant vigilance (Evans, 2019).

As I identified in my assurance review in 2018 and latterly set out in the Resilience Standards for London Local Government, there is a clear role for elected councillors in preparing for, responding to and recovering from a major emergency which includes scrutinising plans and holding officers to account to ensure their council is delivering in line with their statutory responsibilities. This role, for councillors, is not about delivering emergency planning and resilience nor is it about operational decision making, moreover it is about providing political leadership in policy making, oversight, scrutiny and challenge.

It became a challenge to me throughout my public works as to why Officers (paid employees), at all levels of multiple organisations, across London's 33 councils, were reluctant to recognise and encourage the engagement and involvement of elected councillors (community representatives) in emergency planning and resilience activities. I will articulate my conclusions on this during the following paragraphs.

It can be shown from the evidence set out in my CV (Appendix 5) and timeline on pages 24 and 25 that I have significant experience of working with councillors in public organisations. I started my fire

service career as a firefighter and progressed to the highest office as a Chief Fire Officer; various roles throughout my career involved working with councillors on issues relating to emergency situations from planning through to responding and the subsequent community recovery phase. I recognise the anxiety and concern of officials in involving political people in the emergency response phase of an incident and the necessity for operational officers to get on 'with the job'. I have experienced this myself on numerous occasions, as the following paragraphs will illustrate.

I have worked in local government since 1988 and closely with councillors since 1996. This has included briefing, advising and challenging elected politicians. I have also worked at national level advising Ministers on national fire and rescue policy and more recently through the Covid-19 pandemic. I have grown to understand the importance of the role and responsibility of politicians at a local and national level. I respect the democratic accountability bestowed upon politicians and recognise and value the importance of transparent scrutiny and decision making.

On the 22nd August 2015, 11 people were killed and 16 injured when a former military aircraft crashed onto a road during the Shoreham Air show. This incident was the deadliest air show accident in the United Kingdom since the 1952 Farnborough airshow crash, which had killed 31 (Shoreham Airshow Crash. 2015). At the time I was the Chief Fire Officer for West Sussex County Council and I was responsible for the emergency planning, response and recovery matters for West Sussex. One month after the Shoreham disaster I was asked to take on the additional responsibility of Deputy Chief Executive for the County Council.

This incident was a significant tragedy for people across the whole of Sussex and I witnessed the impacts on the families of those who were killed, the community and of my own workforce. My initial role was as part of the response phase, which in this case and unusually, lasted approximately three weeks whilst we assisted the military in recovering the aircraft and the Coroner's office (one of my teams) and the Police in recovering over 3000 body parts; each one requiring the appropriate respect and dignity in the recovery, labelling and identification for the subsequent police investigation and Coroner's inquest.

It was during the initial stages of the incident, when social media had exploded with news of the crash with photos and videos being posted within seconds of impact, that councillors were contacting the initial scene commander to attend the incident. It is understandable why councillors would want to attend such an incident that was to have a devastating effect on the community; some will believe it

is their duty as a community leader and to them it is important to be visible and heard during difficult times.

However, at a time such as this it is paramount that all agencies involved in a major event, and the people who represent those agencies are clear about their roles and responsibilities. The early stages of an emergency incident are a critical time for the emergency responders in gathering information, assessing it and making critical operational decisions; they must be able to do so with a clear mind and unhindered by external influences or distractions.

The role for councillors during an emergency is set out on page 9 of the Councillors Guide to Civil Emergencies, a guidance document published by the Local Government Association as follows:

> In an emergency, as with business as usual, councillors are not involved in the operational response led by officers but must play a leadership role that includes:
> • **political leadership**; ensuring that their council is meeting its obligations under the Act, in terms of preparing for and responding to emergencies
> • **civic leadership**; providing a focal point for the local area during an emergency situation
> •**community leadership**; helping to increase community resilience, and supporting communities' emergency responses and through the period of recovery (Local Government Association, 2018).

During the first minutes of the Shoreham incident, I was in contact with the initial incident commander, receiving operational information, providing support and assessing the immediate priorities. It was at this time I was required to intervene to prevent councillors from attending the incident or contacting responding officers for information. There is an established protocol for briefing councillors, and it was my job to ensure councillors understood theirs. There were a number of challenging conversations with councillors that day but we reached an agreed position that ensured everyone understood their role.

Many Chief Executives across London's local government family will have experienced the challenges I faced on the day of the Shoreham air crash. Some will have had a different outcome whereby councillors turned up at emergency incidents, distracting responding officers from their priority duties and undoubtedly would want to avoid a repetition of the diversion this can cause. However, the perceived interference of councillors at emergency incidents does not and should not dilute the role

of councillors at all stages of emergency planning. Councillors have an important and legitimate role to play in an emergency planning environment which makes it more important that their role, and the responsibilities that go with it, is clearly defined and understood.

On reflection, the Shoreham incident was to have a profound effect on my public works and my determination that the role of elected councillors in preparing for, responding to and recovering from a major event needed to be clearly recognised, understood and enacted through induction, training, testing through exercising plans and embedded in clearly defined role profiles as I recommended in my assurance review:

> **Recommendation 5** – The role and responsibility for political leaders, including the role of assurance, should be clearly defined and supported through induction programmes, training and development and exercises. Consideration should be given to mentoring opportunities to support newly elected or inexperienced Members by those who are more experienced. (Ruth, 2018, p. 21).

Following the closure of the operational incident and until my retirement from the fire service, I was involved in supporting councillors and the council in the recovery phase of the incident. The recovery phase is defined as the process of rebuilding, restoring and rehabilitating the community following an emergency (Cabinet Office, 2013a, p.10).

The recovery phase can last years and in the case of the Shoreham incident, the recovery phase is still ongoing awaiting the Coroner's inquest which is planned for July of 2022. Along with 'Governance – Political Leadership', I felt it was important that recovery management had a Resilience Standard for London devoted to it.

It is the long-lasting nature of the recovery phase that requires perseverance, diligence and a sustained effort by the organisation and its partners to ensure a community is rebuilt, physically and emotionally, and lessons are learned to prevent such an occurrence happening again. There have been many examples across the world where there has been a rapid and intense response to a disaster with much media attention and promises made by national and local politicians to rebuild the affected community better and stronger than before only for this to take several years for progress to be made.

To deliver on such promises not only requires a sustained collective effort, involving those affected, it requires a systematic approach; a plan that sets out what needs to be done, who is going to deliver the plan, by when and how it is going to be delivered. Appropriate governance and leadership need to be in place, whose role it should be to oversee and scrutinise the delivery, monitor progress and evaluate the results whilst ensuring lessons have been learned from past events.

Batho, Williams and Russell (1999, p. 232) writing in the Disasters Journal following the bombing of Manchester City Centre recognised the role of local authorities in the recovery phase of an emergency event as follows:

> While the police, fire and ambulance services were the first to deal with the emergency, it is inevitably the local authority that provides the continuity and in-house expertise for recovery, a task which in the case of Manchester will take over five years to complete. Moreover, the recovery, and subsequent regeneration process has demonstrated the importance of local authorities in an overall strategic framework setting and co-ordinating role.

The role of a councillor becomes increasingly important following an emergency when the lead responsibility for recovery management falls to the local authority. It is this responsibility that fundamentally shapes the role for a local councillor which is to represent the interests of their local community. In the previous chapter where I discussed ethical leadership, I described the need for leaders to match their words with actions and to build trust with the community; these qualities and attributes are undoubtedly required following an emergency, as part of the recovery phase, more than ever.

Challenge and scrutiny

Councillors represent their communities in a variety of ways and a critical element of their work is to oversee, challenge and scrutinise the work of paid officials throughout all phases of emergency planning and resilience activities. This is equally important in looking forward, scrutinising plans and ensuring the community has been engaged and consulted as it is in evaluating the outcome; has the plan been delivered successfully and where relevant, have lessons been identified, learned and implemented.

The role of councillors in scrutinising the work of the Council's executive and officer leadership has been the subject of many discussions, articles and reviews over many years. Coulson (2011) argued that the role of scrutiny committees needed to be strengthened in order to be more effective, recognising their limitations in holding Council leaders and Chief Executives to account. Coulson (2011, p. 109) also observed that if stronger legislative support was not given to the scrutiny process "it may wither on the vine, surviving where individual leaders, chief executives and scrutiny chairs see its value and are prepared to resource".

It was a further six years, in 2017, before there was a such a legislative review conducted as highlighted by Coulson, after previous failed attempts to strengthen the statutory requirements for greater scrutiny. The review was eventually conducted by the House of Commons Communities and Local Government committee.[16]

The review of 2017 looked at the role of scrutiny committees and highlighted a number of cases where previous reviews had been critical of the scrutiny function and the skills and knowledge of councillors within that function. Criticism of specific areas, by Francis, (2013, cited in House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee, 2017) included the lack of understanding and grip, little interrogation and a willingness to accept explanations. Casey (2015, cited in House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee, 2017) also observed a lack of effective challenge, scrutiny being undermined by organisational culture that did not value the role of scrutiny and scrutineers being unable to access information to hold the executive to account.

In its response to the review, in 2019, the Government accepted the majority of the review's recommendations and agreed that scrutiny can play a vital role in ensuring local accountability on a wide range of local issues. "It is one of the key checks and balances in the system and the Government is committed to ensuring councils are aware of its importance, understand the benefits effective scrutiny can bring and have access to best practice to inform their thinking" (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2018, p. 3).

The Government published statutory guidance for Overview and Scrutiny Committees in 2019 which included the necessity to ensure the wider public were engaged in the committee's work and induction and ongoing training was provided for committee members. The guidance further recognised the legal and democratic legitimacy of councillors, their clear role and responsibility and

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[16] Effectiveness of local authority overview and scrutiny committees

the need to create a strong organisational culture that recognises the importance of scrutiny (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019b).

It is both satisfying and reassuring to know that the role of councillors, in the scrutiny of the wider council's work, is now set out in statute. Throughout my career and during the development of my public works for London's local government, I have continuously argued the importance of the role for councillors, as the democratically elected representatives. It is essential that the council's leadership, both political and managerial, are held to account, have their decisions critically challenged and that the organisation (in the case of my public works, the thirty-three London borough councils) are able to effectively prepare for, respond to and recover from major events. Part of this role within emergency planning and resilience requires the council to identify and learn lessons from previous events and to ensure those lessons are acted upon and embedded in policy, procedure and the culture of the organisation.

> Councillors should have a clear role in civil protection, which underpins their community leadership role, that includes setting out the council's statutory duties, responsibilities and expectations for the public and oversight and scrutiny. There should be a public commitment to demonstrate resilience in order to provide critical services during adverse events whilst supporting residents and communities over a prolonged period of time… A role for scrutiny is ensuring lessons identified from exercises and incidents have been incorporated into updated plans and procedures and shared with stakeholders but also that the borough has the appropriate capacity and skills to be able to deliver those plans (Ruth, 2018, p. 19-20).

Identifying and learning the lessons from past events

If Shoreham had an impact on my public works from a professional capacity, then the Grenfell tragedy did so on a personal capacity. On 14th June 2017, 72 people were killed, more than 70 were injured and over 200 people escaped (Grenfell Tower Fire, 2022) and were to be permanently displaced from their homes, and in some cases their community.

It was in 2016 that I applied and was interviewed for the post of Commissioner of the London Fire Brigade; I was unsuccessful and whilst this was very disappointing at the time, it became a seminal point in my career. I, along with millions of people across the world, watched in horror as flames spread rapidly throughout the 24-storey block of flats in North Kensington, West London. It was clear

to me at the time that there would be multiple fatalities and it seemed apparent there had been a catastrophic failure of the buildings fire protection capability.

On 12th June 2017 I retired from West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service as the Chief Fire Officer and from West Sussex County Council as the Deputy Chief Executive. My retirement was two days before the Grenfell tragedy and it did not escape my, or my family's attention, that it could have been me responding to the Grenfell Tower fire that night. There have been many reviews undertaken as a direct result of the Grenfell Fire and the official inquiry, which was formally set up on the 15th August 2017 is currently ongoing.

My previous points regarding the role of elected councillors in oversight and scrutiny are particularly pertinent when considering this in the context of the Grenfell tragedy. Whether the role of councillors had any bearing on the events of the fire will emerge from the inquiry itself but it is clear from the quote from the current Leader of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Elizabeth Campbell, that shortfalls across the council have been acknowledged:

> Too often the council put the narrow goal of generating commercial income above the broader aim of delivering benefits to our wider community. We fell below the bar on consultation, transparency, scrutiny, and policy (Guardian The, 2021).

The Leader has since said that on the day of the fire, Kensington and Chelsea (council) changed for ever, including many of the council's leadership, both political and managerial, and its policies (Campbell, 2019).

Time will tell whether the council has learned lessons from the past, however, when I was asked to conduct the initial assurance review, one of my priorities was to ensure the role of councillors in exercising their responsibilities was clearly highlighted as an area of great importance that required attention.

Following my submission of the assurance review, I was asked to lead on the implementation of three of my recommendations which are set out on page 22 of this context statement. An additional recommendation (recommendation five) concerning the defined roles and responsibilities for councillors with the associated induction, training and development was delivered by a former colleague of mine. This guidance, for councillors, can be found as a Members handbook at

https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/who-we-are/members-area/civil-resilience-handbook-london-councillors.

London Councils, which is the organisation that represents the thirty-three local authorities in London, has stated on its website that the handbook was produced to assist local authorities in meeting their obligations within the Resilience Standards for London, ensure that political leaders and councillors understand their roles and responsibilities and will be supported by a comprehensive training programme (London Councils, 2019). It is incredibly rewarding to see that my public works has had a significant impact already and a number of my recommendations from the assurance review, in addition to those I delivered, have been implemented.

Many of the functions it is important for councillors to execute, are equally important across other areas of a council's responsibility. For example, learning the lessons from an emergency event or training exercise and applying that learning, is covered across multiple standards within my public works as it is required to be picked up by different parts of the organisation. I deliberately designed the Resilience Standards for London in this way, so that each of the eleven standards are complementary with cross-cutting areas of focus. It is intended for the appropriate service, department, or team to take ownership of the standard most relevant to them. They should be able to assess or measure progress against any standard (or part of it) at any time of the year as part of their business-as-usual arrangements.

Identifying and learning the lessons from past events is an integral part of a councillor's role in scrutiny, and I would argue in their day-to-day responsibilities. It is crucial for future planning and preparation across emergency planning and resilience activities to prevent, or mitigate, similar occurrences in the future. Throughout my review of 2018, I found that evaluation of incidents and exercises was not happening in a widespread or consistent way, anywhere, across the London boroughs and there was a widespread view that there was little or no evaluation taking place.

The volume, complexity, and the high profile of incidents across London, with the additional opportunity for multi-agency exercising and training, should provide an ideal environment for organisations in London to identify learning, share that learning and adapt their policies, practices and procedures as a result of that learning.

The fact that meaningful evaluation was not taking place did not come as a surprise to me; there were many reasons given for this across the London borough councils I spoke to including, a lack of capacity, limited organisational buy-in, leaving the responsibility with the two or three person emergency planning teams, bureaucratic processes constraining the opportunity for learning and the absence of a facility to record and share lessons across councils and other partners.

History tells us that despite the numerous disasters that occur across the world, each and every year, the same mistakes are repeated time and time again. In their research in 2006, Donohue and Tuohy identified a number of disasters where common mistakes had been repeated and lessons had not been learned through previous events including Hurricane Katrina, the Oklahoma Bombings, Hurricane Andrew and the terrorist attacks in September 2001 on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in the USA.

> No one in the emergency response community was surprised. …We knew they would be before Katrina ever hit the Gulf coast. Why? Because we identify the same lessons again and again, incident after incident. In fact, responders can readily predict the problems that will arise in a major incident and too often their predictions are borne out in practice. Even a casual observer can spot problems that recur: communications systems fail, command and control structures are fractured, resources are slow to be deployed. A quick perusal of the reports published after the major incidents of the past decade quickly shows this to be true (Donahue and Tuohy, 2006, p. 1).

It was this inability to identify lessons and implement the learning following a tragedy such as Grenfell that motivated me to reiterate this learning point across several standards and to devote a specific resilience standard to the subject of training, exercising and evaluation.

It is the case that the emergency response organisations across London, are attending a wide range of incidents and are conducting training and exercises of various size and complexity across a number of scenarios. These organisations will have been conducting incident debriefs on the ground, gaining valuable team and personal experience but these alone do not change the organisational approach to managing emergency events which require a systematic approach through the development of policies, procedures, structures, systems, and behaviours; in short, it is an issue of organisational culture driven by the leadership and governed by its democratically elected councillors.

Despite the desperate nature of disasters and the terrible and life-long impact they have on people's lives, there is always an opportunity following a tragedy and that is the opportunity for institutional learning (Baker and Refsgaard, 2007). This learning can be used as an enabler to mitigate the effects of future events by altering the culture of an organisation. As Schein, Schein and Schein (2017, p. 190) observed "When an organization faces a crisis, the manner in which leaders and others deal with it…often creates new norms, values, and working procedures. Crises are especially significant in culture creation…because the heightened emotional involvement during such periods increases the intensity of learning".

In conclusion, it is the governance body and leadership group that will change the approach of an organisation in dealing with potential emergency events and a key consideration for them should be the culture of the organisation. This culture is shaped by the leadership, who can influence the people they work and interact with through their vision, values, and behaviours as I have described in Chapter 6 (Governance Arrangements, Managerial Leadership). For a public organisation, the role of the governance body is crucial to the leadership of it, in ensuring people are held to account, decisions and plans are challenged and scrutinised, lessons are learned from past events and implemented to affect future events. More importantly, they are also the representatives of the community and a key responsibility for them should be to ensure those community voices are heard.

In the previous two chapters (Chapters 6 and 7) I have discussed many issues ranging from collaborative and systems leadership, ethical leadership, the engagement of residents in designing solutions and leaders neglecting the views of individuals and communities. I have also discussed the impact of leaders on organisational culture and the need to learn from previous events. This discussion has been conducted in the context of my real world events and observations in a complex environment where there have been multiple significantly challenging events such as terrorist attacks, natural disasters and the Covid-19 pandemic.

In discussing the above issues I have recognised the difficulties and dilemmas facing leaders in finding solutions to 'wicked' problems. The public and political pressure for swift action is, in my experience, a barrier to developing solutions that fall outside of the norm or that have precedent established by previous events. The inability to prepare or foresee future issues, leads us as leaders to fall back on our experiences rather than thinking and acting differently to create new forms of knowledge within a community of practice as described by Brown *et al*. (2010).

In terms of my own approach to challenging issues, I have acknowledged that my actions have ranged from those of a collaborative leader to, on occasion, adopting an autocratic leadership style who on each occasion has been driven to do the right things. Exploring my experiences and actions through a different lens (autoethnography and transdisciplinarity) has challenged my leadership assumptions which, has in turn impacted on my operational approach. In the Capstone chapter on page 98, I will describe how my new learning has manifested itself when facing complex challenges during my involvement in the Homes for Ukraine programme.

Community Resilience

Community resilience has extraordinary value as a strategy for disaster readiness. Unlike many stressors, disasters happen to entire communities. Members are exposed together and must recover together. At minimum, if their aim is to build collective resilience, communities must develop economic resources, reduce risk and resource inequities, and attend conscientiously to their areas of greatest social vulnerability. They must engage local people in every step of the mitigation process, create organizational linkages and relationships in advance of disasters, and boost and protect naturally occurring social supports. They must plan—but also plan for not having a plan, which means that community organizations must appreciate flexibility, develop decision-making skills, and cultivate trusted sources of information (Longstaff and Yang, 2008). In a nutshell, disaster readiness is about social change (Norris *et al.,* 2007).

In the quote above, Longstaff, Yang and Norris, have recognised the importance of community resilience when preparing for emergency events. I will provide further evidence throughout this chapter to articulate why I agree with their assertion and the tensions I encountered during the development of my public works, namely my assurance review and the Resilience Standards for London. One of my greatest challenges throughout my public works, in addition to convincing the thirty-three borough councils across London that elected councillors should be actively engaged and involved in emergency planning and resilience activities, was to convince the councils that 'Community Resilience' should be an essential element of an organisational resilience framework and have a dedicated standard within the resilience standards for London.

From my perspective, the inclusion of the community resilience standard was essential for the improvement in community engagement, community involvement and the contribution to local decision making following the Grenfell tragedy. It is well documented throughout the official Grenfell enquiry and from community groups representing the displaced residents and families of the deceased, that the Grenfell community had raised concerns on numerous occasions about the safety of the renovations within the tower block and had felt their voice was repeatedly ignored.

For each of the resilience standards, I set out a desired outcome. What was it that the standards could help councils, in conjunction with their partners and communities, to achieve? For the community resilience standard, I developed the following outcome:

The Local Authority has a strategic and coordinated approach to activity that enables individuals, businesses, community networks and voluntary organisations to behave in a resilient way and act to support other members of the public. Community resilience considerations and the voluntary capabilities of all these partners are integrated into existing emergency management plans (Ruth, 2019).

It was difficult to capture my vision of what a resilient community should look like, in just a few lines, therefore it was important to capture throughout the rest of the standard what I envisaged was good and leading practice. This became even more challenging given there was no existing legislation focussed on community resilience as there was for many of the other standards. For example, the Civil Contingencies Act of 2004 clearly states what is required, in law, of an organisation in terms of its business continuity arrangements. The Act requires a public organisation to maintain plans to ensure it can continue to deliver their functions in the event of an emergency, as far as is reasonably practicable and this duty relates to all of its priority functions (II, 2004).

There is no such legislation that relates to how a council will involve its community in matters of emergency planning and resilience to ensure the collective group of residents, businesses, community networks and voluntary organisations come together to form a resilient community. This issue made my task all the more difficult. I had no legal duty to point to which stated a council had to undertake a specific activity and therefore it was for me to persuade and influence the leaders and emergency planning professionals that listening, collaborating, and involving local people and organisations in its resilience activities was 'the right thing to do'. Additionally, the practice of involving citizens in emergency planning and resilience activities was absent across London's local government. Consequently, there prevailed a lack of understanding, amongst resilience experts, of the citizen's preparedness role within a resilient community highlighted by Uscher-Pines *et al*. (2012) leading to a subsequent omission in policies, plans and performance management frameworks as observed by Chandra *et al*. (2011).

To help me in my aim to engage councils and to ensure they were taking responsibility of each resilience standard, I incorporated what I call 'descriptors' at the end of each standard. A more detailed explanation about the descriptor can be found in my introduction on page 6. The reason for designing and including a descriptor at the end of each standard was to enable local councils to feel comfortable about where they are on the development journey and to easily assess progress. As the descriptors are not 'judgements' or part of any scoring mechanism, the theory is the council, a peer

review or assessment team would not be led into categorising the organisation as developing, established or advanced but would use the descriptor to help them to constructively advise on how the organisation could improve in any given activity. Given I had set out a vision for success, included detail on how to demonstrate good or leading practice and additionally described the journey from a developing organisation to an advanced one, I believed this was a solid foundation for an organisation to improve its relationship with the community.

It is fair to say there were a number of councils who wanted the standard amended or removed. Looking back at my consultation report that I presented to the Local Authorities Panel, I made the following observations and recommendation at the time:

> There was a view by one sub-region that the 'Community Resilience' standard should be classified as an emerging standard which would allow councils time to develop their approach to community resilience. There was a concern that some councils would not be in a position to meet the criteria and would therefore be seen as 'failing' against this standard. There was also recognition that the voluntary sector has a key role to play here and therefore this standard should be delivered in conjunction with other partners.

> **Recommendation** – Community resilience is a priority for councils across London. The London Resilience Forum has recognised this and has set up a steering group, to accelerate this work, chaired by the Chief Executive of Hammersmith and Fulham and attended by a wide range of stakeholders including the Deputy Mayor. To enable each council to progress its community resilience work it is recommended that this standard remains and that the council engages a broad network of stakeholders, including the voluntary sector, to assist with its development (Ruth, 2019a).

My recommendation was accepted by the Local Authorities Panel and the 'Community Resilience' standard is part of the assurance framework for London's local authorities. However, it was surprising and disheartening to me, at least for a short period, to see that some councils, albeit predominantly from the same sub-region[17] within London, had taken the view that unless a successful assessment was made against a standard then it should either not be included or should be seen as an emerging area of the assurance framework.

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[17] London's local authorities are divided into six sub-regions for emergency planning and resilience activities.

Reservations were expressed by other people operating at various levels throughout various organisations as to the inclusion of a 'Community Resilience' standard. However, through constructive and continuous dialogue, I was able to influence their thinking and seek agreement that community resilience should be an important part of a local councils work in preparing for, responding to and recovering from a major emergency event.

Following the Grenfell tragedy, there was a significant response from the community; this came from individuals, businesses, and the voluntary sector. People wanted to participate (Pfefferbaum, Van Horn and Pfefferbaum, 2015) and help their fellow citizens, whether it be through donations of food, money, or in a more practical sense through organising fund-raising events, setting up food collection and distribution programmes or helping people with basic needs such as clothing and accommodation. There were a number of organisations set up immediately following the tragedy to support people in the local community, some of whom were set up by and continue to support survivors and bereaved families. Organisations such as Grenfell United[18] continue to have a powerful and influential voice in the community and the Grenfell Foundation which, according to Grenfell United (2022) is a charitable organisation set up in 2018 at the request of bereaved and survivors from the Grenfell Tower fire.

It is my opinion, supported by Norris *et al*. (2007) and Pfefferbaum, Van Horn and Pfefferbaum (2015) that individuals and businesses should have a voice and a stake in the resilience of their own community. They are the people who live, work, socialise and form the culture within their locality and there is no one 'forum' better placed to have the knowledge and experience to enable that community to grow.

Although some councils were reluctant to include community resilience in the assurance framework due to the prospect of being seen to fail to meet the standard, there was another contributory factor that was discussed in numerous forums. This was the difficulty in defining a community and what community resilience constitutes. I had experienced this issue before when I developed an early intervention strategy for West Sussex County Council (Safer, Stronger and Resilient Communities). Local councillors with responsibility for relatively small divisions, who represent a few thousand people, struggled to understand how a diverse and relatively large geographical area could be galvanised into a community and therefore become more resilient.

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[18] Grenfell United a group of survivors and bereaved families from of the Grenfell tower fire, working together for our community and campaigning for safe homes, justice and change. We were founded in the days after the fire. We are a registered family association and have an elected committee that seeks to represent survivors and bereaved families. (Grenfell United, 2022).

In their article in the American Journal of Community Psychology, Norris *et al.* (2007) identified 21 definitions of resilience including eight definitions for community resilience. A google search reveals millions of results for 'community'. It is therefore unsurprising there is difficulty in agreeing a term that multiple organisations can agree on.

Notwithstanding the complexities of agreeing terminology, for me it is the principle of interacting and engaging with a diverse group of people in a locality or setting and who are linked in some way that should be the important starting point for councils. The size and complexity of a community is irrelevant initially; a community will grow and develop with the right conditions and a key enabler in creating these conditions is the local governing body and its leadership, the local council.

I acknowledge there are numerous definitions for 'community' and that views will differ considerably in terms of agreeing a single term. After reading a significant number of definitions, the following is, to me, a helpful guide to what a community is:

> "A group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings" (MacQueen *et al.,* 2001, p. 1936).

Similarly, the definition of 'community resilience' espoused by Bulbulia *et al.* (2004) is favoured by me for it captures the preventative elements of resilience whereas many other definitions focus on the response and recovery phases of a crisis or emergency and, more specifically, on self-reliance and survival, rather than on active engagement in prevention strategies and pre-planning:

"We define community resilience as including those features of a community that in general promote the safety of its residents and serve as a specific buffer against injury and violence risks, and more generally, adversity" (Bulbulia *et al.,* 2004, p. 391). Bulbulia *et al*. (2004) propose further detail of the key dimensions they see as forming a composite measure for community resilience including community networks and relationships and the presence of community structures and leadership.

It is my view and experience, supported by existing research, that a resilient community cannot exist or operate effectively without the support, encouragement and perhaps permission of the local council (community structures and leadership) (Bulbulia *et al.,* 2004). Good governance and visionary leadership, which is responsive and accessible (Goodman *et al.,* 1998) are required to build trust with

the community through effective and ongoing communication (Longstaff and Yang, 2008). The council is able to cut through some of the bureaucracy to help a community to help itself. The governance structures are able to approve decisions and give permission, the leadership (both political and managerial) create the environment and affect the organisational culture to support the mobilisation of community leaders, champions, and volunteers, all of which are enabled to come together for the greater good.

The Government published a Community Resilience Development Framework in 2019. The framework was developed by the Cabinet Office and given the subject matter, this would have undoubtedly been developed by the Civil Contingencies Secretariat, a representative of which I had invited on to the external stakeholder group when I was developing my public works. The Civil Contingency Secretariat were very supportive of my work and presented at the launch of the standards, at my request, at the Guildhall in London.

Some of the work I have included in my Resilience Standards for London is set out in the Government's framework including the need to engage individuals, businesses, and the voluntary sector in developing a resilient community. The Government's framework sets out the strategic approaches in six steps for Local Resilience Forums and emergency responders to develop community resilience. These are as follows:

1. Identify community networks, characteristics, risks and prioritise support
2. Align responder and community networks' understanding of risk and capabilities
3. Enable resilient behaviours
4. Enable community led social action
5. Partner with voluntary capabilities
6. Review community preparedness and impact of activities

(Cabinet Office, 2019).

I believe there are weaknesses within this approach that will miss out key stakeholders within the community resilience development process. The framework is specifically aimed at local resilience forums and emergency responders. Although local councils are a statutory partner of local resilience forums, the primary function of the forum is to prepare for and respond to emergency events. Many of the core functions of a local council which are important enablers for a resilient community will not

be discussed in these forums. These include planning, regeneration, economic development, and community engagement.

To enable and support the development of a resilient community requires open and engaging leadership and long-term thinking (Baker and Refsgaard, 2007). Enabling organisations, which include the Local Resilience Forum, emergency responders and local councils, need to look beyond the immediate and short-term and should engage with the community to assess where they want to be in five, ten and fifteen years' time and beyond.

Local councils have the systems, structures and responsibilities in place to engage, involve and represent local people across multiple communities as discussed by Pfefferbaum *et al*. (2005, cited in Norris *et al.,* 2007), that is what democratically elected politicians are elected to do. This is why I felt, and still feel, so strongly about the role of elected councillors in an assurance framework for emergency planning and resilience and why the inclusion of the community resilience standard is inextricably linked to the governance and leadership of an organisation.

I stated earlier that I believed there were weaknesses in the government's approach to community resilience. Of course, the six steps set out by the Cabinet Office are perfectly valid for the intended audience, however, there are other practical steps that should be part of the council's way of working that encourage the development of a resilient community and the inclusion of the residents and businesses of that community.

Thirty years of working within the public sector have shown me that public organisations can, on occasion and on particular issues, be seen as bureaucratic, unlistening and inaccessible to the public. The discussion on whether communities are truly included and engaged in the development and design of their community is contentious. Local councils will assert that processes and systems are in place to ensure the community plays an active role in the shaping of a local area whilst others may argue that formal systems such as planning arrangements, local strategic partnerships and community networks are merely an extension of bureaucracy and bureaucratic controls as discussed by Fenwick, Miller and McTavish (2012).

I believe the relationship between public sector organisations has developed significantly in recent years and many are sharing ideas, plans, resources and are pooling funding to support shared objectives. A Local Resilience Forum is an exemplar in bringing together organisations to support the

planning, response and recovery for major events. However, forums such as these will not bring about changes to organisational approaches in terms of involving communities in co-design to support their community resilience.

Involving residents, businesses and the voluntary sector in resilience activities must go beyond consultation on strategic emergency plans or a voluntary organisation having a minor role in a multi-agency exercise; it requires a fundamental shift in how local councils partner with the community. It needs to recognise the vested interest of the local population and the long-term investment the community has in its area's well-being. The diverse nature of communities leads to a complex network of influence (Norris *et al.,* 2007), capability and capacity. This may manifest itself through a resident who has lived in the community for many years, a business that has an historical foothold on the high street or a voluntary body that has been founded to support and look after local people.

Given my experience in working for local councils, I recognise the difficulty in this paradigm shift. The Grenfell tragedy has highlighted some of the weaknesses in the current council/community relationship and if councils fail to anticipate the need for future change, adapt and expand their knowledge (Baker and Refsgaard, 2007), I am sceptical whether the current or future arrangements will change outcomes significantly to prevent a reoccurrence.

Affluence and influence

Before I discuss how councils may wish to develop their relationship with the community, I wanted to offer a brief comment about whether the Grenfell Fire would have occurred in a tower block in a more affluent area of Kensington and Chelsea. I do this in the context of developing a resilient community, recognising that the voices of the Grenfell residents, previous to the fire on issues of safety in the block, were unheard. Grenfell Tower was in one of the most deprived areas in the country, yet its residents could see some of the most affluent areas in the country from their living room windows as observed by Barr (2017).

There have been numerous publications regarding the link between fire deaths and deprivation and my personal experience within the fire and rescue service tells me that people who live in deprived areas are more likely to be killed or injured as a result of a fire in their homes compared to people living in more affluent areas. Considering the multiple effects of deprivation, the Government's indices of deprivation set out the seven domains of deprivation as income, employment, education,

health (including premature death), crime, barriers to housing and services and the living environment (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019a).

The above inequalities are being tackled by numerous agencies in an attempt to narrow the inequalities gap and to give people greater opportunities in life. The reasons as to why such inequalities exist are well documented but the ability to solve these issues are incredibly difficult. It is outside of the scope of this work to research whether the inclusion, engagement and participation of the Grenfell residents, in the years leading up to the fire, would have prevented its occurrence or whether the support and engagement for residents in more affluent areas is any different but it does concern me that there is a relationship between affluence and influence. It would be interesting to consider my model 'Developing Community Resilience' (Model 1, discussed in chapter 9) when addressing this point and to determine whether the more affluent residents of a community have greater access to information and people, whether they are listened to, have their issues resolved and have more influence and say over the future development of their community and environment.

Intuitively, I would suggest there is a significant difference when comparing the affluent from the deprived in terms of developing a resilient community, with a significant barrier being the elements contained in Model 1 presented on page 90. Given the levels of deprivation across many communities in London, the need for local councils to invest in the time, effort and funding to support the development of resilient communities is critically important and is why I believed it was a priority to ensure the 'Community Resilience' standard was included in my public works.

In Chapter 7, Governance Arrangements, Political Leadership, I recognised the pressures on local councils in delivering solutions to complex problems. As observed by Baker and Refsgaard (2007), developing a resilient community is a long-term challenge which can only be achieved through open and engaging leadership and the expansion of existing knowledge. Current engagement with communities is still, in most cases, through formal routes such as consultation exercises that fail to recognise the complex network of communities.

If organisations and their leaders want to address the 'wicked' issues previously discussed, they require the vision to see a change in their approach is required. The ability to plan for the long-term including acceptance that the foreseeable risks will materialise, is essential. This approach needs to be widespread across the organisational culture so everyone is receptive to new ideas through listening, challenging and co-designing new solutions to complex problems.

I have concluded that understanding the views, beliefs, values and aspirations of others, including those who have, historically, been outside of their sphere of interaction as discussed by Martin (2017) is required to meet the needs of societies complex challenges. This cultural shift and behavioural change across stakeholders can develop trust and knowledge and ultimately deliver a different outcome as explored by Boulton, Allen and Bowman (2015).

The Government's seven domains of deprivation set out on page 85 could be seen as examples of the 'wicked' problems previously discussed by others such as Brown *et al*. (2010). The difficulty in addressing these challenges requires new thinking; the creation of new learning beyond accepted norms (Maguire, 2018) and through a transdisciplinary approach demonstrated in the real world example on page 33 by Nyang'au *et al*. (2018).

Summary and critical reflection of my findings

Writing this context statement has been an incredibly thought provoking, rewarding and challenging process. It has given me the opportunity to reflect on my professional journey and to think about the events throughout my life that have had a significant impact on how I have developed and shaped as a leader and a manager. The thinking, the research, and the very act of writing about my learning journey, that has shaped me as a leader through many years of diverse experiences, has been incredibly enlightening.

This doctorate enquiry has not only enabled me to critically examine the experiences and events that have shaped my public works, it has also facilitated the answering of previously unanswered questions, questions about why I have continued to strive to achieve more in terms of academic qualifications and why I have needed the recognition of peers. I believe the questions have been answered to such an extent that I feel a sense of closure in that I have accepted 'who I am' and 'why I am', particularly in relation to my professional field. In terms of moving forward, this 'enlightenment' will, I believe, prepare me for the challenges yet to come and the decisions yet to be taken. I know more about myself and what has shaped my personal values, thinking and decision making.

My professional journey to date has been interesting, exciting and rewarding. I have had the privilege of working with, and meeting some of the very best and talented people across local and national government. The talent, knowledge and experience available to local government gives me enormous optimism that the sector will thrive in the future and will take the opportunity to seek out alternative approaches to the delivery of their services. This opportunity should extend to how local councils engage and interact with the citizens and businesses they are fortunate to represent and to develop collaborative partnerships across the community system where people coalesce in tackling the complex and challenging problems that will inevitably face them but where people emerge with a unified solution. It is my intention to be part of that unified system and below I will set out my contribution to a safer, stronger and more resilient community.

The way ahead, a contribution to a future council approach

Thirty-three London borough councils have now implemented my public works into their organisations. In reality, this means the Resilience Standards for London Local Government have been integrated into the working practices of services and departments across each organisation. Chief

Executives have taken ownership and agreed to adopt the assurance framework, committing people and funding to the process. There is an overarching governance body in place to maintain momentum, share learning and to drive improvements across London's resilience activities.

Elected councillors have received training on the Standards and have a published accompanying handbook that defines their roles and responsibilities in the field of emergency planning and resilience activities. There is a four-year national peer review programme in place, being led by the Local Government Association that engages the best political and senior executive leaders from across the country to assess each organisation against the standards; each review will produce a report and improvement plan to be signed off by the council's leadership.

I will continue to be involved with London's borough councils on their improvement journey including a three-year evaluation and update of the resilience standards, ongoing training and awareness for the national peer review teams and the assessment of councils as part of the peer review teams themselves.

An enormous amount has already been achieved but there is more to be done. Councils need to do more to engage with their communities on emergency planning and resilience activities. They should demonstrate an openness and transparency by publicly stating their intentions and limitations in planning for, responding to and recovering from a major emergency event. This should include a dialogue, with the community and partners, on what the gaps in their capabilities are and who is best placed to fill those gaps. Solutions should be co-designed, implemented and tested to prove they work and to identify learning.

Once councils have completed their self-assessment against the standards, this should be published to complement the public dialogue and to facilitate the development of appropriate solutions. Reports, recommendations and improvement plans should be published on the council's website and form part of ongoing discussions about how to improve the partnership's approach to development and improvement.

Possibly the biggest challenge for councils, will be to develop their approach to community resilience. The first step has been taken in that councils have accepted my contention that community resilience should be part of their assurance framework. This acceptance followed over 18-months of development and consultation which entailed challenging, constructive, and positive discussions and

each council should be applauded for reaching the right decision. Throughout this context statement, I have articulated the challenges facing councils in engaging and involving their communities and I continue to recognise and understand those challenges. I will maintain my offer of support and advice to assist in the transition to a more inclusive community approach.

As a starting point, I have designed the following model, 'Developing Community Resilience'.
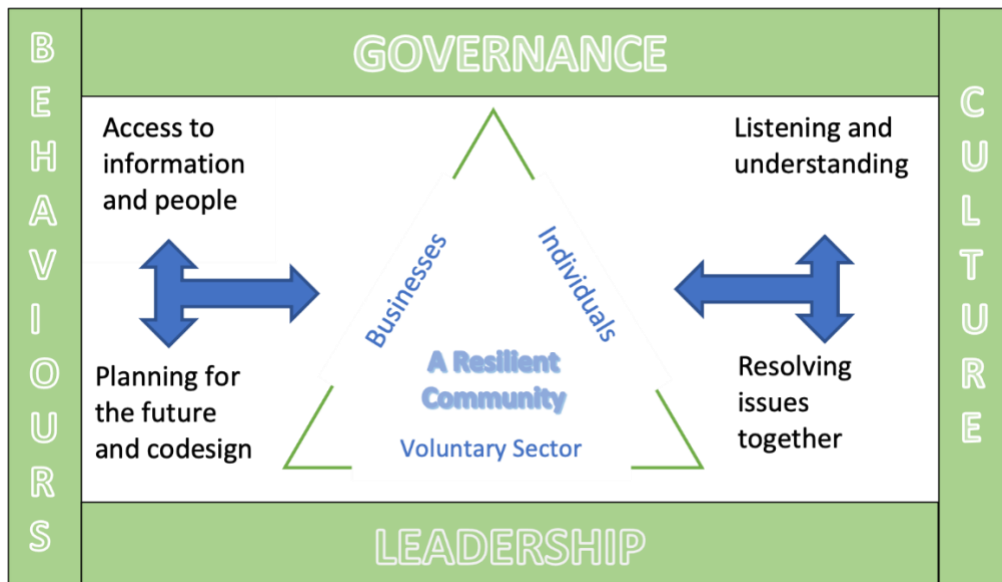
Model 1 – Developing Community Resilience. Sean Ruth, 2021

The model recognises the opportunity to analyse existing approaches to encouraging and supporting citizen preparedness to determine its appropriateness and relevance (Uscher-Pines *et al.,* 2012). The model highlights the need for a community to have **access to information and people** (Pfefferbaum, Van Horn and Pfefferbaum, 2015) beyond the data included in consultation papers or performance data or the formal meetings that exist as part of the current local democratic processes. This is about building relationships through knowledge and shared interests and ensuring local people have a meaningful input, through discussion, decision making and action.

Thankfully, tragedies such at the Grenfell fire are rare in the U.K. and therefore the interests of the businesses, individuals, groups and the voluntary sector will be diverse, depending on the current or existing circumstances, particularly where emergency planning and resilience issues are concerned. This gives the local authority an opportunity to understand the detail of the needs of its local community and to work with it in partnership. However, any successful partnership will need to demonstrate they are **listening and understanding** the concerns, needs, priorities and views of all

stakeholders and reaching mutual understanding as observed by Cottrell (1976, cited in Norris *et al.,* 2007) and (Wildridge *et al.,* 2004).

My view is that many organisations will put in place processes to hear what people have to say rather than to understand the issue and act upon it. This view is supported by the multitude of on-line forums and consultations that take place daily across the country and when politicians and council officials do bring together the public, it is generally in mass gatherings with pre-determined time limited agendas which can stifle discussion and be a barrier to understanding.

The third element of my model is **resolving issues together** (Israel *et al.,* 1994). Satisfying multiple parties in many situations is a difficult proposition for local authorities, where a solution might not be acceptable to everyone or deliverable in practical or financial terms. However, it is well documented that the residents of Grenfell Tower had raised their concerns many times regarding the safety of the building without a satisfactory resolution. Could the outcome have been different if the local authority and the Tenant Management Organisation[19] had **listened** to a representative group, **understood** their issues and **resolved** them together in partnership? Sadly, it has taken the loss of 72 lives to form such a representative group.

Finding the right solutions to every problem within a community is an almost impossible task. People's views differ and can contradict each other leaving local councils in an invidious position leading to disengagement and withdrawal. This is where having a long-term view and a vision of the intended outcome is important; can a partnership coalesce to deliver an outcome rather than fracture over the detail on how to achieve it?

The model has been developed in the context of emergency planning and resilience; planning for, responding to and recovering from a civil emergency, although it could be utilised in other activity areas too. In this context, I am proposing that a local authority and local resilience forum, actively engage their community in the planning phase and involve them in co-designing response and recovery options. The emergency services (fire, police and ambulance services) are normally the first emergency responders on scene. These services are generally reactive services and will attend after being notified of an incident which means there is a delay between the start of an emergency, such as a fire, and the attendance of emergency personnel, the fire and rescue service. It is during this

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[19] At the time of the Grenfell Tower fire, all of the properties owned by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Council were management by a Tenant Management Organisation. The contract was terminated following the fire.

delay period where buildings are damaged, people's possessions are destroyed, and people are killed or injured. This is the reason why, during my professional fire service career, I believed in the prevention strategy I developed for West Sussex County Council.

The fourth element of my model is an attempt to build in this preventative approach across the community/local authority partnership and also to enable a community to **plan, in partnership, for future events** and **co-design** preparatory, response and recovery options to mitigate the effects of an emergency. This practice requires a long-term approach beyond the tenure of the current political and managerial leadership. It relies on behavioural change amongst individuals and cultural change within organisations which enables people to participate, lead, find solutions and make decisions to achieve good outcomes (Goodman *et al.,* 1998).

If the acceptance of a 'Community Resilience Standard' within my public works was difficult, which it was, then I suspect a further shift to provide the community with greater access to information, people and resources to co-design and plan will be met with scepticism and resistance. However, every journey requires a first step to be taken; success will come to those community leaders and partners who are prepared to take it.

The model is mainly concerned with the 'what' and the 'who' in developing a resilient community. There is no simple process for developing the 'how', but I believe my 'Community Resilience' standard provides a good starting point. The standard includes guidance on how a local council can begin to support a resilient community through the provision of information, identification of community networks, defining roles for community and voluntary partners and arrangements for supporting community offers of support and response, which are often spontaneous and through unaffiliated groups as seen following the Grenfell tragedy.

Once a council has developed a solid foundation (good practice) towards a resilient community, I have provided further guidance, in my public works, to develop a more sophisticated and long-term approach (leading practice) including, amongst other deliverables:

- Regular outreach sessions, workshops and conferences for individuals, businesses and community networks to share leading practice, provide training, build relationships and enable networking

- Provision of physical resources, assets and training for community networks and volunteers
- A process for identifying, mapping and regularly assessing the resilience of communities at highest risk to inform priorities for targeted communications and interventions (Ruth, 2019).

Although supporting the development of a resilient community is a strategic and long-term aim, the detail of identifying, including and working with community networks, leaders and individuals in a permissive and collegiate way is key to that success. This is a view promoted as far back as the 1990's where the interconnectedness between communities and leadership/decision making organisations (local councils) was recognised as important in developing community capacity and resilience. Israel *et al*. (1994, p. 152) was discussing then, the need to share information and power, utilize cooperative decision-making processes, and involve the community in the design and implementation toward mutually defined goals.

In 2011, in the USA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) produced a document entitled "A Whole Community Approach to Emergency Management: Principles, themes and pathways for action". FEMA described this document as "a philosophical approach on how to think about conducting emergency management" (FEMA, 2011, p. 3). It contained three principles that followed a national engagement exercise including understanding and meeting the actual needs of the whole community, engaging and empowering and strengthening what works well in communities on a daily basis (FEMA, 2011). FEMA concluded the document was a starting point and recognised the challenges in shifting public thinking on how to plan, respond to and recover from emergencies.

Further research of FEMA's website and published documents reveal this work is still ongoing and there is much more to be done. Evidence from previous disasters continually identified lessons learned and avoidable mistakes. A basic internet search reveals over fifty significant disasters in the USA since the publication of FEMA's report, resulting in approximately 8000 deaths. There will, unquestionably, be lessons identified where the preventative activities, including the involvement of community assets, could have avoided the loss of life. My point here is not to critique the work of FEMA nor to evaluate the disasters that have occurred but simply to highlight the scale of work required to embed community resilience as a systems-level concept, with the associated complexities and considerations that comprise a community (Pfefferbaum, Van Horn and Pfefferbaum, 2015).

The development of a simple model may be a relatively small step in persuading and influencing councils, across London and elsewhere, to take public responsibility through their governance and leadership structures, organisational culture and individual behaviours framework, however, it is my hope this small step could be a catalyst for increased and widespread dialogue and action.

This doctorate programme has enabled me to look at a council's approach to emergency planning and resilience from a different and more holistic perspective. It has given me the opportunity to explore my own life's journey, my thoughts, emotions and experiences to see how my personal attributes and experiences, acquired through a private or professional context, have directly influenced my work to date and the confidence that they can positively influence my future endeavours.

The broader reading and research has reinforced the importance of the role of leaders in shaping the organisational culture and giving permission to those who work for it to deliver what is right for its community. Additionally, the leaders, both managerial and political, are effectively the gatekeepers of their organisations, able to determine who is engaged, what they are engaged in and how they can contribute and influence the future plans within their own community. This process of enablement and engagement is manifested through the culture of the organisation and the behaviour of the people who lead it alongside the decision making, oversight and scrutiny role of the community leaders.

This new perspective has developed my thinking from a specific focus of delivering on a commission for the local government organisations in London, e.g., my assurance review, the Resilience Standards for London etc, to shaping an organisational and resilience approach for my wider industry and perhaps those outside of it, whether they are in the public, private or voluntary sector.

My first consideration is the outcome we want to achieve across any given sector. Clearly, we want good outcomes for people; a safer living environment, the ability to carry on working in severe weather conditions, a safe road network, a thriving and prosperous community where young people can develop and be successful. We want our own organisation, as well as our partners, to deliver the best possible services which are accessible and affordable; we want our community to be engaged and to see us as trustworthy and credible.

To enable our organisations to deliver those excellent services, we want our staff to believe in the vison for the future, live by its values and embrace a culture of learning, innovation, openness and

inclusivity. This culture leads to ownership across the organisation, people taking responsibility for the risks and issues in their area of expertise whilst supporting colleagues across the system. The day-to-day business is continuously improved whilst people strive to achieve leading practice. In short, emergency planning and resilience becomes everyone's business.

To support the conversation of emergency planning and resilience becoming everyone's business, I have taken the learning from my public works, developed my ideas through this doctorate programme and have produced the following organisational and resilience model.
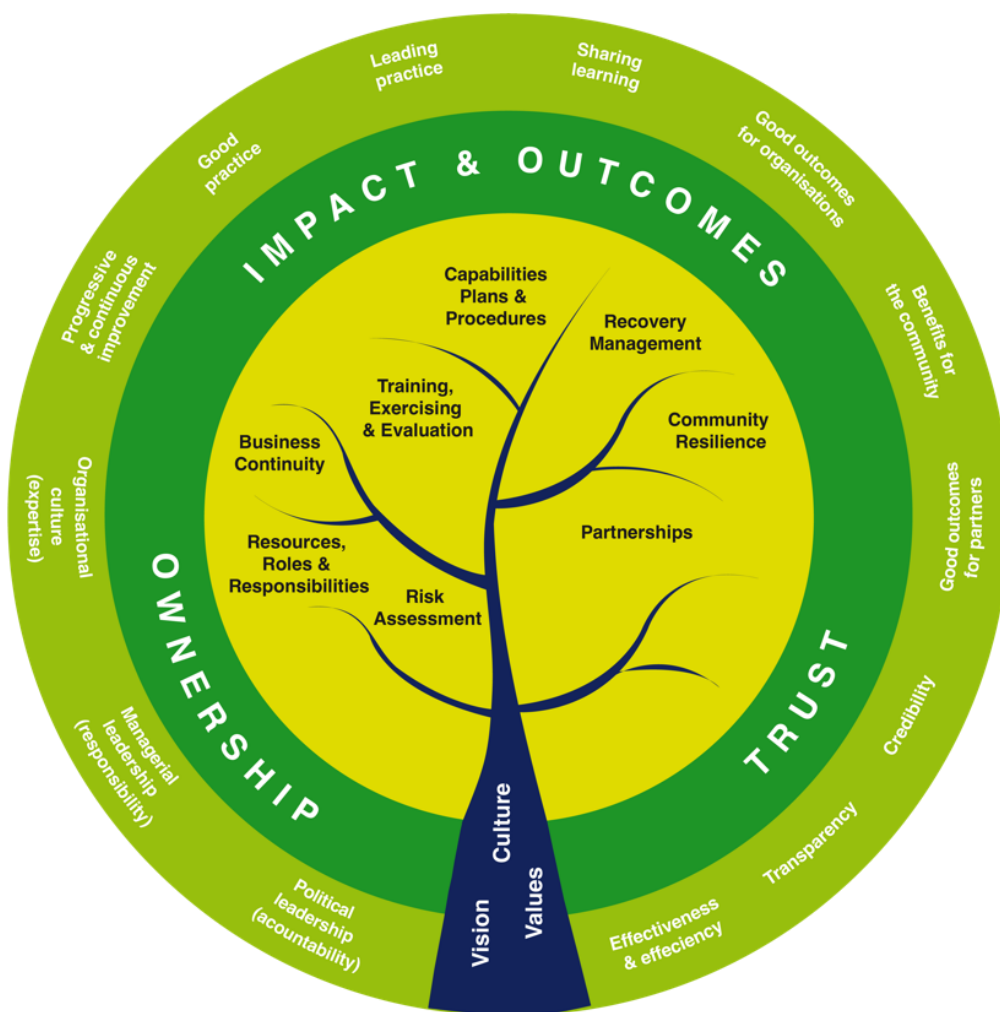
Organisational Resilience and Assurance

Model 2 – Organisational Resilience and Assurance. Sean Ruth, 2021

The model above is a development on my public works, specifically the Assurance Review and the Resilience Standards for London. I envisage the model being the foundation of my future business assignments and I hope to apply it across other public and private sector organisations. In the short term, I will be using it during my future work with the borough councils across London, to further embed the resilience standards across each organisation and to integrate the working practices of specific teams across emergency planning and resilience activities as follows:

Ownership

Councils should utilise the model to confirm ownership of the resilience standards at appropriate levels across the organisation. The political leadership of each council is the accountable body responsible for decision making, challenge and scrutiny. Political leaders should hold managerial leaders to account and satisfy themselves that the standards are an integral part of the vision for the organisation and are being integrated across teams and with partners and other stakeholders.

Managerial leaders will be responsible for ensuring each team is embedding the principles of emergency planning and resilience which means they anticipate future events, assess risk, develop mitigation and response plans (including business continuity arrangements) and give priority to the recovery arrangements. Managerial leaders will be responsible for ensuring their teams engage with appropriate stakeholders including internal council teams, partners and the community they interact with. Leaders will be supported by the emergency planning teams, who are the experts in this field, providing advice and guidance to the council which supports a developing body of knowledge and a move towards a culture where emergency planning and resilience is everyone's business.

Trust

A collective approach to ownership, as described above, should lead to a more effective and efficient emergency planning regime. Organisational capacity, to deal with emergency planning issues, should increase as teams become more responsible for the activities within their own areas of expertise and form networks with external stakeholders. The engagement and inclusion of partners and the local community in preparing for, responding to and recovering from an emergency event will demonstrate transparency and build credibility.

Impact and Outcomes

Accepting ownership and building trust within the council and with external stakeholders is key to delivering good outcomes. A drive to achieving continuous improvement whilst identifying and sharing learning with each other should achieve benefits for the whole emergency planning community including partners and citizens. Evaluating the impact of emergency planning activities and implementing shared learning should raise the standard of emergency planning preparedness.

The Organisational Resilience and Assurance Model (Model 2 above) represents an opportunity for people and organisations to collaborate towards a collective endeavour, a safer, stronger and more resilient community. It is also an opportunity for the collective to adopt a different approach to emergency planning and resilience. I believe there is an alternative approach for organisations to adopt in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from major emergency events. However, it requires great leadership and governance, the involvement of people from a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences; it requires ownership and trust with a spotlight on great outcomes and positive impact. It is a transdisciplinary approach that focuses on the legacy the 'collective' want to leave society for years to come.

Capstone - Homes for Ukraine

The submission of my context statement was a significant milestone in my life's journey; it was the culmination of many years experiences including a fulfilling professional career, academic research and the personal successes and challenges I was fortunate to have enjoyed. These combined experiences have shaped the person I am today and the professional leader I have become. I will continue to develop as a leader and my doctorate journey has played a key role in that development.

The opportunity to apply my new knowledge, skills and experience to a real-world problem arrived soon after the submission, as I embarked on a new contract with East Sussex County Council where I was commissioned to set up the Homes for Ukraine scheme. The scheme is the first of its kind in the UK and was introduced as a result of the war in Ukraine which has led to thousands of people fleeing their homes to find safety in other countries. The scheme works on the principle of host families providing accommodation for refugees with the support of their local council and other stakeholders. East Sussex County Council was to be the lead authority for the scheme across the county and I was appointed as the lead officer to design, develop and implement the arrangements from scratch, given the limited central government guidance available at the time of inception.

My starting brief was limited and I initially had a team of two to support me. I developed the vision and strategy, including the governance arrangements for the scheme, which has involved co-designing services with key stakeholders. I have established the partnership arrangements to deliver innovative solutions to complex problems; this includes a model to move from sponsorship arrangements to independent living with three strategic priorities; access to English language provision, employment and housing opportunities.

I immediately recognised that the scheme was incredibly complex with multiple challenges for numerous groups of people. There were over 1600 people due to arrive from Ukraine, or a third country, to settle with strangers (their hosts) in an unfamiliar environment. They arrived with limited possessions and many were traumatised from their experiences. The receiving hosts would require significant help and support to enable their guests to settle into their homes and the community. There would be many services and organisations responsible for various aspects of this support; these included the county council, district councils (responsible for housing and benefit payments), the NHS, voluntary sector organisations and the emergency services who would be responsible for conducting safety checks.

It was clear to me that the traditional approach of individual organisations providing their respective services would be inadequate in delivering the quality of support required. The challenges we encountered would be multi-faceted, complex and required a collective endeavour which would move the organisations to a new way of working.

My experiences and learning through my doctorate journey had a profound impact on my approach to the Homes for Ukraine scheme. In writing my context statement I used transdisciplinarity and autoethnography as my organising frameworks which has developed my knowledge and approach to workplace activities. I was able to draw on my new knowledge to combine elements of both in implementing this unique programme. I wanted to ensure each individual and organisation involved was committed to a collaborative approach involving many disciplines and that they were prepared to work together to achieve a shared outcome. Equally important was to involve the people who we were there to support; the Ukrainian people arriving in East Sussex. The success of the programme would be dependent on a shared understanding of our (individuals, organisations and Ukrainian refugees) experiences, beliefs, values and aspirations so that we could collectively design the future services and support together. Having a collective understanding of the real-world opportunities and constraints, whether these were political, cultural or societal was incredibly important in this endeavour.

To support the transition from a traditional local authority approach, I developed two key groups to co-design our programme of support and to develop solutions to the myriad of unprecedented issues that presented themselves over the following months. My first objective was to establish a partnership group which consisted of multiple partners. Together we developed our terms of reference, strategic priorities and the operational structure required to achieve success. We learned about each other's experiences, knowledge and skills to identify the most appropriate response. Each partner had an equal voice and we made decisions collectively, finding compromise where required. This group was incredibly important through the initial stages of the scheme when it was necessary to set up systems and processes to ensure people received immediate support. Over the longer term, we developed our strategic priorities to support people from hosting arrangements to independent living through education, employments and housing.

Once the partnership group was established it was essential to engage those people who would, traditionally have been seen as the recipients of the support and services we provided; in this project they were seen as co-designers. This would ensure support was designed to meet their needs initially

and longer-term to understand the challenges and opportunities in transitioning to independent living. To support this approach, I developed the Ukraine Guests Advisory Panel which consisted of a diverse range of Ukrainians with different lived experiences.

The panel was the embodiment of the model I had developed through my context statement.
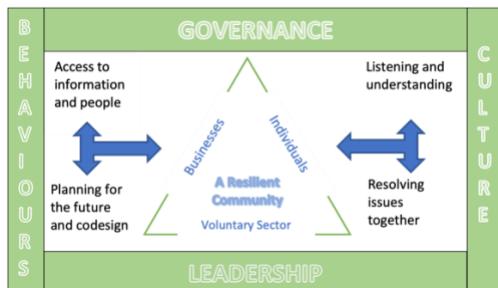
Developing Community Resilience. Sean Ruth, 2021

The panel had open access to data and information that helped us to develop the programme. We listened to their concerns, ideas and life stories so we could better understand their culture, experiences and aspirations and the obstacles to opportunities they were seeking for their families. The issues encountered were numerous and included limited access to employment due to language barriers and the absence of documents such as criminal record checks and national insurance numbers, alongside the inability to move to independent accommodation due to a lack of credit history or savings, for deposits. Through this group we understood the issues and resolved them by engaging the relevant organisations (national and local) and inviting them to the panel meetings so they could hear first-hand the difficulties and potential solutions. We understood their aspirations for the future and were able to develop our strategic priorities and co-design the future services together.

The groups I put in place had a significant impact on the success of the programme and although my contract has now finished with East Sussex County Council, the work with partners and our Ukrainian guests continues. It will be essential in meeting the future needs of those who continue to remain in the UK and my experiences and learning through my doctorate journey had a profound impact on that approach.

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