

## Report of Chief Fire Officer

### Cultural Issues in the Fire Service

#### Purpose of report

1. To inform Members of the current assessment of the Service's culture and behaviours and assure Members of the measures being taken to drive progress in this area.
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#### Recommendation

*It is recommended that Members note this report.*

#### Introduction and Background

2. Members will be aware of the recent publication of the [independent culture review of London Fire Brigade \(LFB\)](#) that was published in late 2022 describing the abhorrent and unacceptable cultural behaviours that were found. Since then there has been a media campaign highlighting similar poor practices and behaviours in a number of other UK Fire and Rescue Services.
3. In the early 1990s a female Firefighter in HWFRS was exposed to institutional mistreatment, bullying and harassment after joining in 1989 as one of the two first female Firefighters in the Service. This is a shameful and embarrassing chapter in HWFRS's history, however the learning from this case was well embedded in management training and cultural improvements throughout the early 2000s and to this current day.
4. In 2021 (prior to the LFB report), as part of the ongoing journey of improving the culture and behaviours of all HWFRS staff (Wholetime, On-Call and Corporate staff) the Service's current Strategic Leadership Board (SLB) adopted the NFCC Core Code of Ethics and made a commitment to review and improve how we support and manage Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). SLB are committed to drive forward an even better level of understanding and improve accountability in how all staff act and behave whilst at work, how they interact with each other and, most importantly, ensure the way they treat and interact with all parts of our communities is of the highest possible standard. It is vital that our communities have confidence in the integrity of their Fire and Rescue Service.

## Current Situation

5. Before the publication of the Independent Cultural Review of LFB, the Service had already commissioned an extensive staff survey, and tendered to outsource a professional training supplier to deliver a bespoke EDI training programme. SLB also undertook a long-term specialist leadership development programme with a company called Trans2Performance, which all managers have undertaken at least twice in the last two years.
6. Trans2Performance also provide an online support portal and coaching sessions for those who need further support. Feedback from staff has been excellent, and there has been a significant improvement in managers becoming more aware of their impact on others in the workplace and how they can better utilise the diverse skills and characters of those they work with.
7. The staff survey is now complete and the results will be published in the near future. The results of the survey are extremely positive and indicate that the Service is on an upward trajectory, Members will receive a separate presentation on the staff survey (Appendix 1).
8. A company called IODA who are experts in EDI training were awarded the contract to provide training which commenced in April 2023, starting with the Strategic Leadership Board. This training is mandatory for all staff and is open to Members should they wish to attend a session.
9. Following the recent LFB report and media attention in early 2023, and prior to the [HMICFRS Spotlight Report on Values and Culture in UK Fire and Rescue Services](#), SLB implemented a new confidential reporting line for staff through a contract with a company called Say So. Whilst most staff are happy to report matters of concern openly and freely to Service managers, Say So provides a confidential third party to support staff who feel they cannot report matters internally. Staff can report confidentially and if they choose anonymously and all reports go directly to an Assistant Chief Officer for initial review. A comprehensive communications plan across the organisation has helped to spread awareness of this new facility.
10. At the time of writing this report Say So has been live for a relatively short period of time and has already proven worthwhile. It has not received a high volume of calls from our staff and some of the issues reported have not been in relation to poor cultural behaviours of staff towards other staff or the public. Members will receive an annual summary report of the issues raised through Say So in the annual report on complaints and concerns.
11. The Service will also be launching a Say So PLUS reporting line. Say So PLUS provides any member of the public with a safe, independent and impartial reporting service in which they can have trust and confidence that the issues

they raise will be listened to and assessed for action at a high level within HWFRS.

12. In February 2023 the Chief Fire Officer took the decision to commission an independent Cultural Audit of the Service, led by Dr Debra Willoughby in conjunction with IODA (our new EDI training provider). Terms of Reference for this Audit are attached to this paper (Appendix 2).
13. At the time of writing this report the independent cultural review team have spoken with over 120 members of staff. The Cultural Audit is not fully complete as yet, although initial early feedback has been positive in regard of highlighting some areas that could be improved, but independently providing high levels of assurance of the generally high standard of behaviour and understanding of most staff and managers across the Service. The final report will be published in full and will be presented to Members at a future meeting. The recommendations will be used to help shape our Cultural Statement and supporting work streams.

## **Conclusion/Summary**

14. Results from the staff survey and looking at the feedback from our staff in regard to the performance of managers and the actions taken to address poor behaviours in the last two years has been overwhelmingly positive. This has given some significant degree of assurance that the endemic cultural issues and managerial neglect being found in other organisations does not appear to be present in HWFRS.
15. IODA were commissioned last year and in April 2023 began a bespoke specialist EDI and cultural training programme, which is mandatory for all staff to attend. This training is delivered by very experienced and professional experts in the field of workplace behaviours, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and will be linked to the outcomes and recommendations of the Cultural Audit.
16. By the end of 2023 all those who hold a management role, and new managers should have undertaken at least two full days of leadership training with Trans2Performance. As well as this training managers have also had access to numerous management training and support sessions. Trans2Performance also provide an online support portal and coaching sessions for those who need further training and development. Feedback has been excellent from staff, and there has been a significant improvement in managers' performance.
17. Say So has proven successful and allowed a minority of staff to report concerns they may not have otherwise reported, and not only in relation to culture and behaviours. Public access to Say So PLUS reporting will be launched in the near future.

18. The Cultural Audit by Dr Debra Willoughby, will provide independent evidence and assurance of the state of the culture and behaviours of staff and management within HWFRS. Initial feedback is positive in that it is finding areas that can be improved, but also not finding some of the endemic and institutionally poor cultures that have been exposed in other Fire Services and public sector organisations.
19. Overall it appears that whilst there are some issues and some staff behaviours fall well below the expected standards at times, the Service does have a positive and mainly good culture with a normally high standard of behaviour in the workplace. Despite this the Service does seem to regularly have to deal with isolated instances of poor behaviour from individuals, as would be expected in any organisation with over 700 employees.
20. However, when issues are reported they are dealt with swiftly and decisively by managers, and staff generally have confidence that this will happen. Reporting of poor behaviours could be improved, especially at an earlier stage and the IODA training programme will increase staff awareness and train staff how to recognise and address these issues when they happen.

### Corporate Considerations

<b>Resource Implications</b> (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	NA
<b>Strategic Policy Links &amp; Core Code of Ethics</b> (Identify how proposals link with current priorities & policy framework and align to the Core Code of Ethics)	The content of this paper directly links to efficiently and effectively delivering the CRMP, core Strategies and the People Strategy.  The update on culture directly links to the 5 elements of the Core Code of Ethics.
<b>Risk Management / Health &amp; Safety</b> (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	NA
<b>Consultation</b> (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	Staff groups have been directly engaged in the work being undertaken to understand culture, behaviour and inclusion.
<b>Equalities</b> (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	EIAs are completed as appropriate.

<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b> (where personal data is processed a DPIA must be completed to ensure compliant handling)	NA
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### **Supporting Information**

Appendix 1 – Report of Findings from Staff Survey

Appendix 2 – Cultural Audit Terms of Reference