

ESSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

Essex County Fire & Rescue Service



MEETING

Essex Fire Authority

AGENDA ITEM

8

MEETING DATE

28th June 2017

REPORT NUMBER

EFA/080/17

SUBJECT

Progress report on the delivery of the work programme required to improve the culture within ECFRS

REPORT BY

Acting Chief Fire Officer – Adam Eckley

PRESENTED BY

Acting Chief Fire Officer – Adam Eckley

SUMMARY

The purpose of the report is to provide Members of the Essex Fire Authority with a progress report on the delivery of the work programme required to improve the culture within ECFRS. This supports the resolutions reached by Essex Fire Authority at its meeting of 7th October 2015.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the Essex Fire Authority are asked to note the contents of this report and the progress report provided by the Chairman of the Expert Advisory Panel which is attached as Appendix A.

BACKGROUND

At its meeting on 7th October 2015 Essex Fire Authority accepted, in full, the 35 recommendations made within the report of the Independent Cultural Review of Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (conducted by Irene Lucas CBE). The report itself was received by the Authority on 2nd September 2015.

In addition to accepting the recommendations a number of other resolutions were reached at the 7th October meeting, amongst which was that Essex Fire Authority:

3. Instructs the Acting Chief Fire Officer to report progress to every meeting of Essex Fire Authority for a minimum of 24 months.

In the twenty months that have elapsed since the meeting of Essex Fire Authority on 7th October 2015, Members of Essex Fire Authority, the Acting Chief Fire Officer and members of the Service Leadership Team have continued to meet with and benefited from

the support and guidance of members of the Expert Advisory Panel. Since the last progress report presented to Essex Fire Authority on 12th April 2017 the following key actions have been taken:

1. A number of Prioritisation and planning days have been held with the Service Leadership Team and department heads to review the strategy, refine and prioritise planned activity over the next year. This has helped to develop a shared sense of ownership over decisions, moving away from a less directive, command style of management to a more collaborative approach.
2. A newly designed Fire Station Plan and corresponding Information Pack has been implemented across all 51 Fire Stations and departments. A single and forward looking "plan on a page" has been developed and the five Service strategic themes have been aligned to seven work activities to produce thirty corresponding objectives. Service Values underpin the new plan and its achievement is dependent on regular one-to-one manager meetings and the appraisal process. An advantage of a single plan aligned to the Service Strategy is that staff have an overview of what is required and how individual contributions will benefit the wider Service to support key and local performance indicators.
3. The outcomes of the last staff survey have been published and these will be presented at today's meeting of Essex Fire Authority. The largest improvement in the Employee Engagement Survey was for "I understand the Service Strategy and Objectives of Essex County Fire and Rescue Service" which increased from 12% to 70%. This is largely attributable to a refreshed Service Strategy and 'Your Strategy at a Glance' summary documents, which have been shared across the Service.
4. The Talent Pool/Promotion Process has commenced and will implement the processes that bring the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to deliver the Service Strategy including resilience and business continuity. Assessment and Development Centres have been developed for all Grey and Green Book roles to provide one consistent, fair and transparent way of identifying, developing and promoting talent. Assessment Centres began in April and will run through to July 2017.
5. Engagement has continued to increase throughout the duration of Programme 2020. Following the first phase, which set the overall direction and objectives, engagement has continued to assist in refining the detail of change plans and the approaches taken to implement the change. The default position in Programme 2020 is to include Representative Bodies at the earliest point. This approach has been extended into changes occurring outside of Programme 2020.
6. Improvements have been made to the On-Call marketing and recruitment activity, which appear to be having a positive impact. Recruitment of On-Call firefighters at Clacton Fire Station has been successful and there is positivity around further successes in unexplored areas. Some areas continue to be difficult to recruit and activity is being continually evaluated for new opportunities. There has been early success through direct business engagement with Tesco and work will restart to look at Police Community Support Officers becoming On-Call firefighters.
7. Joint management skills workshops are in place for Grey and Green Book managers. There is a three-stage leadership development programme being drafted to develop potential. The Institute of Leadership and Management Level 3 and 5 qualifications will underpin with introduction in Autumn 2017. In addition, appraisals will review

Personal Qualities and Attributes (PQAs) and Competencies to encompass required leadership skills.

8. Delivering Differently in the Neighbourhoods (DDiN) has opened Fire Stations to the public; looking at how Firefighters can engage with new community groups whilst assisting the voluntary sector in establishing community hubs. This has taken place in Grays, Southend, Harlow and Basildon. 'DDiN2' is about to launch; identifying six additional Fire Stations, including On-Call, to continue the Department for Communities and Local Government originally funded project.
9. Clinical Commissioning Groups are to use rural On-Call Fire Stations as health drop-in centres in the North East of the County. This has potential to be replicated across the County.
10. Four Fire Stations in the South East of the County look set to be used by Voluntary Aid Services for elderly / vulnerable care sessions every two weeks. This will see Fire Stations used for the benefit of those that need instruction on healthier living, including cooking, health advice and signposting.
11. The Inclusion and Diversity Lead is attending On-Call drill nights to provide an 'inclusion input'; a facilitated two hour session exploring what a positive workplace culture looks and feels like, why it's important and how we all have a role to play to achieve it. This is an ongoing programme of work that utilises the new Dignity at Work policy, toolkit and overall approach to set the tone. Sessions have taken place at the following Fire Stations: Brightlingsea, Tiptree, Wethersfield and Saffron Walden; receiving positive feedback and engagement. Future sessions are planned at Witham, Leading Roding, Dovercourt and Braintree with a commitment to see Loughton, Brentwood, Rochford and Clacton in Autumn 17.
12. The Inclusion and Diversity Lead is attending Whole-time Fire Stations to spend the day with a Watch. Over the day, positive workplace culture is explored with crews, the dignity at work policy and toolkit is discussed allowing for questions and considerations to be raised. By integrating with day-to-day operational tasks, working relationships are enhanced providing a stronger likelihood that individuals will engage with future inclusion initiatives. Putting faces to names is aiding ongoing communication and helping to reduce divides between Green and Grey Book staff supporting our 'One Team' Service Value. So far, two Watches at Southend Fire Station and one Watch at Harlow Fire Station have participated. This work will continue with planned attachments at Chelmsford and Colchester as well as the remaining Watches from Southend and Harlow.
13. 'A Day in the Life' activity initiative has been introduced in April 2017. To date, fifteen individuals have requested 'A Day in the Life' consisting of a mixture of operational and non-operational colleagues attaching to areas such as Control, Human Resources and Safety Communities. Leigh Fire Station are leading the Watch attachments with support from Colchester Fire Station. Photos and a written account of the day have been shared in the Weekly News section on the Intranet. The opportunity to experience a typical day of a colleague educates and develops a greater understanding of different roles whilst helping to address the lack of belonging that some individuals feel when they visit various buildings within the Service.
14. Dignity at Work Advisors have been introduced to support the new policy and enable the toolkit to be consistently applied. Advisors are volunteers that will be trained to support colleagues across the Service to identify and address inappropriate

behaviour, bullying, harassment or disadvantage. Where proportionate and appropriate, informal resolution will be supported.

15. The Inclusion and Diversity Action Group has a total of twenty-two active participants from a range of roles across the service with growing interest. The group are currently supporting the Service response to the Inclusive Fire Service Group in relation to the improvement strategies that have been identified as a result of The Behaviour and Cultural Survey (NJC/6/16). In addition, the action group is supporting a review of recruitment activity to identify positive action initiatives and interventions. This will include revising website content as part of our commitment to attract, recruit and retain a more diverse workforce. Minutes and actions as well as any supporting documents will be available on the new Inclusion & Diversity Intranet pages once available.
16. A draft strategic Inclusion and Diversity action plan has been developed. This is due to be submitted to the Service Leadership Team in early July 17 for ratification.
17. The Service Leadership Team attended a development session on “Understanding Unconscious Bias” which will now be considered for a wider roll out across the Service.

In addition to the information set out above, a progress report, prepared by the Chairman of the Expert Advisory Panel, Steve McGuirk CBE, is attached as Appendix A for the consideration of Members of the Essex Fire Authority.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Failure to effectively address the issues identified within the Independent Review of Culture present significant risk to the Service and the Essex Fire Authority not least as the report suggests that without significant change our employees and the communities they serve may be at risk.

The information set out in this report and in **Appendix A** supports the delivery of the work programme required to improve the culture within ECFRS.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Essex Fire Authority established a budget of £400k to support the work of the Expert Advisory Panel between 2015–2017. It is expected that not all of the budget will be necessary to conclude this work.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The information set out in this report sets out the progress made in the delivery of the work programme required to improve the culture within ECFRS and therefore serve to lessen any potential litigation presented by the risks identified within the Independent Review of Culture.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

Failure to implement the Independent Review Action Plan and address the associated recommendations could result in the Service failing to meet its obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985	
List of appendices attached to this paper: Appendix A –Progress report by the Chairman of the Expert Advisory Panel	
List of background documents (not attached): Independent Cultural Review of Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, EFA/081/15, EFA/082/15, EFA/096/15, EFA/097/15, EFA/098/15, EFA/099/15, EFA /104/15 and EFA/105/15, EFA/031/16, EFA/039/16 and EFA/080/016, EFA/105/16, EFA/134/16	
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