

Agenda Item 3
EISC/01/23

Report title: Essex County Fire and Rescue Service People Strategy - Update	
Report to: Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel – Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee	
Report author: Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority	
Date: 21 March 2023	For: Noting
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County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Purpose of Report

This report is provided for information. It provides a snapshot of progress against the delivery of the People Strategy 2020 – 2024 and the six pillars which enable delivery of the strategy.

Staff were engaged in development of the People Strategy, which is designed to align with and enable delivery of the Fire and Rescue Plan and Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and incorporates both Culture and Resourcing and Talent pillars.

2. Recommendations

The Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee is invited to note the contents of the report, identifying any areas that require further clarification or comment.

3. Context / Summary

Since Quarter 2 of 2022/23 the People Strategy Action Plan has been managed and monitored in accordance with the Portfolio Management Board approach to ensure the programme of works delivers in accordance with the Service's standards. The People Strategy Programme is now in year 3 of a four-year programme.

Delivery of the People Strategy (including the Culture and Resourcing pillars) is regularly reviewed by two governance boards; the Portfolio Management Board for 'change the business' activity and the People Strategy Board for 'run the business' activity. Progress is also reported to the PFCC's Performance and Resources Board on a regular basis and some elements of the Strategy are audited in line with our audit schedule.

In this report, an update is provided on each of the six pillars as detailed below:

- Fair, Kind and Inclusive
- Culture - Involved and Valued
- Leadership and Development
- Operational Training
- Resourcing and Talent
- Wellbeing and Health

Progress and outlook remain good, with all pillars due to complete within the programme schedule. Some minor delays are noted, which are all recoverable, with the exception of training facilities, where dependencies outside the programme will impact delivery. An agreed extension is in place for training facilities.

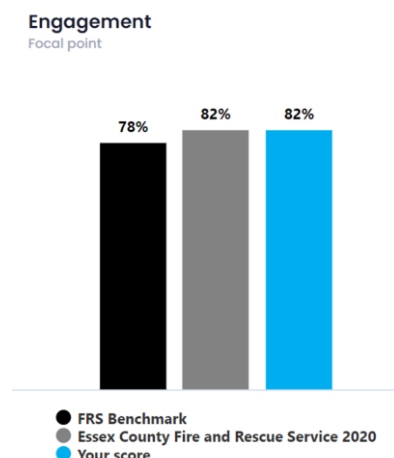
Analysis (based on a data snapshot taken on 1 March 2023)

This section of the report outlines the intention of each pillar of our People Strategy and provides both a narrative and data update regarding programme delivery. In order to respond more fully to the Panel's areas of interest, Appendix 1 shares the Fire and Rescue Service's Equality Report 2021 and Appendix 2 shares more detail of a culture of positive action in recruitment.

1) Culture – Involved and Valued

As detailed in our Fire and Rescue Plan, we are committed to promoting a positive and kind culture. This is so that we nurture a modern, forward-looking, innovative and collaborative environment which can anticipate and deliver against the changing needs of our communities.

The service has taken significant steps to develop the culture of the organisation. A survey of staff carried out in Quarter 3 of 2022/23 tells us that, nearly three years into delivery of the strategy, engagement within the service is high.



This overall headline reflects both quantitative and qualitative questions related specifically to culture. Specifically, 80% of colleagues who answered the survey felt proactively positive (blue column below) or neutral (light grey column below) in response to the statement that 'ECFRS promotes a culture of openness and transparency'.

ECFRS promotes a culture of openness and transparency

Culture and Values

53%

27%

19%

In total there are 43 People Strategy actions contributing to the development of our culture. 29 of these are complete with just over a year of the strategy left to deliver. Examples of actions which have made a difference to the service and its staff are:

- Core Code of Ethics launched and embedded.
- Positive working relationships with representative bodies achieved through a jointly agreed approach, 'Working Well Together'.
- Dignity at Work supporters available throughout the service.
- Reward and recognition enhanced through monthly and yearly People Awards.
- The service's values and Code of Ethics are embedded in all policies.
- A new 'Safer Together' approach was launched in January 2023 which includes an additional reporting mechanism for sharing concerns.

Our next steps include use of a Cultural Maturity Model to keep measuring and embedding progress.

2) Fair, Kind and Inclusive

We believe that every employee has the right to be treated fairly, inclusively, with kindness, equality, dignity and respect. We are committed to providing a supportive and inclusive working environment to foster such a culture.

A survey of staff carried out in Quarter 3 of 2022/23 tells us that, nearly three years into delivery of the strategy, 88% of colleagues who answered the survey felt proactively positive or neutral in response to the statement that 'I feel ECFRS treats people fairly'.

Regardless of ethnic background, gender (including transgender), religion, sexual orientation, disability, pregnancy or age, I feel ECFRS treats people fairly

Culture and Values

67%

21%

13%

In total there are 43 People Strategy actions contributing to the development of our fair, kind and inclusive service. 12 of these are complete with just over a year left of the strategy to deliver. Examples of actions which have made a difference to the service and its staff are:

- Delivery of Public Sector Duty Objectives (more detail in Appendix 1 - Equality Report 2021).
- Achievement of the Inclusive Employer Bronze standard.
- People Impact Assessments which support evidence-based decision making.
- Reduction of the mean Gender Pay Gap from 3.1% in 2021 to 1% in 2022.
- Active staff networks offering support, education and empowerment including

- collaborative focus days with Essex partners.
- Positive Action day created and hosted with the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) for Essex partners.
- Delivery of positive action in recruitment (Appendix 2 provides more detail of our approach and progress).

Our next steps include an aim to achieve the Inclusive Employers Silver standard.

3) Leadership and Development

We will support and develop our people so that we have strong, effective leadership now and in the future. Our people will feel that our leaders and managers role model positive behaviours and have effective management and communication skills.

A survey of staff carried out in Quarter 3 of 2022/23 tells us that, nearly three years into delivery of the strategy, 76% of colleagues who answered the survey felt proactively positive or neutral in response to the statement that 'I have received the right development to perform my management role well'.



In total there are 49 People Strategy actions contributing to the development of leadership and development. 42 of these are complete with just over a year of the strategy left to deliver. Examples of actions which have made a difference to the service and its staff are:

- Over 120 colleagues accessed our full leadership development programme between 2020 and 2022. 68 people accessed our 'Leadership Light' programme and 100 people our Institute of Leadership Management qualifications at levels 3 and 5.
- 244 colleagues accessed internal and external coaching in 2022. A further 54 accessed a coaching and mentoring course so that they could support others.
- Mandated training linked to behaviours has had high levels of completion:
 - Code of Ethics (released 21/02/22) – 89.5% completion
 - Dignity at Work (released 21/03/23) – 88.1% completion
 - Safeguarding (released 05/04/23) – 90.1% completion
- Additionally, 254 attended Inclusive Employers courses including Inclusive Behaviours, Inclusive Leaders and Inclusive Managers.
- A range of colleagues are accessing the Leadership, Resourcing and Succession (LRS) process. Nearly 13% of our workforce is currently part of the LRS.

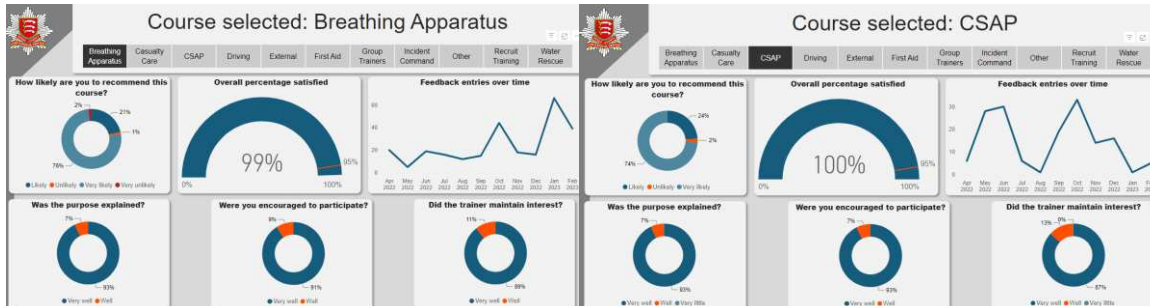
Our next steps include the launch of the next phase of our Leadership Development programme.

4) Operational Training

The three pillars of our Operational Training Strategy (training, assessment and

verification), together with functions fulfilled by the Director of Operations and Operational Assurance colleagues, ensure that all firefighters are competent.

Examples of feedback from operational training courses are shown below.



In total there are 65 People Strategy actions contributing to leadership and development. 30 of these are complete with just over a year of the strategy left to deliver. Examples of actions which have made a difference to the service and its staff are:

- Refurbishment of Breathing Apparatus training facilities to provide most realistic training scenarios.
- Multi agency exercises.
- Continued investment in a Core Skills Assurance Programme which is a key part of providing assurance of competence.
- Partnership with a local college to provide around 100 ongoing apprenticeships.
- Compliance with core skills training (see table below):

Name	Qualified operational personnel with exclusions	Compliance percentage
Breathing Apparatus	668	98%
ERD Driving	428	96%
Officer ERD Driving	52	100%
CSAP Lvl 2	586	100%
CSAP Lvl 3a	569	100%
Incident Command Lvl 1	292	98%
Incident Command Lvl 2	44	100%
Incident Command Lvl 3	12	100%
Incident Command Lvl 4	7	100%

Our next steps include developing the full business case for the replacement of live fire training facilities.

5) Resourcing and Talent

We are committed to ensuring that we have the right people and skills to deliver the best service to our communities in Essex. Our resourcing strategies will deliver the commitments set out in the service's Fire and Rescue Plan, specifically ensuring that resourcing challenges are addressed in critical areas and that the service is efficiently staffed.

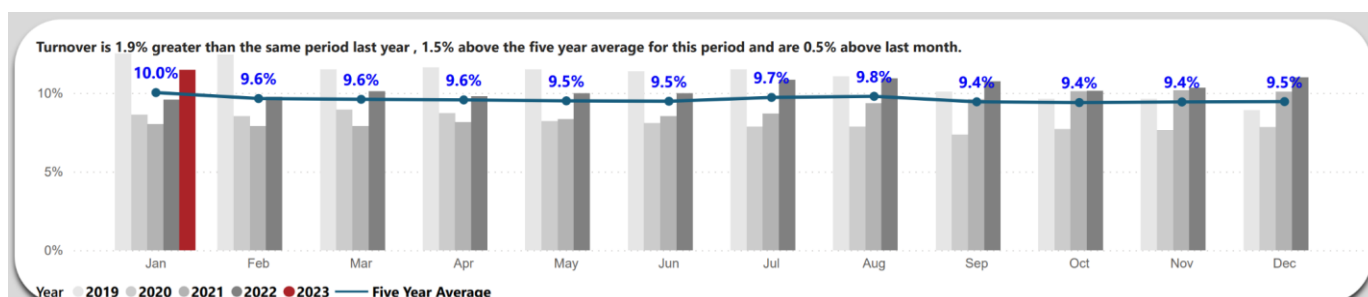
A survey of staff carried out in Quarter 3 of 2022/23 tells us that, nearly three years into delivery of the strategy, 78% of colleagues who answered the survey felt proactively positive or neutral in response to the statement that ‘I have the right opportunities to learn and grow at work’.



In total there are 45 People Strategy actions contributing to the development of resourcing and talent. 33 of these are complete with just over a year of the strategy left to deliver. Examples of actions which have made a difference to the service and its staff are:

- Putting a strategic workforce plan in place, enabling effective planning of recruitment and promotion activity.
- Increased squad sizes for firefighter new recruits, enabling us to meet demand.
- Putting succession plans in place for the majority of business areas.
- An internship programme, partnering with the Leonard Cheshire Foundation, aimed at supporting those who live with disability.
- Assessments which are values based and include a diverse range of trained assessors.

Turnover (based on data as at January 2023) has increased over a five-year period but remains significantly below the national average for the public sector.



Our next steps include the launch of a new applicant tracking system to improve candidates’ recruitment and on-boarding experience.

6) Wellbeing and Health

We are committed to ensuring a safe workforce where we value health, safety and wellbeing. We know this is critical to making Essex a safe place to live, work and travel. Investing in wellbeing helps us to achieve increased organisational strength, performance, and productivity. We are committed to better working lives.

In total there are 66 People Strategy actions contributing to the development of wellbeing and health. 46 of these are complete with just over a year of the strategy yet to deliver. Examples of actions which have made a difference to the service and its staff are:

- Regular health promotion activity including mental health initiatives and 'Time to Talk'.
- Extensive Mental Health First Aider training.
- Partnership with the Firefighters Charity.
- Proactive support for attendance management.
- Launch of a 'Fire Family' approach to financial wellbeing and support.

Our next steps include further embedding of Mental Health First Aiders and related training.

A full review of the People Strategy will take place in 2024.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Equality Report 2021

Appendix 2 – A Culture of Positive Action in Recruitment