

Minutes of the meeting of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel: Ethics and Integrity Sub-Committee, held in the Council Chamber at County Hall on Tuesday, 21 September 2021

Present**Representing**

John Gili-Ross (Chairman)	Independent Member
Cllr Godfrey Isaacs	Castle Point Borough Council
Cllr Lynda McWilliams	Tendring District Council
Cllr Ian Shead	Southend Borough Council

Also present

Gemma Bint	Democratic Services Officer
Colette Black	Director of People Services, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service
Pippa Brent-Isherwood	Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer, Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex
Roger Hirst	Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Emma Tombs	Democratic Services Manager

1 Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

There were no apologies.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2021 were approved as an accurate record by those present.

Matters arising –

At the previous meeting it was advised that the pandemic had slowed the development of the National Fire Standards Board. The Commissioner confirmed to the Sub-Committee that the programme was underway, and the first draft of the Standards document had been developed.

3 Core code of Ethics for Fire & Rescue Services

The Sub-Committee received report EISC/01/21 from Roger Hirst, Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, reporting on the new Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services, and the steps taken and planned by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority and the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service to ensure its implementation locally.

In response to questions from Members the following points were highlighted/raised/noted:

- The Core Code of Ethics was shaped by the Local Government Association, the National Fire Chief Council and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners. Essex would have to adopt the code and adapt it to the area.
- The ambition would be that the Code was consistent across all of the UK Fire and Rescue Services and adopted in the format recommended in the documentation, however each Fire and Rescue Service would have some flexibility to slightly adapt the Code to suit their own circumstances.
- The launch was planned for December 2021 and the lead up work was already taking place.
- Livestreams, training sessions and face to face visits would be used to launch the proposal. Methods of communication that were used during the pandemic such as livestreams had been successful, and the proposal was to continue to use those methods going forward.
- Going forward the Code of Ethics would be incorporated in a number of processes such as assessment processes, induction programmes for new staff and the leadership development programme.
- Measures of success would be determined by current indicators already included in the Fire and Rescue Plan and the People's strategy such as grievance and disciplinary cases and absence rates. They were measured every quarter and reported to the Performance and Resources Board. Results of the staff survey would also be used to measure success; the last survey was undertaken in December 2020 and it was anticipated that the next survey would be taken in approximately 12 months' time.
- It was highlighted that training sessions would not be sufficient on a standalone basis as it would be a lengthy process and cultural change could not be achieved quickly. Important building blocks had to be put into place to achieve the aim of a kinder service and it was important that staff related to behavioural standards. A Learning and Development programme was now in place that trained and promoted behavioural skills.
- It was understood that people had a tendency to revert to how they were used to doing things; they were being asked to behave in new ways when under pressure and that required reminders and good examples of why the new way worked better, implementing this code of ethics for Essex was going to be one more step in that course.
- Unconscious bias training was not standalone training, but it was incorporated into other types of training.

RESOLVED:

That members of the Sub-Committee noted the report.

4 Diversity in Recruitment

The Sub-Committee received report EISC/02/21 from Roger Hirst, Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, advising of the letter received by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable from the Minister of State for Crime and Policing, on diversity in Police recruitment and the response to that letter.

In response to questions from Members the following points were highlighted/raised/noted:

- It was important to get the right people for the job and that standards were not dropped.
- Fewer people had left than anticipated when the programme started but that may have been due to the pandemic, more people may leave as the economy opens up and more people are looking to recruit in the private sector.
- Positive action was taken to appeal to groups of people whom Essex Police had sometimes not appealed to before and advice was taken from various organisations to help achieve that.
- The rate of recruitment in policing had to double to get to where it needed to be, previously 200 officers were recruited a year and now numbers had increased to 400 a year.
- Recruitment targets were being achieved.
- Failing to make a timely response to some recruitment applications was due to volume challenges which needed to be resolved.
- Within Fire and Rescue, three squads of twelve per year were recruited into the wholetime duty system. In the on-call duty system the numbers were much higher, in the next year it was anticipated there would be 132 on-call firefighters.
- There were 100 apprentices at any one time in Fire and Rescue which demonstrated a successful approach in regard to diversity.
- New Domestic Abuse Problem Solving Teams had been created to support victims of domestic abuse in Essex.
- Leavers numbers included normal Retirees and there was a very low turnover figure.
- Retention rates of staff had not been reported and did not form part of the regular report that went to the Performance and Resources Scrutiny Board. However, it was suggested that there were a variety of reasons why some staff would leave the service, including personal reasons and simply finding that the job did not suit them in the period relatively soon after completing training.
- The Police Education Qualifications Framework were transferrable qualifications and gave people the opportunity to look elsewhere if they wished to.
- Some Police Officers in Essex join the Metropolitan Police but usually returned.

RESOLVED:

That members of the Sub-Committee noted the report.

5 Date of Next Meeting

The date and time of the next meeting was to be arranged.

6 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

7 Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved:

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the remaining items of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information, as specified within paragraphs 4 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A.

8 Immediate Detriment

The Sub-Committee received and noted report EISC/03/21 from the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.

Chairman