

Status of Report: Public

Meeting: Combined Fire Authority

Date: 21st June 2023

Subject: HMICFRS 'Spotlight' Report & Cultural Survey Update

Report by: The Chief Fire & Rescue Officer

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For: Information

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on activity and actions within Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) following the internal Cultural Survey report and the publication of His Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary's and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) review into the culture of the Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) nationally – referred to as the 'Spotlight Report'.
2. The report also provides details of the key themes emerging from the internal Cultural Survey and LFRS's position against the findings of the Spotlight report.

Recommendation

3. It is recommended that the CFA notes:
 - a) the findings of the Cultural Survey and the activity being undertaken to meet the requirements of the HMICFRS Spotlight report; and
 - b) that a further update report and action plan will be presented to the Corporate Governance Committee to monitor and scrutinise progress.

Executive Summary

4. In the later part of 2022, LFRS commissioned the services of an external company, 'People Insight', to undertake an internal cultural survey on behalf of the Service. The results of the survey were pleasing but identified some areas for further focus.
5. In March 2023, the HMICFRS released its own report which had explored cultural issues across the wider FRS sector. This report made a number of recommendations and will receive the scrutiny of Government Office in relation to progress against the recommendations.

Background

Cultural Survey

6. The Cultural Survey commissioned by the Service showed a largely positive response from employees, with a response rate of 55% which is good, particularly as it was the first survey of its kind. It also showed an engagement score of 82% which measures pride in the service, care about the future of LFRS and it being a good place to work.
7. Feedback showed a high level of alignment to the values of the Service of 'Professional, Positive and Honest', with many of the responses to questions overperforming against external non-FRS benchmarks.
8. Teamwork, colleagues, reputation and resources were cited as being positive, along with wellbeing, leadership and working patterns being in the best things about working for LFRS.
9. Despite the positive responses, the report also provided feedback and insight into areas where people felt things could continue to improve. To explore this further, People Insight were asked to conduct a series of additional workshops to enable people the opportunity to inform based upon their lived experiences.
10. An area of concern was the limited response from some of the minority work groups. The Service responded to this by enabling further workshops and meetings with the Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer to explore their concerns. There was a good uptake on the workshops and additional information will be included in the activities as a result.
11. Other areas for focus in the coming year and as part of the People Strategy will be (but not exhaustively):
 - a. A review of processes, including promotions and transfers
 - b. Further embedding of the leadership development programme
 - c. A focus on staff engagement and enhanced communication with people
 - d. Ongoing development of policies and procedures to reflect modern working practices
 - e. The introduction of a professional standards role to ensure objectivity in investigative practice
 - f. Development of LFRS employee networks to ensure greater involvement and consultation.

HMICFRS Spotlight Report

12. In March 2023, HMICFRS released its report into the values and culture of the 44 English Fire Services. Research had been undertaken over several months and in particular in light of the review of the London Fire Brigade.
13. The focus for the report was:
 - a. Bullying harassment and discrimination;
 - b. Lack of fairness and diversity; and
 - c. Reporting and handling of concerns, including misconduct
14. HMICFRS made thirty-seven recommendations, some of which will require Government and national activity. A number of the recommendations require FRS and Chief Fire Officers to take action, in particular to address concerns relating to culture and behaviours of employees within the sector. A link to the full report and findings is detailed in the Background Papers section of this report.
15. An analysis of LFRS against the recommendations has been undertaken, and an external consultant was commissioned to provide a 'deeper dive' understanding of behaviours and culture at a local level. It is pleasing to report that, whilst there are some areas of focus, the consultant's findings are consistent with those of the Cultural Survey.
16. The Service is in a good position in relation to the recommendations and had a number of areas already in progress. This includes the new provision of a confidential reporting line which is completely external to LFRS and will be available from the end of July. There is budgetary provision for a new role of Professional Standards Officer which will undertake complex investigations and provide additional training.
17. There are a number of recommendations over which the Service will have no influence; for example, from January 2024, CFO's will be required to ensure that enhanced vetting and safeguarding checks are made for all new and existing staff.
18. In conclusion, areas for action will be incorporated into an overarching Service Plan. Due to the overlap, it is proposed to bring the actions from both the Cultural Survey and HMICFRS Spotlight report into one plan. Progress of this will be reported to the Corporate Governance Committee.

Report Implications/Impact

19. Legal (including crime and disorder)

The service has a moral and legal duty for the care and wellbeing of its employees. Employment Law directs in relation to Harassment, Victimisation Equality and others. LFRS has a strong record of supporting its employees and of having a no tolerance approach to evidence of inappropriate behaviours. The CFO and Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) are committed to ensuring a safe and positive culture across the service.

20. Financial (including value for money, benefits and efficiencies)

LFRS has committed financially to ensuring that it undertakes Cultural Surveys every two years. A permanent revenue provision of £30,000 will have to be factored into future budget setting covering the costs for future Cultural Surveys and the confidential reporting line. (Manjora Bisla, Finance Manager).

21. Risk (including corporate and operational, health and safety and any impact on the continuity of service delivery)

The Service's reputation as an employer of choice will be at risk if it is not seen to have a positive culture and working environment.

The risk of litigation through employment tribunal is one which will be mitigated as the Service seeks to continue to improve the organisation.

22. Staff, Service Users and Stakeholders (including the Equality Impact Assessment)

Clearly this is a significant area of interest for all employees. They will be key to the ongoing development as a Service. Actions and activities will be drawn up in an engaging and inclusive way so that the CFO can be assured that LFRS continues to be an employer of choice.

23. Environmental

None directly arising from this report

24. Impact upon "Our Plan" Objectives

The People Strategy is a key supporting document within 'Our Plan'. It has been revised to ensure action against the findings of the first Cultural Survey and those of the HMICFRS Spotlight report.

Background Papers

[Values and culture in fire and rescue services - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(justiceinspectors.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/Values-and-culture-in-fire-and-rescue-services)

Appendices

None.

Officers to Contact

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