

**REVIEW OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE EMPLOYEE
ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES**

To: **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Date: **10 January 2019**

From: **Overview & Scrutiny Review Group**

Forward Plan ref: **N/A** *Key decision:* **No**

Purpose: **To present findings and recommendations of the review of
Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service Employee
Engagement Activities**

Recommendation: **The Committee is asked to:**

- **Consider findings and recommendations of the review group**
- **Present the report and recommendations to Fire Authority for information**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO DATE

Theme	Paragraph/Appendix	Positive Findings	Neutral Findings	Negative Findings	Recommendation
Background	4	Organisational awareness of factors affecting the workplace and culture		Most factors are outside of the organisations control	Maintain horizon scanning for potential influencers
Employee Engagement Survey 2015 and Results	5	Identified areas of satisfaction	Need to be prepared for feedback and have capacity to respond appropriately	Widespread issues of concern	
Employee Engagement Survey 2015 - Action Plan	6	Direct and indirect results			
Employee Engagement 'Pulse Check' 2017 Survey and Results	7/1	Increased response rate	Need to be prepared for feedback and have capacity to respond appropriately		Report progress to Authority
Other Considerations	8/2		Some are outside of the organisations control		
Next Steps	9	CFO is sponsor			
Conclusions	10		Transparency		
Recommendations	11				

PART A - BACKGROUND

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This review is being undertaken to interrogate the evidence and project work undertaken by Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS) and seek to assure Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority that the direction of travel and approach taken by CFRS in terms of employee engagement are still appropriate. It seeks to provide fact based evidence that the activities undertaken to date and those planned for the future will operate effectively and efficiently whilst contributing to the strategic aims of CFRS.
- 1.2 The review was undertaken by Councillors Paul Raynes and John Gowing. In August 2018, Councillor Raynes resigned from the Authority and the review work was completed by Councillor Gowing.

2. REVIEW OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The objectives of the review were to;
- identify the catalyst for the initial survey in 2015,
 - interrogate the 2015 survey results and appropriateness of the action plan,
 - check progress against the action plan to include analysis of approaches taken to achieve results,
 - review results of any subsequent 'pulse checks',
 - make any necessary recommendations should available evidence not provide assurance that the direction of travel and approach being taken is not appropriate.

3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The key lines of enquiry for this Member-led review were to understand the catalyst for the initial survey, what CFRS has done, who has been involved and the direction of travel.
- 3.2 Members met with the Scrutiny and Assurance Manager on several occasions between January and November 2018 to review research and evidence collected. They also held several informal sessions with key stakeholders to inform the final report. Any member wishing to review evidence not specifically included in this report may request to do so via Councillor Gowing.
- 3.3 The remainder of this report sets out the findings and recommendations from the review.

PART B – FINDINGS

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In early 2015 CFRS commissioned an independent company called Harris Interactive to conduct an employee survey. The purpose of the survey was to find out how employees felt in a number of areas affecting the workplace and its culture. The reasons for undertaking this piece of work were brought about by a desire from the then senior management team to understand the impact of recent industrial action, implementation of the (national) rank to role structure, the comprehensive spending review and other public sector influences such as (national) pay negotiations and changes to the firefighter pension schemes.

5. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY 2015 and RESULTS

- 5.1 It is widely recognised that engagement is just one ingredient of employee performance and organisational success; overall success is also dependent on performance across four other ingredients namely selection, direction, effort and enablement.
- 5.2 In terms of CFRS and engagement, Harris Interactive used the following six questions to work out how engaged employees were;
- How satisfied are you with CFRS?
 - How motivated are you to give your best?
 - How committed are you to CFRS?
 - How satisfied are you with your job?
 - How proud are you to work for CFRS?
 - Would you recommend CFRS as an employer?
- 5.3 These questions measure how much employees are rationally and emotionally bought into their organisation; the higher the score, the greater the buy-in. To be classed as engaged you have to **agree or strongly agree** to all six questions or behaviours of an engaged employee.
- 5.4 The response rate to the survey was considered excellent at 70% giving CFRS confidence that the data was representative of all employees. The proportion of employees answering favourably to the six key questions and therefore engaged was 58% which is above the Harris norm (46%), national benchmark (40%) and just below the upper quartile threshold (59%).
- 5.5 There were high levels of satisfaction across the organisation generally (86% satisfied) and 79% of employees stated that they were motivated to give their best. Overall 75% of employees were satisfied with CFRS as an employer and 84% were committed to what the organisation were trying to achieve; 70% would recommend CFRS as a great place to work and 85% were proud to work for CFRS.
- 5.6 The results were very encouraging and provided reassurance that the 2014 peer assessment undertaken by CFRS, that found its employees engaged and loyal to the Service, was an accurate assessment. However analysis revealed that there were differences between the various groups of employees that required further

exploration and understanding. For example, those working within the professional support services were most engaged (77%) and wholetime station based employees were the least engaged (34%).

5.7 Further analysis identified the low scoring areas, several of which are strongly linked to motivation, as follows;

- whether staff felt their opinion was heard,
- leadership in the organisation (variations between employee groups),
- how change is managed in the Service (variations between employee groups),
- satisfaction with hours worked (work/life balance),
- higher than expected results of employees who had suffered or witnessed bullying or harassment over the last three years,
- trust in the then senior management team had an overall score of 48%.

5.8 After a briefing to the senior management team it was decided that Harris Interactive representatives should facilitate several informal sessions, to all levels across the organisation, to inform them of the results and add context and comparison. This feedback strategy was well received by those able to attend.

5.9 The senior management team recognising that, in addition to those that were considered engaged, 4% of the workforce were disengaged (disagreed with all six engagement questions) leaving 38% in the middle ground or having latent potential and were very keen to use the results of the survey to unlock this potential.

6. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY 2015 ACTION PLAN

6.1 In addition to engaging the disengaged and unlocking the latent potential the senior management team were also keen to improve in areas employees had not rated very high. An action plan was devised and the organisation continued on its path of continuous improvement and an inclusive employer with a fully engaged workforce.

6.2 An important part of the action plan was to look at the main areas (behaviours, connections, accountability, quality of communications and information) in which the Service scored lower to get employees to suggest how it could change. A small team worked with employee volunteers, from across the organisation, to form four employee engagement working groups. These groups looked at how to further improve the levels of engagement through the implementation of the action plan, discuss ideas and suggest changes.

6.3 These groups were;

- Behaviour – four focus areas,
- Connections - six focus areas,
- Recognition – three focus areas,

- Information – five focus areas.

6.4 The working groups met regularly and some of the 'quick wins' were greater informal recognition of employee achievement, the introduction of Workplace and even greater visibility of the new Chief Officer Group (COG) team who tried to listen and engage with employees through informal station and team visits. The structure of the Service was also changed with the removal of directorates to encourage more inclusive, collaborative working across departments on issues and opportunities. Progress against the action plan was communicated to the wider organisation.

Member View

The review group acknowledge the time, effort and commitment evidently shown by those involved in the employee engagement working groups however they also recognise that progress was perceived as slow by the very nature of them trying to achieve results in addition to their primary roles. It is noted that some areas of focus from the Employee Engagement Survey 2015 naturally progressed as the organisation changed for example, change in leadership at the senior level shortly after the survey was completed, introduction of leadership training, changes in methods of communication and involvement of staff in key decisions across the organisation.

7. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT 'PULSE CHECK' SURVEY 2017 and RESULTS

- 7.1 Recognising the inevitability that as an organisation grows and changes over time so does culture, the Service decided to run a 'pulse check' survey in 2017. The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) sent a message to all employees advising them of the decision and that after two years it was felt that it was an appropriate time to conduct a 'pulse check' survey to understand what progress had been made.
- 7.2 The 'pulse check' would be a shorter survey with questions focussing on the areas where employees had said CFRS needed to improve, as well as checking overall engagement scores to ensure they had at least been maintained and measure progress against the action plan. The same company would be used, the survey would be anonymous, the results would be analysed and published and the action plan would be refreshed if necessary.
- 7.3 The response rate was 54% and the level of fully engaged staff had increased by 2% to 60% which is around 20% higher than the national average; the results showed improvement around satisfaction with CFRS as an employer. However motivation levels had dropped slightly in the intervening period and now lagged behind the benchmark norm; employees within the professional support area reported the highest levels of motivation.

- 7.4 Job satisfaction remained high across CFRS as a whole and satisfaction with CFRS as an employer had improved since the 2015 survey although levels varied widely with professional support rates the highest and whotetime station based the lowest. As stated above, whilst the survey indicated that 60% were fully engaged, 2% were fully disengaged and 38% were neither; as before almost all of the 38% had potential to be moved up the engagement scale.
- 7.5 The key messages were that (national) pay negotiations and not having their opinion heard were the areas causing most dissatisfaction especially amongst whotetime non-station based, On-Call employees and Combined Fire Control employees
- 7.6 In October 2017 a message was sent to all employees stating that the 'pulse check' results would be presented by Harris Interactive in the same face-to-face format as previously. Feedback from these sessions would also inform any revision of the action plan and re-establish direction of travel for delivery. The refreshed action plan would also be shared and communicated across the organisation. The results were shared with COG by Harris Interactive in November 2017 but there was no further cascade.
- 7.7 In April 2018 a message was sent to all employees that apologised for the delay in publishing the results. It stated ... *it was intended for it to happen sooner, there was nothing to hide, the Service wanted to produce something for staff that was delivered by Harris Interactive so the data could be brought to life by someone independent using their expert knowledge to add context to the results. ... time passed as the Service tried to make this happen and a point was reached where it needed to get results out ...* so some highlights from the survey were produced and published (Appendix 1); a Harris Interactive presentation was also published on the intranet summarising the results.

Member View

The review group recognise the shift in engaged employee results from specific areas of the workforce and suggest that any future activities must also include those groups considered fully engaged otherwise there is a risk they will become less engaged.

The review group also recognise the desire to publish the results in the same format as 2015 however it felt the delay in publishing the 'pulse check' results was significant and unacceptable. It caused unnecessary suspicion and led to negative feelings amongst employees. The Service acknowledges this was an error and have assured the review group it will endeavour not to repeat it should another survey be carried out in the future.

8. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 Strategic Aims/Focus

People are at the heart of everything CFRS does both employees and those in the communities they seek to protect and assist. The success of an organisation depends on having appropriately skilled and motivated employees, who feel valued as individuals, making them more likely to deliver an excellent service.

Through the review of risk and opportunity the Service has identified several areas to further improve and this includes creating and implementing an action plan in response to the results of the employee engagement surveys discussed in this review. The strategic focus and specific priorities for 2018 and beyond include employee engagement and specifically focus on continuing the journey to make all employees feel valued and proud to work at CFRS.

8.2 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services

HMICFRS has been appointed to inspect fire and rescue services and two (pre field work and field work) of the three phase inspection of CFRS had been completed at the time of writing. The final phase (post field work) is expected in October and December 2018 (report and grading). The inspection was focussed on three key areas;

- effectiveness - how effective is the fire and rescue service (FRS) at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks,
- efficiency - how efficient is the FRS at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks,
- people - how well does the FRS look after its people.

The latter area includes how well the Service promotes its values and culture, train and skill its staff to ensure fairness and diversity and develop leadership and capability. The position statement given to HMICFRS inspectors during their field work highlighted that, in accordance with the strategic aims, people are at the heart of everything that the Service does and evidenced this with the 2015 and 2017 employee engagement surveys and corresponding response rates.

Member View

Whilst the judgements of the inspection are awaited it is hoped the examples and culture experienced by the inspectors will be positively recorded in their report. The review group believe the example of the engagement surveys to date have been a step in the right direction to gauge the people measure and await the final report and grading to validate this thinking.

8.3 Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2017 - 2020

Members will be aware that the planning process starts with the excellence statements which sit under each of the strategic aims (operational excellence, community safety excellence, value for money and people) and the Service looks at two things; what will get in the way of us achieving these? (risks) and what will help us get there quicker? (opportunities). The review of the risks and opportunities together with the resulting action plan becomes our IRMP which covers a three year period and is reviewed annually.

Working with managers and employees to ensure our people are safe and the Service is accessible to everyone, meeting their needs and expectations, we continually strive to improve the service we deliver, listen and engage with employees, communities and partners to improve what we do, develop our employees and encourage them to reach their potential. The IRMP Action Plan

has a nominated employee engagement lead that has responsibility for, amongst other deliverables, the employee engagement action plan.

8.4 Annual Report and Statement of Assurance

Members will also be aware of the above document published annually summarising organisational performance over the previous financial year. Examples of where the Service has sought to achieve their aims in terms of people include but is not limited to, the Aspire development programme for existing managers (expanded collaboration with regional partners), the Insight programme for aspiring managers, succession planning activities, manager seminars, appointment of a Positive Action Officer and work plan, apprenticeships, awareness sessions for dementia and dyslexia and the development of support for better mental health through the Blue Light Champions network.

Member View

The review group, as part of the Authority, regularly receive reports that update them on progress against action plans and associated activities.

8.5 Workplace Tool

Workplace was rolled out to all employees in January 2018 as a new and exciting internal communication platform. Although run by Facebook it is completely separate from personal accounts and is a closed forum for CFRS employees only; as a not for profit organisation it is also free. It allows communications to be more visual and engaging and has an employee engagement group that circulates articles and related information on activities.

In August 2018 an article was placed on this platform under the employee engagement group ... *"We look forward to the year ahead and continuing to look at ways to increase employee engagement and ultimately improve the experience of everybody who works for the Service. Appendix 2 shows the highlights from the engagement working group following on from the Employee Pulse Check Survey completed in September 2017 and continued feedback from everybody who works at Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service".*

Member View

It is not always fully understood that some of the changes or progress being made through for example, projects, actually stems from the feedback received. At the time of writing the Workplace employee engagement group was small with less than 50 members however it is hoped more employees will join in the future.

8.6 RESPECT (February 2018)

Following a report from IODA Ltd received in the summer of 2017 an action plan was developed and given approval by the Chief Officers Advisory Group (COAG). It detailed information about the research with employees around experiences of bullying and harassment and the issues that prevented these behaviours being dealt with appropriately. After further sharing with managers, a group of volunteers worked with the Equality and Inclusion Advisor to look at the

recommendations from the report and produce a deliverable action plan that will make a difference. This was again presented to COAG and is now being worked through with an appropriate governance and resourcing structure. Further details on RESPECT and the work of its 'champions' can be found via the following link;

https://cambsfire.facebook.com/download/2031890500411202/CFRS-%23524675-v1-RESPECT_PPT_Presentation.PPT?hash=AcraV8uRPqJ1Qb1

8.7 Refreshed Personal Development Review form and guidance

Listening to feedback from the 2015 survey, which suggested that employees would like a simpler review process with one form for all staff, a new simplified form designed by a group of volunteers from the employee engagement group to encourage better conversations between individuals and their managers about performance and development was approved. Launched in early 2018 with support for anyone requesting it, the new process is currently being evaluated.

8.8 Appointment of Learning and Development Manager

The permanent appointment of a Learning and Development Manager shows the importance the Service places on its people. The relatively newly appointed post holder has a strong background in people and a professional desire to improve the experience of all that work within CFRS. She has already facilitated a number of workshops and activities for example, motivation workshops (there is a clear link between employee engagement and motivation), delegation and empowerment, becoming a Faceteer, developing your team and management training (Inspire/Aspire).

9. NEXT STEPS

9.1 Work continues behind the scenes to progress the original action plan and look at how to move the work forward; a revised version was presented to COG in September 2018. Whilst the action plan is still considered appropriate the Service strongly believes the key to a fully engaged workforce is good line management. It is intended to incorporate related activities, based on the ACAS pillars of trust, voice, management and leadership in to the 2019 manager seminar programme. The employee groups will reconvene and progress the areas with least satisfaction through the action plan.

9.2 It is intended that another full survey will be run in 2019; date to be confirmed.

10. CONCLUSIONS

10.1 CFRS has experienced significant change over several years and continues to operate within an increasingly challenging and austere environment. The COG recognises the critical nature of trusting and engaged relationships at every level to ensure success. The CFO is the sponsor for the current employee engagement work and it forms part of the COG performance objectives for 2018/19.

- 10.2 Employee engagement surveys are an opportunity to learn and reflect. They highlight areas that need to improve, challenge thinking, provide insights and afford an opportunity for an organisation to move forward together. They also set an expectation with employees that the organisation will make meaningful changes. Not following through with effective change can cause cynicism that harms future initiatives and cause a negative environment.
- 10.3 The survey results are generally positive however as a self-aware organisation CFRS should continue their journey of continuous improvement and look at ways to increase employee engagement and ultimately improve the experience of everybody that works within it.

Member View

The review group believe that the evidence suggests a genuine desire by senior leaders to know what employees think and how they feel about working for CFRS. They recognise that only with honest feedback, no matter how brutal, can they learn what else needs to be done to continue to make improvements to the Service. Employees across the organisation have also demonstrated their desire to provide honest feedback, evidenced through the response rates and answers.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 Having considered all available evidence, the review group make the following recommendations for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- acknowledge the support of COG to facilitate employee engagement activities,
 - acknowledge the successes of the employee engagement groups and the required effort over and above their primary roles to ensure progress,
 - reassure the Authority that the Service is affording any employee engagement activities the necessary priority and that the direction of travel and approach being taken is appropriate.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Source Documents	Location	Contact Officer
Various	Hinchingbrooke Cottage Brampton Road Huntingdon	Deb Thompson Deb.thompson@cambsfire.gov.uk 07775731629