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| <b>REPORT REFERENCE NO.</b>                 | <b>PC/23/13</b>  |
| <b>MEETING</b>                              | <b>PEOPLE COMMITTEE</b>  |
| <b>DATE OF MEETING</b>                      | <b>30 OCTOBER 2023</b>   |
| <b>SUBJECT OF REPORT</b>                    | <b>PEOPLE SURVEY ACTIONS</b>   |
| <b>LEAD OFFICER</b>                         | <b>ASSISTANT CHIEF FIRE OFFICER – SERVICE DELIVERY</b>   |
| <b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>                      | <i>That the report be noted.</i>   |
| <b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>                    | <p>The Service conducted a People Survey between April and June 2023, the aim of which was to gather insight from our workforce (including volunteers) about how they feel within their role at Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service.</p> <p>The survey gave people a confidential space to be able to give feedback and gained about 800 responses. The results were reported to the previous people committee.</p> <p>This report gives a summary of some of the actions that are currently taking place and areas to explore as a result of the survey results.</p> |
| <b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>                | As indicated in the paper.   |
| <b>EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS</b> | An initial assessment has not identified any equality issues emanating from this report.   |
| <b>APPENDICES</b>                           | None   |
| <b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>                    | People Committee report (PC/23/9) – Minute PC/23/3 refers  |

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. The Service conducted a People Survey between April and June 2023 to gather insight from our workforce (including volunteers) about how they feel within their role at Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service.
- 1.2. The survey gave people a confidential space to be able to give feedback and gained about 800 responses. The results were reported to the previous people committee.
- 1.3. Following the analysis of the results, the Extended Leadership Team has agreed five areas of focus from the report, which are:
  - Inclusion of thought – valuing opinions and ideas for all areas of the Service;
  - Bullying and harassment – improving reporting and responses;
  - Trust in leadership – having visible leaders who engender trust in colleagues;
  - Support staff – valuing support staff and create better learning and development opportunities; and
  - Working together – improving collaboration and inter-departmental working practices.
- 1.4. Colleagues from the Communications and Engagement team have been meeting with departments to talk through the survey results for their areas.
- 1.5. Department leads have been tasked with adding actions against these five areas, but also any areas specific to their department. These are continuing to be developed across the Service.
- 1.6. The Extended Leadership Team has also worked to develop actions across the five areas.
- 1.7. This report gives a summary of some of the actions that are currently taking place and areas to explore.

## **2. FIVE AREAS OF FOCUS**

- 2.1. Based on what colleagues have said in the People Survey, the Extended Leadership Team has agreed five key areas for focus. There are also activities that have been listed against each – what we're doing and actions to take.

### **1. Inclusion of thought**

Opinions and ideas being valued and receiving feedback on input is an area for improvement highlighted by survey responses. Looking at all survey responses, 59% of our workforce agreed or strongly agreed their ideas are valued and they have opportunity to share them.

## I feel my ideas and opinions are valued and I have the opportunity to share them

Question report

| Impact  | Question   | Theme                        | Response Favourability  |
|---|--|------------------------------|---|
|  | I feel my ideas and opinions are valued and I have the opportunity to share them | Inclusion, Values and Ethics | <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"><div style="width: 59%; background-color: #00a0e3; text-align: center;">59%</div><div style="width: 24%; background-color: #d9d9d9; text-align: center;">24%</div><div style="width: 18%; background-color: #555555; text-align: center;">18%</div></div> |

## I will be asked for my opinion to give input before decisions are made

Question report

| Impact  | Question   | Theme           | Response Favourability  |
|---|--|-----------------|---|
|  | I will be asked for my opinion to give input before decisions are made | Ways of Working | <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"><div style="width: 39%; background-color: #00a0e3; text-align: center;">39%</div><div style="width: 31%; background-color: #d9d9d9; text-align: center;">31%</div><div style="width: 30%; background-color: #555555; text-align: center;">30%</div></div> |

2.2. Here's what some colleagues said about this:

*"New ideas from ops assurance input from incidents are met with huge brick walls and political issues within departments."*

*"I feel that the expertise I have achieved in my role is not used to its full potential and others that have no real knowledge of my role are left to make decisions for me. I am only trusted to make any decision when it suits."*

2.3. What we're already doing:

- Tactical co-ordination forum set up. Terms of reference and membership to be looked at;
- Manager skill-build and Leading Conversations listen to ideas and enable people to share them;
- Work underway to improve feedback process, to include tracking and assurance;
- Communications and engagement strategy in place;
- Stakeholder workshops feed into projects;
- People survey taken place to listen to workforce; and
- Efficiency suggestions have been considered, further suggestions are being sought from individuals and teams.

2.4. Proposed future actions (timescales to be confirmed):

- Extend leader visits to departments as well as stations;
- Hold Extended Leadership Team meetings at different locations to improve access to leaders;
- Improve performance, development, and pastoral care processes;
- Improve links to wider range of NFCC work to help consider learning that could support the Service;
- Communicate departmental actions of People Survey with workforce;
- Explore how can give more feedback from meetings ELT attend to understand how the Service is influencing other stakeholders and the bigger industry picture
- Ensure early engagement with staff when planning change. Add 'understanding fears' gatepost in the decision-making process to ensure engagement has happened;
- Learn from director's hotseat success in corporate services and extend to other directorates;
- Education on people impact assessments; and
- Clearer stakeholder management on decision making to bring consistency to engagement and consultation.

**2. Bullying and harassment, and reporting this**

2.5. The survey asked whether respondents have witnessed or experienced bullying or harassment in the last 12 months. Looking at all the responses, 22% said they had, 68% answered no and 10% preferred not to say.

**I have witnessed or experienced bullying or harassment in the last 12 months**

Question report

| Impact  | Question   | Theme                        | Response Favourability   |
|---|--|------------------------------|--|
|  | I have witnessed or experienced bullying or harassment in the last 12 months | Inclusion, Values and Ethics |  |

2.6. On a base of 808 responses, 22% is approximately 178 people having witnessed or experienced bullying or harassment. Based on the responses, 117 people experienced it themselves, and 66 people said they reported it. 116 said they had not had a satisfactory response, although more work is needed to understand why this is.

2.7. Here's what colleagues said about this:

*“Due to reported behaviour being ignored, unfortunately I had lost faith in reporting behaviour through line management. However, in recent months with a focus on the confidential reporting line and messages from leaders, I feel equipped to report behaviour again. Next time, I will use the confidential reporting line, rather than going to line management.”*

*“Overall excellent standards of inclusion across the service, there are still occasions within a close working group where standards could be a bit better. It's difficult to isolate a single incident as it may seem trivial, however these incidents when you may feel isolated or undermined can carry on if not challenged.”*

2.8. What we're already doing:

- Introduced lots of channels for people to report concerns, such as Speak Up Guardians, a confidential reporting line, whistleblowing, HR processes. Respect and Fairness Toolkit (RAFT) in place to signpost the best route for people.
- Making sure people understand what's expected within our culture.
- Cause for concern action plan being carried out and HMICFRS culture report recommendations implemented.
- Policy review taken place to support investigations into reports of bullying and harassment.
- Line manager development specifically to focus on culture and supporting people.

2.9. Proposed future actions (timescales to be confirmed)

- Need to understand more about the satisfactory outcome. Adapt survey questions.
- Clearer use of professional standards and conduct a clear gap analysis.
- Continuous review of culture to check on progress and explore whether there are issues we are unsighted on within the Service.


### **3. Trust in leadership**

2.10. Senior management (defined as Executive Board, Service Leadership Team, and Group Commanders) demonstrating our Service values is consistently lower than line managers displaying the values, with honesty and working together being the least favourable responses.

2.11. The question about 'trusting leadership to make decisions that support me, and my colleagues' has dropped from 56% in 2021 to 43% in 2023 of people in agreement.

## I trust our leadership team to make decisions that support me and my colleagues

Question report

| Impact  | Question  | Theme      | Response Favourability  |
|---|---|------------|---|
|  | I trust our leadership team to make decisions that support me and my colleagues | Leadership | <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"><div style="width: 43%; background-color: #0070c0; color: white; text-align: center;">43%</div><div style="width: 28%; background-color: #cccccc; color: black; text-align: center;">28%</div><div style="width: 29%; background-color: #666666; color: white; text-align: center;">29%</div></div> |

2.12. Here's what some colleagues said about this:

*"It still feels like senior managers withhold information and when asked direct questions do not give direct answers. Also, problems that arise at station level that are cascaded up to senior management level then get forgotten about and not resolved or deemed too difficult to sort out."*

2.13. What we're already doing:

- Refreshing the terms of reference for Executive Board and Service Leadership Team.
- 360 feedback process rolled out for all leaders, and now being carried out with middle managers.
- Key message briefing, updated regularly, so that all leaders give consistent messaging.
- Customer charter introduced to set expectations and allow people to be held to account at all levels.

2.14. Proposed future actions (timescales to be confirmed). Note that lots of actions around inclusion of thought and other priority areas were considered to also improve trust in leadership. Not duplicated in this report.

- More informal working groups to encourage wider diversity and levels of people to come together.
- Encourage buddy system or secondments across departments.
- Follow through on actions and suggestions, clearly explaining rationale for decisions.
- Continue to work to make sure leaders are more visible and accessible.

### 4. Support staff

2.15. The survey consistently shows that people who have identified that they work as 'uniformed – wholetime duty system' or 'support staff' are less likely to answer favourably to the questions asked.

- 2.16. The largest difference is within the Learning and Development theme, with support staff 11% less likely to answer in agreement on average. The question where this is most notable is 'I understand how to progress in the organisation if I want to', compared to the whole workforce average of 50% agreement, 34% support staff agreed, compared with 69% on-call, 55% wholetime and 53% control.

*"There is a lack of senior leadership respecting, listening, and acting upon advice given by green book staff. Often a stance of 'we know best' is demonstrated. This has led to a feeling of us not working together as a team."*

*"I feel that the vision is unclear and that we are still focused too strongly on ops. If we want to end preventable emergencies, we should focus more on prevention and community engagement"*

- 2.17. What we're already doing

- Apprenticeships scheme, which will be shared more widely.
- E-learning, local development sessions and team-arranged development.
- Standard recruitment process, with clearer progression paths for support staff.
- Providing consistent guidance across departments for professional development at budget setting time.

- 2.18. Proposed future actions (timescale to be confirmed)

- Empower people to be more proactive and develop their own development plans.
- Introduce a buddy system to learn from other roles and understand roles within the Service.
- Develop formal secondment opportunities across departments.
- Include support staff department visits on leaders' visit cycle.
- Improvements to succession planning.
- Provide a fair process for allocating funding for learning and development across support departments.

## **5. Working well together (high negative)**

- 2.19. The average responses for each theme of the People Survey show that 'ways of working' has the lowest agreement, and highest disagreement rates. Less than half (47%) agree that senior management (Executive Board, Service Leadership Team, and Group Commanders) demonstrate the value 'working together', with 26% disagreeing. 31% of the people who answered the survey disagreed with the question 'I feel that different parts of the Service are working well together'.

## I feel that different parts of the Service are working well together to deliver our services

Question report

| Impact  | Question   | Theme           | Response Favourability   |
|---|--|-----------------|--|
|  | I feel that different parts of the Service are working well together to deliver our services | Ways of Working |  |

2.20. Here's what colleagues said about this:

*"Five years ago, almost without exception, everyone I encountered was keen to cooperate and build a better service. This is much less proactive now; cooperation is complex and time consuming and it feels like there is a need to 'Just Do It'. At the same time there is a loss of the wider organisational 'why'."*

*"I feel like the service is not working well together at the moment. I get the feeling that different departments in the service are trying to protect their own interests in fear of cost saving measures affecting them."*

2.21. What we're already doing:

- Service Leadership Team actions are combined into one tracker to understand priorities.
- Service Leadership Team meeting scheduled to record actions and review performance.
- Internal engagement programme, including station visits, Big Conversation Live, Leading Conversations, Manager Skill-Build.

2.22. Proposed future actions (timescales to be confirmed):

- Improve the visibility of actions and decisions.
- Understanding the importance of the seemingly 'small things' and delivering on these promptly, such as weeding at stations.
- Development of the tactical leadership team (grade 9/10) to cascade from SLT to deliver actions.
- Clearly set out strategy with minimum delivery standard and scheme of delegation which we can all work within and trust staff to deliver against.
- Microsoft 365 product access to be consistent across departments to enable effective sharing of information and cross-departmental working.

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