

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	PC/24/7
MEETING	PEOPLE COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	24 APRIL 2024
SUBJECT OF REPORT	PEOPLE AND CULTURE UPDATE
LEAD OFFICER	Chief Fire Officer
RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>That the Committee reviews progress in delivery of the action plan.</i>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>On Friday 31 March 2023, HMICFRS published a report into the values and culture in fire and rescue services. The report contains 35 recommendations, 1 specific for the police, 14 which require action at a national level and 20 which are specific for fire and rescue services.</p> <p>The paper appended to this report outlines the progress that has been made against these recommendations since the last update to the committee in January 2024. The key highlights are that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One recommendation, Monitoring and Evaluating Feedback, has been marked as closed since the last update to the committee. <p>HMICFRS requested services provide a final update on the status and progress against each of the culture recommendations by Tuesday 19/03/2024. The following recommendations have remained marked as 'In Progress':</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation 09: Background checks • Recommendation 12: Staff disclosure, complaint and grievance handling standard • Recommendation 14: Misconduct allegations standard • Recommendation 32: Diversity in succession planning
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	Considered within the Action Plan where appropriate.
EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS	Considered within the Action Plan where appropriate.
APPENDICES	None.
BACKGROUND PAPERS	HMICFRS Report – Values and Culture in Fire and Rescue Services

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. On Friday 31 March 2023, HMICFRS published a report into the values and culture in fire and rescue services. The report contains 35 recommendations, 1 specific for the police, 14 which require action at a national level and 19 which are specific for fire and rescue services.
- 1.2. This report provides an update on the action plan to address these recommendations.

2. CULTURE RECOMMENDATIONS COMPLETION STATUS

- 2.1 An update has been provided to HMICFRS, via their online document sharing platform, detailing the actions the Service has taken against each of the 20 recommendations for the fire and rescue sector.
- 2.2 Table 1 below outlines the recommendations which have been marked as 'Closed' since the last update to the People Committee in January 2024.

Table 1:

DSFRS Ref.	Description	Deadline	Status
REC24	Monitoring and Evaluating Feedback	01/10/2023	Closed

- 2.3 Figure 1 below outlines current progress against addressing these recommendations (as at 10/04/2024), as reported to HMICFRS, with the colour coding as follows:
 - Blue (B): Closed (evidence has been reviewed by the HMICFRS Governance Board and the Executive Board has approved the closure)
 - Amber (A): In Progress (recommendation deadline not met)

Figure 1: HMICFRS Culture Recommendations Completion Status

Recommendation 1 Confidential Reporting (B)	Recommendation 3 Support for individuals raising concerns (B)	Recommendation 4 Handling of raised concerns (B)
Recommendation 5 How to raise concerns (staff and public) (B)	Recommendation 9 Background Checks (A)	Recommendation 12 Disclosure, complaint and grievance standard (A)
Recommendation 14 Misconduct Allegations standard (A)	Recommendation 17 Allegations of staff gross misconduct (B)	Recommendation 18 Support during ongoing investigations (B)
Recommendation 20 Fire Standards (B)	Recommendation 21 360 Feedback (ACFO and above) (B)	Recommendation 22 360 Feedback (all managers) (B)
Recommendation 23 Feedback from staff (B)	Recommendation 24 Monitoring and Evaluating Feedback (B)	Recommendation 26 Management and Leadership Training (B)
Recommendation 27 Equality Impact Assessments (B)	Recommendation 28 Equality and Diversity Data (B)	Recommendation 32 Diversity in succession planning (A)
	Recommendation 33 Progression of non- operational staff (B)	Recommendation 34 Core Code of Ethics (B)

3. **CULTURE RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH ARE 'IN PROGRESS' (DEADLINE NOT MET)**

- 3.1. Table 2 below outlines the recommendations which are currently marked as 'In Progress' where the recommendation deadline has not been met. Factors impacting the delivery of actions to address these recommendations are detailed in section 4.

- 3.2. HMICFRS requested services provide a final update on the status and progress against each of the culture recommendations by Tuesday 19/03/2024. The following recommendations have remained marked as 'In Progress'.

Table 2:

DSFRS Ref.	Description	Deadline	Status
REC09	Background checks	01/01/2024	In Progress
REC12	Staff disclosure, complaint and grievance handling standard	01/03/2024	In Progress
REC14	Misconduct allegations standard	01/03/2024	In Progress
REC32	Diversity in succession planning	01/06/2023	In Progress

4. CULTURE RECOMMENDATION ACTIONS WHICH ARE 'OFF TRACK'

- 4.1. The tables below outline the factors impacting the completion of the culture recommendations that are currently marked as 'In Progress'.

Improvement Area	Status
REC09 – Background checks	In Progress
Factors impacting delivery	
<p>All staff have a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check on appointment appropriate to their role. As part of the pre-employment checks a 'basic' DBS had to be completed for all staff. There are some roles which require an 'enhanced' DBS and this has been completed.</p> <p>The amendment to the DBS criteria in July 2023 means that the Service can now undertake a 'standard' check for staff. All new starters have been checked to the appropriate level since July 2023.</p> <p>A paper outlining the plans for implementation of the new required level of check for all existing staff has been approved by the Executive Board and work has commenced on preparing for implementation. Communications will be sent to all staff outlining the changes.</p>	

Improvement Area	Status
REC12 – Staff disclosure, complaint and grievance handling standard	In Progress
REC14 – Misconduct allegations standard	In Progress
Factors impacting delivery	

As no new standards have been published, the Service can no longer 'provide assurances to HMICFRS that they have implemented the standard on staff disclosure, complaint and grievance handling.' or 'provide assurances to HMICFRS that they have implemented the standard on misconduct allegations and outcomes handling.'

As an alternative approach, the Service has provided evidence of compliance against each of the updated criteria from the 'Leading the Service' and 'Leading and Developing People' Fire Standards, as outlined by the NFCC.

Due to the existing challenges around completing actions against recommendation 09 (background checks), and specific requirements for recommendations 12 and 14 in relation to managing staff disclosure and misconduct allegations, the Service will be unable to mark this recommendation as completed. New guidance, including the 'Positive Disclosure Risk Assessment Guidance' and the 'Managing Allegations' guidance, will now be included as part of existing work.

In reference to internal misconduct, this is dealt with under our disciplinary policy and procedure. The Service ensures it aligns to guidance outlined by ACAS in relation to the management and resolution or conclusion of misconduct related allegations.

Improvement Area	Status
REC32 – Diversity in succession planning	In Progress
Factors impacting delivery	
<p>The Service's Strategic Workforce Planning Group considers diversity data in workforce planning at an organisational level. At a department level, the Service will be re-introducing a revised workforce planning toolkit which includes supporting department heads to consider diversity in succession planning. We will monitor implementation of this toolkit.</p> <p>In addition to this, the Service is involved with the 'Our Time' sponsorship programme which aims to remove barriers to increasing diversity and inclusivity in the workforce, particularly in relation to progression for women.</p> <p>The People Services department has started the PPD refresh activity and the recording of succession plans will form part of this conversation and scenario planning. This also links to the high potential work that has begun. These activities will pool together appropriate action areas to better inform succession plans and workforce planning. Regular meetings are in place for PPD refresh and high potential actions. Key actions to be delivered by June 2024.</p> <p>Diversity in succession planning will continue to be an area of focus for the Service.</p>	

GAVIN ELLIS
Chief Fire Officer