

SUBJECT: EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT – UPDATE

**JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, THE CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY, THE
STRATEGIC FINANCE OFFICER AND THE PERSONNEL ADVISOR TO THE AUTHORITY**

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on the current position in relation to employee engagement activities that have been undertaken in the last 2 years, and to share the direction of travel / way forward that aims to improve our current approach.

2 WHAT IS EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT?

- 2.1 Employee Engagement is a term used to describe the way people feel about working in an organisation. In highly engaged workplaces, employees are physically and psychologically safer, healthier and more productive, have a sense of belonging and belief in what is trying to be achieved. It provides a broader and more helpful measure for organisations compared to satisfaction, which only focuses on contentment of employees.

3 BACKGROUND AT TWFRS

- 3.1 Over the last 4 years TWFRS has evolved its approach towards employee engagement. This started by using an improved survey application for annual employee surveys, and in 2017/18, results were acted upon with a series of 'you said we did' briefings from SMG across the Service. The aim of these briefings was to share the key themes and create an opportunity for discussion.
- 3.2 In autumn of 2020, responsibility for improving and evolving our approach to employee engagement moved to the Organisational Development (OD) Team from the Business Support & Improvement Department. This move meant:
- existing subject knowledge within OD and its wider professional network could be taken advantage of more easily
 - taking the opportunity to bring into closer alignment, our work on inclusion, so an overall understanding of how employees experience work can be determined
 - we can evolve our approach which will help us to:
 - measure the impact of interventions that support change more effectively
 - understand better how our people feel about working for TWFRS

- be more adaptive in our approach to be able to deal with and understand the implications of new ways of working, accelerated by the impact of the Covid-19 global pandemic.

3.3 Aside from traditional surveys, employee engagement also includes day to day interactions with colleagues, comments received on intranet articles, as well as more formal well established mechanisms such as Employee Network Groups, Health & Safety and Joint Consultative Committees, i.e. any forum where employees are represented.

3.4 To illustrate some of the more recent work in this area, the following formal events have taken place since 2019:

- 2019 Annual Employee Survey
- 2020 HMICFRS Covid-19 Inspection Employee Survey
- 2020 Investors in People (IiP) Assessment - focus groups and 1-2-1s
- 2020 How We Have Experienced Work – Team discussions about working life during the pandemic.

3.5 Members are advised that a significant amount of information and data has been captured from the above activities, all of which has helped to inform current and future thinking around improvements for our people and service. This information can be provided separately and on request where required.

3.6 In addition to these, a number of other engagement events most of which could be classed as 'business as usual' have taken and continue to take place:

- ELT listening events (on station)
- Station Audit follow up with an informal Watch discussion
- CFO Vlog
- Ride-alongs (up until Covid-19)
- SM / GM all in training / shared learning days (virtually and in person)
- Discussions over 28 day file (on station)
- Watch Team Talks – during Covid-19 led by ELT
- District PAGs
- WM meetings
- Weekly FDO Briefings
- Barriers to productivity during Covid discussions
- All staff TEAMS Engagement Sessions with ELT using SLIDO collaboration tool
- Consultation with a selection of employees on draft guidance for having career conversations
- Involving a selection of WMs and their teams in trialling an on line self-coaching / development tool on personal mind-set.

4 WHERE WE ARE NOW

- 4.1 As can be seen from the examples above, TWFRS has been active in asking questions and encouraging discussions to understand how engaged and how well its people are. Despite this, there is a need to review and develop our overall approach to employee engagement and consider how an employee really experiences working for us, especially as the theme of Inclusion now features prominently within TWFRS 2025. This work will include being more consistent and timely in communicating our employee survey results and finding more effective ways of gathering and using quality data, to encourage ownership of issues and appropriate recognition of where things are going well.

5 WHERE WE WANT TO BE

- 5.1 To be able to do these effectively, we have recognised that:

- Developing a framework for all of our communications will help give us some consistent and valued methods to increase levels of employee engagement.
- Senior leaders through their behaviours and actions, need to enable their people to feel compelled to respond to surveys, because they can see the value in doing so, for themselves, their colleagues, the service and the community.
- We will need to invest further in resources that can give us timely and insightful data, which can help us to understand how things really are for our people. This includes the procurement of an IT solution using our inclusion budget, to help us survey in a more focussed and frequent way.
- We need to explain how personal data that we ask our people to share will be used, in an effort to build confidence and trust, and increase the value seen in the approach.
- We need managers and employees to feel enabled and confident to address any issues.
- We will need to involve our people to understand alongside the investment of better data collection:
 - what the best ways are to engage with them that will help us to understand how they experience work
 - how included they feel
 - how valued they feel for who they are and what they bring
- Utilise I.T. investments made on station e.g. TV monitors to share relevant employee engagement data more directly.
- We need to structure our work when it comes to employee engagement, particular employee survey responses to the simple framework of 'We Asked, You Said, We Did'.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 There are no direct risk implications arising from the content of this report. However, supporting the direction of travel in relation to Employee Engagement can help to mitigate risk for example in relation to employee turnover, improve employee wellbeing and reducing the risks of unplanned absence.

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report. Any costs associated with investments in resources will be considered at the appropriate time and using the appropriate Authority procedures.

8 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out as the various work and projects required to support our direction of travel commence.

9 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no health and safety implications in respect of this report.

10 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 Members are recommended to:
- a) Note the content within the report
 - b) Receive further reports / updates as appropriate.