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| Report to        | <b>North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority</b>  |
| Date             | <b>19 January, 2026</b>   |
| Lead Officer     | <b>Dawn Docx, Chief Fire Officer</b>  |
| Contact Officers | <b>Llinos Evans, Head of Corporate Communications</b><br><b>Elin Hughes and Tom Weston, Culture Champions</b> |
| Subject          | <b>Fire Family Survey and Cultural Champions Update Report</b>  |



## PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To provide Members with an update on the Fire Family Staff Survey results, together with an overview of recent activity and workstreams led by the Culture Champions.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 The Culture Champions provide regular updates on their workstreams at North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) meetings, Culture Improvement Board, the People and Organisational Development Committee, and the Joint Consultation and Negotiation Committee.
- 3 These updates support assurance and oversight by demonstrating progress against North Wales Fire and Rescue Service's (the Service) cultural journey, the Strategic Cultural Improvement Plan, and emerging indicators of cultural change and improvement.

## OBSERVATIONS FROM EXECUTIVE PANEL/AUDIT COMMITTEE

- 4 The information in this report has not been presented previously to Authority members.

## RECOMMENDATION

- 5 It is recommended that Members:
  - i) **Note the initial findings of the Fire Family Staff Survey, acknowledging both the positive progress made and the key areas requiring further focus, and support next steps; and**
  - ii) **Note the ongoing programme of improvements and support the next steps outlined in this report by the culture champions.**

## BACKGROUND

### Fire Family Survey Results

- 6 This was the third Fire Family Survey and achieved the highest response rate in four years at 68%. Overall results show improvement since 2023. Staff continue to express pride in their roles, teamwork, and a supportive environment. Eighty-three percent feel proud to work for the Service and would recommend it as a workplace. Engagement is strong at 81%, and 85% of staff know how their work contributes to the Service's aims. Governance improved to 73%, and reward saw one of the biggest uplifts, reaching 63%. The top five words used to describe culture were: friendly, supportive, improving, inclusive, and positive.
- 7 These results confirm that staff remain committed, value their work, and feel increasingly recognised. However, the pace of change has not met everyone's expectations. While staff feel more listened to, confidence is affected by a perceived lack of follow-up when issues are raised. Leadership scored 75% positive or neutral, but concerns remain about whether action will be taken and whether leaders are connected to frontline realities. Enablement stands at 57%, highlighting the need for clearer communication, stronger support, and consistent expectations. Some staff groups scored lower than others, so targeted support will be important.

### Key Themes from Comments:

- 8 Cultural progress is noted, with managers seen as more approachable and blame culture reduced. Staff value crew-level pride, community impact, and improved station-based training.
- 9 Positive initiatives include Culture Champions, EDI training, Speak Up routes, and welfare support. Challenges remain around leadership trust and accountability, promotion fairness, communication, bullying, rostering flexibility, and training consistency.
- 10 The Service Leadership Team, the Fire Family Working Group, and middle managers received the People Insight presentation ahead of the all-staff drop-in session held on 9 December 2025. Approximately 75 staff members attended, with actual participation likely higher as some groups joined collectively using a single device.

## Next Steps:

- 11 Further survey statistics will be shared in the New Year. Focus will be on building confidence by improving communication, increasing trust in leadership, and ensuring actions are delivered fairly. The Fire Family Working Group will help shape action plans, with updates shared via Weekly Brief and Hwb Tân.

## Recent Culture Champions Activities

- 12 The Culture Champions have engaged with a range of committees and trade union representatives, gaining oversight of work across the Service and gathering workforce feedback to inform cultural improvement. This engagement supports alignment with the Cultural Action Plan and embeds cultural considerations within decision making. Further engagement with staff and key stakeholders will continue through visits, staff networks, working groups and ongoing committee attendance.
- 13 Following a series of discussions, the Welsh Government has confirmed funding for several initiatives that will strengthen the Service's cultural development, align with ongoing improvement activity, and support in addressing recommendations of the Crest Report.
- 14 A revised draft of the Strategic Cultural Improvement Plan was approved for publication at December's Culture Improvement Board.
- 15 Development of a draft implementation plan to support the embedding of the Core Code of Ethics across the Service is underway. This workstream is being considered for inclusion within the Fire Family Survey Working Group to support delivery and oversight, particularly in response to themes emerging from the recent survey findings.
- 16 The 'Our Culture' page on the Hwb has been refreshed, incorporating a revised introduction and the introduction of a monthly newsfeed highlighting ongoing cultural improvement workstreams. Updates are also being shared via the weekly brief to support improved communication and staff engagement.
- 17 The Culture Champions are supporting Human Resources colleagues in the development of the Workforce Representation Strategy. This work includes consultation with staff networks and trade union representatives to ensure the strategy reflects diverse perspectives and addresses barriers to representation, progression, and inclusion.

- 18 Work has commenced to explore how key performance indicators (KPIs) can support the effective tracking of cultural progress against the Crest Report recommendations. This includes consideration of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) culture dashboard methodology, which is designed to support services in monitoring and understanding their organisational culture and how it changes over time. The methodology aims to help identify key issues and successful practices, enable informed conversations between staff and leadership on values, culture, fairness, ethics and diversity, and support evidence-based action.
- 19 The Culture Champions attended the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) Conference hosted by London Fire Brigade at London Heathrow on 26–27 November. The conference focused on themes of trust, leadership, organisational culture, and community across fire and rescue services. Attendance provided the opportunity to engage with colleagues nationally, gather learning on effective cultural improvement practice, and strengthen relationships with partner organisations undertaking similar work. Key insights gained will inform ongoing culture-related initiatives within the Service.
- 20 The Culture Champions have also participated in research being undertaken by the University of South Wales examining culture and conduct within public services across Wales. This included attendance at a 10Kv consultation event in North Wales alongside representatives from other public services. Outputs from this research will directly inform the development of an Innovation Plan for the Welsh Government and wider public sector bodies.
- 21 The Culture Champions chaired an initial meeting on 18 December 2025 with individuals in comparable roles from Fire and Rescue Services, Police Forces and the Ambulance Service across Wales. With this forum now established, regular future engagement is planned to share learning, monitor progress, identify opportunities for collaboration, and exchange best practice in relation to cultural improvement across Wales.

## **CONCLUSION**

- 22 The programme of work now requires ongoing support to ensure these improvements are embedded, trusted, and sustainable.

## IMPLICATIONS

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| Well-being Objectives                          | Cultural improvement activity contributes to a healthy, motivated workforce and supports long-term organisational sustainability.   |
| Budget   | Welsh Government funding has been confirmed to support several cultural improvement initiatives aligned to the Crest Report recommendations. Further activity is being delivered within existing budgets.   |
| Legal  | Work to embed the Core Code of Ethics and respond to the Crest Report recommendations strengthens organisational assurance and mitigates legal and reputational risk.   |
| Staffing                                       | Survey findings and engagement activity highlight strong workforce commitment, while identifying areas requiring targeted support. Ongoing cultural improvement work aims to enhance trust, leadership confidence, enablement, and fair treatment, supporting staff retention, wellbeing and workforce effectiveness. |
| Equalities/<br>Human Rights/<br>Welsh Language | Cultural improvement activity promotes engagement with staff, fairness, inclusion and dignity at work. Communication activity, including use of Hwb Tân, continues to reflect Welsh language standards.   |
| Risks  | Failure to maintain momentum or demonstrate clear follow-through on staff feedback may impact trust, engagement and confidence in leadership.   |