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| Report to | Executive Panel |  |
| Date | 16 June 2025 | |
| Lead Officer | Dawn Docx, Chief Fire Officer | |
| Contact Officer | Anthony Jones - Assistant Chief Fire Officer | |
| Subject | Independent Cultural Review into North Wales Fire and Rescue Service | |

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To present to Members of the Executive Panel of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) an update into the independent cultural review into North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) and to confirm the next steps on the cultural journey of the Service.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2 It is recommended that Members:
 - i) **Note the Strategic Cultural Improvement Plan, and**
 - ii) **endorse the next steps on the cultural journey of NWFRS.**

BACKGROUND

- 3 On 5 February 2025, the cultural report into cultural review undertaken by Crest advisory was published and was presented to the Executive Panel of the Authority on 17 March 2025.
- 4 Since 17 March 2025, Crest Advisory have made presentations to Authority Members, to the Service Leadership Team, to Middle Leaders and at events open to all employees, as well as to Welsh Government officials on 11 March 2025.
- 5 Following numerous staff cultural workshops held at all levels and departments of the Service, a Cultural Board (CB) has now been established, chaired by the CFO. The CB will continue to work closely with the staff networks, the Fire Family Staff Survey Project Group as well as the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity (EDI) Committee, which will also be chaired by the CFO.

- 6 The goal of the CB is to ensure this process is as collaborative and inclusive as possible, where everyone has a voice in shaping the future of the Service.
- 7 The CB has now produced a Strategic Cultural Improvement Plan, (see Appendix) and a more detailed action plan that sits with it. This plan was reviewed at the last Service Leadership Team meeting on 27 May 2025, and a small number of recommendations for amendment were submitted which are being worked on.

INFORMATION

- 8 This strategic cultural improvement plan, whilst acknowledging progress, targets issues like a lack of accountability and transparency among some leaders. It proposes concrete steps to bolster trust, ensure fairness in recruitment and promotion, and invest in staff development.
- 9 This strategic cultural improvement plan also aims to foster a diverse and inclusive workforce, improve health, safety, and wellbeing, and enhance the handling of misconduct and grievances to build on existing improvements and tackle remaining obstacles.
- 10 This improvement plan acknowledges that while the culture has improved since June 2021 with the appointment of the current Chief Fire Officer, negative behaviours among a minority of staff are still hindering positive change.

INFORMATION – KEY OBJECTIVES

There are 5 Key Objectives as follows:

- 11 The primary objective of this plan is to create a more transparent, accountable, diverse, and supportive workplace, where all recommendations are fully implemented and have become **“business as usual.”**
- 12 To deliver on the areas for improvement that were identified via the main Crest report, and the subsequent departmental focus group meetings, and staff suggestion scheme.
- 13 To utilise Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timebound (SMART) objectives to identify actions to meet these improvement recommendations.

- 14 To clearly identify who will be responsible for implementing the plan to address the recommendations.
- 15 To regularly monitor the plan at strategic level, making any necessary adjustments as part of an ongoing strategic review process.

INFORMATION – KEY STRATEGIC THEMES

- 16 The above objectives were created having reviewed a number of key strategic themes that were evident in both the narrative of the report, and during the workshops and group presentations already discussed earlier in this report.
 - Bolstering accountability and building trust
 - Ensuring recruitment, promotion and transfer are fair and transparent
 - Investing in every individual's development
 - Fostering a diverse and inclusive workforce
 - Improving health, safety and wellbeing
 - Improving misconduct and grievance handling

NEXT STEPS

- 17 To publish the approved strategic cultural improvement plan onto the Authority and Service websites.
- 18 To begin the implementation phase of the underpinning detailed action plan, providing regular progress reports against the plan to the Executive Panel.

IMPLICATIONS

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| Well-being Objectives | Future Service provision could be impacted if the concerns highlighted by the review are not addressed |
| Budget | The cost of the review was £150,000 and it was fully funded from the Authority's reserves |
| Legal | The Service is working with the Equality and Human Rights Commission to ensure that it complies with its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 |
| Staffing | An Area Manager was seconded onto this project for nine months to coordinate, and contract manage the project |
| Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language | The project was conducted bilingually, and participation was on a self-selecting, voluntary basis |
| Risks | The report identifies both positive improvements and causes for concern. The concerns must be addressed to ensure that the Service remains an employer of choice and can attract talent to provide quality services. |