REPORT AUTHOR: **ALISON KIBBLEWHITE**

SUBJECT: **BRIEFING ON THE INDEPENDENT CULTURE REVIEW OF LONDON FIRE BRIAGDE**

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Background Papers: Independent Culture Review of London Fire Brigade, November 2022 by Nazir Afzal OBE

PURPOSE:

To brief members on the findings from London Fire Brigade Cultural Review

RECOMMENDATION:

That Members acknowledge the contents of the report.

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1. Background

1.1 The review was established by the London Fire Commissioner after the tragic death of firefighter Jaden Francois-Esprit, who committed suicide in August 2020 after concerns were raised that he had been bullied because of his race. Prior to this tragedy there had been accusations that the Brigade had a culture of bullying, racism and discrimination.

1.2 A culture audit was carried out in 2020 and its findings were many of those interviewed found the culture of London Fire Brigade (LFB) to be controlling.

1.3 The most recent HMICFRS report from July 2022 acknowledged there had been progress since the first inspection but LFB still needed to improve looking after its people and that the Brigade's values and behaviour are not displayed by all.

1.4 Nazir Afzal OBE was appointed as the lead officer for the review and he appointed a team of 6 to work with him in November 2021. The Terms of reference included identifying areas for improvement, areas of strength and recommendations on the culture of LFB in regard to discrimination, unfairness and inequality.

2. Contents of the Review

2.1 The following lines of enquiry were considered:

- The impact of policies, processes, systems and ways of working on people and culture
- The way in which policies, processes and systems are applied and interpreted by staff and how that impacts on people and culture
- The behaviours and decisions of leaders at all levels and the impact they have on people and culture
- The impact of individual and group behaviour on people and culture
- The impact of team-based customs and traditions within the Brigade on people and culture
- The impact of barriers to progression, real and perceived, on people and culture
- The difference in experiences of staff based on, but not limited to their age, race, disability and neurodiversity, religion or belief, gender reassignment, sex, marriage and civil partnership, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and other forms of difference, including occupational group and rank.

2.2 The team carried out desktop research, data, reports, documents, focus groups, station visits, and interviews with over 250 staff including those that had left LFB. A private secure email address was also set up and this received over 100 written submissions.

2.3 The report covers the following areas:

- Strategic direction
- The impact of the Grenfell Tower fire and subsequent inquiries
- Leadership styles
- Workplace culture
- Morale across the Brigade
- Impact of Industrial relations
- Role of people services
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Mental Health and wellbeing
- Communication and engagement
- Training and career development

2.4 23 recommendations and 33 expected outcomes are included in the report.

3 Actions for Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

3.1 The contents of the report have been reviewed and a gap analysis is being completed against the recommendations contained within the report. It should be noted that a number of these recommendations are LFB specific.

3.2 The gap analysis will be reviewed by the Corporate management team and any areas which are found to be amber or red will be addressed.

3.3 South Wales Fire and Rescue Service have also commissioned an independent review into their culture after complaints were received concerning the handling of previous discipline hearings. There has also been a call for a national review of fire and rescue service culture as a result.

4   Recommendation:

4.1   That Members acknowledge the contents of the report.

ALISON KIBBLEWHITE
ASSISTANT CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

Appendix 1

__Recommendations__

Area	Recommendation Number	Recommendation	Outcome Number	Outcome
Creating a workplace where everyone is afforded dignity	1	All managers should adopt a zero-tolerance policy for bullying, racist and misogynistic behaviour in the workplace and appropriate disciplinary action must be taken to root out a toxic culture.	1	EDI training for managers and an independent complaints service.
Creating a workplace where everyone is afforded dignity	1	All managers should adopt a zero-tolerance policy for bullying, racist and misogynistic behaviour in the workplace and appropriate disciplinary action must be taken to root out a toxic culture.	2	Managers can identify inappropriate behaviours and values and act decisively to tackle them.
Creating a workplace where everyone is afforded dignity	2	Consider anonymised reporting of incidents relating to bullying, misogyny and racism. In a closed team-based culture individuals /groups can and have become stigmatised for reporting poor behaviour or bad experiences.	3	Staff can report incidents anonymously with no fear of the repercussions.

Creating a workplace where everyone is afforded dignity	3	Consider historic review of complaints about bullying, racism and misogyny over the last five years. This would establish a team to determine whether further action is necessary in cases where justice has been denied.	4	Review past cases and ensure all complaints over the past five years have been managed appropriately and the correct sanctions applied and where not an appropriate remedy has been introduced.
Creating a workplace where everyone is afforded dignity	4	Recognise the 'Safe to Speak' programme is not sufficiently trusted and that further policies and dedicated resources are needed to make it easier for people to report clear examples of racism, misogyny and bullying of staff.	5	Ensure staff are confident to speak up when they witness or experience racism, misogyny or bullying.
Creating a workplace where everyone is afforded dignity	5	In conversation with the workforce and stakeholders, develop Brigade values that are 'public service' first, underpinning how we behave within the organisation and towards our public and partners. These values should inform the core code of ethics, recruitment, promotion, discipline, talent management, industrial relations, staff engagement, leadership development and strategic planning.	6	Eliminate the potential for bias or unfair treatment.

Creating a workplace where everyone is afforded dignity	5	In conversation with the workforce and stakeholders, develop Brigade values that are 'public service' first, underpinning how we behave within the organisation and towards our public and partners. These values should inform the core code of ethics, recruitment, promotion, discipline, talent management, industrial relations, staff engagement, leadership development and strategic planning.	7	For this to be successful the values must be visible in everything from the most strategic plans through to staff appraisals. They must run as a golden thread through recruitment, promotion, discipline, talent management, Industrial Relations, staff engagement. All of which must be transparent and open to challenge. Action must also be visible where there have been transgressions.
Creating a workplace where everyone is afforded dignity	6	Build a culture dashboard of LFB stations and teams that uses a mix of metrics to assess whether these are red, amber or green on a scale of risk where the working environment is concerned. The worst offenders (red) will demonstrate toxic behaviours, while at risk stations (amber) will demonstrate some areas of concern, and good practice stations (green) will demonstrate a healthy and supportive culture. Data to use includes grievances, staff turnover, exit interviews, people survey data, diversity and more. Use these dashboards to proactively address	8	The Brigade can identify where toxic culture is a threat and managers take swift action to address it. Good practice is identified and shared, so that others can learn from it.

problem teams and identify and
learn from good practice.

Creating a workplace where everyone is afforded dignity	7	Develop a robust mechanism for measuring LFB culture, which operates on an ongoing basis using a number of tools and metrics, including big data, social media, exit interviews, complaints levels, turnover etc.	9	LFB can monitor the health of its culture on an ongoing basis and take action to address emerging issues.
Creating a workplace where everyone is afforded dignity	8	Consider introducing body worn video for fire safety home visits.	10	Drive up standards of behaviour and professionalism.
Creating a workplace where everyone is afforded dignity	8	Consider introducing body worn video for fire safety home visits.	11	To be rolled out across station and inspection teams.
Creating a workplace where everyone is afforded dignity	9	Ensure there are secure facilities for all women in stations.	12	Afford greater dignity for all staff.
Better engagement with London Communities	10	Borough Commanders should build a better understanding of and closer relationships with their local communities, which should include learning from them and seeking the	13	Borough Commanders will own and implement their local Borough Community Risk Management Plan, informed by the community and local partners.

		input of diverse staff and the communities themselves.		
Better engagement with London Communities	10	Borough Commanders should build a better understanding of and closer relationships with their local communities, which should include learning from them and seeking the input of diverse staff and the communities themselves.	14	By 2024, local fire stations are seen as a community resource. Services are shaped by a deep understanding of local community needs.
Better engagement with London Communities	11	Recruit and progress fireghters who reflect and can demonstrate their commitment to London's diverse communities.	15	All Brigade staff understand London and its communities and are proud to serve them. Diversity is visible in all levels in the Brigade.
Better engagement with London Communities	12	Improve post-incident care by providing a named person to members of the public directly impacted by an event that required LFB attendance.	16	Members of the public affected by incidents are provided with an LFB Family Liaison Officer who offers sensitive and compassionate support. This increases community trust and confidence.

Building a leadership model of trust	13	Consider ways to integrate Head Office with operations immediately, and longer term when the lease of the Unions Street HQ expires in 2027.	17	Senior leaders work alongside operational and control staff regularly. Senior leaders are visible and regularly demonstrate their commitment to Brigade values and their understanding of the workforce at all levels.
Building a leadership model of trust	14	Improve the fairness and transparency of senior selection panels by appointing independent chairs and panel members and asking all candidates and panel members to declare any interests, including membership of the Freemasons.	18	Ensure there are transparent processes around ethics and conduct that reassure staff and communities that selection processes are fair. Selection data demonstrates that no groups of people experience bias in the process.
Building a leadership model of trust	14	Improve the fairness and transparency of senior selection panels by appointing independent chairs and panel members and asking all candidates and panel members to declare any interests, including membership of the Freemasons.	19	LFB staff declare potential conflicts of interest and memberships of any organisation that may conflict with our values and expectations.

Improved wellbeing	15	Increase the focus on mental health prevention by providing training for leaders and managers to identify and respond to stress at work; to understand their role in creating healthy cultures and understand the connection between inclusion and wellbeing	20	Training is delivered across all leadership roles. By 2024 - leaders and managers build and maintain inclusive, healthy and high performing teams. They can spot the signs of stress and anxiety and know their team members well, understand sources of stress and where more specialist support is needed to maintain or restore individual health and wellbeing. This is well funded, well signposted, well known and well used. The link between inclusion and wellbeing is well understood, and wellbeing metrics are integrated into culture measures.	
Improved wellbeing	16	Gather better information on employee red fags that signal the need for early intervention to prevent deteriorating mental health.	21	Staff are able to spot red flags that indicate deteriorating mental health and know how to access appropriate support for those at risk.	
Improved wellbeing	17	Investigate the root causes for LFB FRS staff being significantly more impacted by stress, anxiety and depression in comparison to their national colleagues and design	22	Ensure the sources of stress for FRS colleagues have been identified and appropriate support introduced to reduce occurrences	

		wellbeing interventions that address these issues directly.		
Improved wellbeing	17	Investigate the root causes for LFB FRS staff being significantly more impacted by stress, anxiety and depression in comparison to their national colleagues and design wellbeing interventions that address these issues directly.	23	By April 2024 the particular workplace sources of stress for FRS colleagues have been reduced, so that stress, anxiety and depression are at or below national levels.
Improved wellbeing	17	Investigate the root causes for LFB FRS staff being significantly more impacted by stress, anxiety and depression in comparison to their national colleagues and design wellbeing interventions that address these issues directly.	24	FRS staff are an integral part of the LFB community and their knowledge and expertise are valued and rewarded.
Improved wellbeing	18	Make it a priority to try to understand the reasons for suicide by ensuring that a clear and robust system of reporting is established. Capture the learnings in a Guidance document that includes a communication plan and action plan to support staff in the event of a colleague's death by suicide.	25	In the event of a suicide, the Brigade is prepared to act promptly and compassionately to offer staff information and support. LFB gathers and records information to build an understanding of the issues and design interventions to address them.

Improved wellbeing	19	Review the triggers that are needed to generate interventions to support mental health and wellbeing. A more detailed critical incident log of all firefighters will show what they have been exposed to and indicate where wellbeing support is necessary.	26	Ensure LFB has a clear understanding of the range of incidents their staff are exposed to and systematically reaches out to those who could be particularly at risk. There is a range of easy to access support and all colleagues are offered a comprehensive programme of support for their mental health.
Transforming HR Services	20	Conduct an independent review of People Services resourcing and provision to improve the professionalism and effectiveness of the service and deliver leading-edge HR solutions that managers and staff trust.	27	Ensure your HR service is valued and respected by all colleagues and plays an integral role in maintaining an inclusive culture.
Transforming HR Services	21	Create an HR Data Analytics Strategy and develop HR data analytics skills. Use data to design and implement People Services' strategies, policies and practices (including the 'Togetherness Strategy'), as well as lead the organisation in the desired cultural change.	28	The LFB people strategy and underpinning decisions will be evidence based and will use data to support a process of continuous improvement across people management practices.

Transforming HR Services	21	Create an HR Data Analytics Strategy and develop HR data analytics skills. Use data to design and implement People Services' strategies, policies and practices (including the 'Togetherness Strategy'), as well as lead the organisation in the desired cultural change.	29	LFB staff will always understand why decisions are made that affect them at work.
Transforming HR Services	22	Create an LFB workforce planning strategy to support the 'Togetherness Strategy', using data to link practices to long-term goals and outcomes. This will understand the reasons why BAME staff and women are significantly under-represented in the organisation in comparison to their White, male counterparts, and design interventions to improve this ratio. It will also deliver positive action to ensure talent at all levels is identified and, where appropriate, fast track development programmes enable people to fulfil their talent, particularly underrepresented groups.	30	LFB's recruitment and promotion processes are reviewed and revised.

Transforming HR Services	22	Create an LFB workforce planning strategy to support the 'Togetherness Strategy', using data to link practices to long-term goals and outcomes. This will understand the reasons why BAME staff and women are significantly under-represented in the organisation in comparison to their White, male counterparts, and design interventions to improve this ratio. It will also deliver positive action to ensure talent at all levels is identified and, where appropriate, fast track development programmes enable people to fulfil their talent, particularly underrepresented groups.	31	By April 2024 LFB are trusted by all colleagues. The selection of leaders is a transparent, well understood process based on merit, capability, and demonstration of clear, well-communicated values. Many colleagues across all levels help to select LFB leaders and there is never any doubt that leaders are in post because they are the right people for the role.
Transforming HR Services	22	Create an LFB workforce planning strategy to support the 'Togetherness Strategy', using data to link practices to long-term goals and outcomes. This will understand the reasons why BAME staff and women are significantly under-represented in the organisation in comparison to their White, male counterparts, and design interventions to improve this ratio. It will also deliver positive action to ensure talent at all levels is identified and, where appropriate, fast track development programmes	32	Within 5 years - LFB's workforce composition better reflects the communities they serve at all levels, including a diverse talent pipeline for the most senior leadership roles.

enable people to fulfil their talent, particularly underrepresented groups.

Transforming HR Services	23	Investigate the root causes why BAME staff are more likely to raise a grievance and twice as likely to be subject to disciplinary hearings in comparison to their White counterparts. Review the ways in which grievance and discipline policies are currently used and received by staff with protected characteristics across all occupational	33	Ensure LFB has a clear approach to responding to inappropriate behaviour that everyone trusts, understands and acts upon. Groups will use this in numbers that reflect their representation in the workforce. LFB staff subsequently feel confident in, and protected by, policies and systems to be able to raise concerns regarding other people's behaviour; they know they are safe and that their complaints will be taken seriously.