

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE: 24 APRIL 2024
REPORT OF: CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE
AUTHOR: GRAEME WORRALL

SUBJECT: 2023-24 STAFF ENGAGEMENT FORUM

Purpose of Report

1. To provide Members with a report on the activity of the 2023-24 Staff Engagement Forum.

Recommended: That

the report be noted.

Background

2. The 2023-24 Staff Engagement Forum is the fourth forum to be established since the introduction of the concept in 2018. The Forum comprises a range of individuals from across the Service who have applied to join the forum, with membership selected from a broad cross-section of the workforce.
3. The Forum largely set its own agenda and meets monthly to discuss various issues and topics, with the aim of suggesting ways in which improvements could be made to the Service.
4. There were 12 Members of the 2023-2024 Forum, from a range of roles and experiences from across the Service. They were:
 - Lottie Germaney, People and Organisational Development (Co-Chair)
 - Martin Dodd, Service Delivery, Powey Lane (Co-Chair)
 - Robert Ward-Dutton, Service Delivery, Runcorn
 - Heather Fox, Service Delivery, Lymm
 - Danielle Burgess, Service Delivery, Macclesfield
 - Phil Cornes, Service Delivery, Crewe
 - Steve Tucker, Service Delivery, Northwich
 - Conner Lafferty, Protection
 - Lawrence Howard, Health, Safety and Wellbeing
 - Helen Crick, Communications and Engagement
 - Hannah MacDonald, Service Delivery, Halton and Warrington Admin Hub
 - Hayley Williams, Governance and Democratic Services

Forum Contributions

5. The Forum held a total of nine meetings over the course of their year-long tenure, covering a range of topics and issues. A further meeting is planned following the presentation of this report, which will be the final meeting of this Forum. The following paragraphs summaries some of the topics that were discussed.
6. Also, as a standing item of business, each month the Forum provided an initial assessment for staff suggestions as part of the Ignite staff suggestion scheme. In total 56 ideas were assessed.

Integration between operational and non-operational staff

7. The Forum considered ways to improve integration between operational and non-operational staff within the Service, to help to support a positive culture, develop stronger links between different parts of the Service and improve cross-departmental communications. The Forum undertook initial planning on holding a specific event to bring colleagues together, which has now been incorporated into preparations for a new Cheshire Safety Day, scheduled for 12 September 2024.

Development of the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2024-28

8. Forum members were involved in two dedicated sessions as part of the pre-consultation phase of the development of the CRMP 2024-28. Members were provided with the data used to inform the fire cover review and took part in a workshop to explore various options for the provision of fire cover.

2023 Staff Survey and HMICFRS Feedback

9. The Forum provided feedback on the 2023 Staff Survey, acting as a focus group for the independent survey provider to obtain views and comments on a range of questions as part of the survey process itself. Secondly, members were asked to provide comment against the outcomes of the survey and suggest actions to address the emerging corporate level themes, including feeling informed about what is happening across the service and maintaining the visibility of senior leaders.
10. The Forum was also encouraged to provide views on the outcome of the 2023 inspection of the Service by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), in particular comments on taking forward any areas of improvements identified within the report.

Promotion board process

11. The Forum provided views and suggestions on potential improvements to the promotion board processes for operational staff, following the 2023 promotion board programme. The feedback received was considered by the project team reviewing the promotion boards, with several suggestions incorporated into the new process effective from 2024.

Review of the Ignite suggestion scheme

12. The Forum helped to review the Ignite staff suggestion scheme, suggesting improvements to the process from an end-user perspective. The feedback provided has been incorporated into a redesigned intranet page featuring a tracker to improve transparency and feedback on suggestions.

Internal communications and engagement

13. The Forum also provided feedback into the ongoing review of internal communications across the Service, covering issues including accessing the intranet, internal communications channels and corporate events. The feedback provided will be considered as part of the review process, which is due to conclude later in the year, and will directly inform the Service's new Internal Communications and Engagement Strategy.

Charity Fundraiser

14. Finally, the Forum is planning to hold a charity fundraising raffle to raise funds for the Fire Fighters Charity. Members are currently in the process of sourcing a range of donated prizes before promoting the event and are aiming to hold the raffle on Wednesday 26 June.

Financial Implications

15. A dedicated budget within the Communications and Engagement cost centre is provided to source external meeting venues and catering, plus any associated materials such as stationery, to facilitate the meetings of the Forum. In addition, each Forum member receives a £1,000 performance payment at the conclusion of the year, in recognition of their individual contributions.

Legal Implications

16. None.

Equality and Diversity Implications

17. Members of the Forum were appointed to provide a range of diverse views and experiences from all departments within the Service.

Environmental Implications

18. None.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE