the values of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Cultural Audit...

...what you said
Over the course of 2014, SFRS began its first ever cultural audit to look at our organisation’s culture and help identify what staff felt was - and wasn’t working well and how the working culture within SFRS could be developed to help support and deliver our vision, strategic aims and objectives.

Employees from across the Service took part by completing surveys and participating in focus groups. External partners, stakeholders and the public also had the chance to share their views via an online survey, giving us feedback on the way we approach our work with these groups.

From the audit a suite of actions were identified for priority and implementation through a specific action plan. Staff input and suggestions were at the heart of the actions which were taken forward to form the approved Cultural Audit Action Plan.

The findings of the audit were also used to help us identify the core values for SFRS and this information has been used to help develop a new SFRS Values Framework.
What were the audit’s findings?

Our current culture

Feedback from staff showed that in our current culture:

- **Conventional** behaviours are a strong feature of our current culture within SFRS. This means in terms of how staff are expected to approach their work and interact with each other, staff reported that making a good impression, conforming and always following policies and procedures are reinforced across SFRS. These behaviours were evident across all three Service Delivery Areas.

- **Oppositional** behaviours also featured strongly within SFRS, meaning colleagues are encouraged to look for mistakes, point out flaws as well as staying detached and objective.

- **Avoidance** behaviours were also a feature of our current culture, with staff reporting expectations to push decisions upwards, take few chances and shift responsibility to others.

- **Power** based patterns of behaviour were reported in terms of the extent to which people use the authority of their position or play ‘politics’ to gain influence and maintain authority.

- **Dependent** behaviours were reported by staff as a feature of our current culture in terms of being expected to check decisions with supervisors or managers and obeying orders.

- **Constructive** patterns of behaviour were evident in respect to employees being encouraged to achieve goals, support each other and work together.

- **Constructive** behavioural expectations were also highlighted by employees in respect to knowing the business, pursuing a standard of excellence, as well as thinking and planning ahead.
Our ideal culture

As well as looking at the Service’s current culture, the audit showed a high level of agreement in respect of the behaviours both SLT and Board members believe would support and drive effective performance in the SFRS. These behaviours centre on constructive behavioural norms where employees should:

- Be encouraged to achieve goals
- Support each other and work together
- Feel a sense of accomplishment in their role and the contribution they make
- Know the business
- Pursue a standard of excellence
- Enjoy their work
- Think ahead and plan

These are the behaviours which were central to the ideal culture SLT and Board members wish to grow and develop.
What you said you like working for SFRS

During the audit, staff were asked what they liked about working for the Service. Here’s what you had to say:

53% of staff highlighted that they most like working with people. You told us you enjoy working with direct team members, people within the same departments and with colleagues working elsewhere across SFRS.

41% of staff said that they most like making a difference and providing a service to the public and communities.

26% of people said they most like the terms and conditions of their employment, including shift patterns, flexible working, holidays, pay and pensions.

21% of colleagues said they most like the variety of their work.

20% of staff highlighted the sense of satisfaction their job provides them with as one of their top plus points working for SFRS.
How SFRS employees interact with others

A range of partners, stakeholders and members of the public who had, within the last six months, came into direct contact with the SFRS, were invited to take part in the audit process by completing an online survey. Their responses were measured against the same framework used to measure employee responses.

The external survey highlighted that our partners, stakeholders and members of the public feel that SFRS employees:-

- Seem to genuinely enjoy their jobs
- Work to build long-term, trust-based relationships with them
- Explain things in a helpful and informative way
- Maintain standards and personal integrity

Findings indicated that we would also benefit from reducing dependent and conventional behaviours in terms of the extent to which employees:

- Need to get a manager’s approval to fulfill special requests or need a supervisor to “sign off” routine tasks,
- Need to follow rules and policies without exceptions or come across like they’re following a ‘script’.

Service outcome scores from this survey also showed that SFRS consistently scored above average as compared to other organisations and are delivering high levels of:

- **Customer satisfaction** – SFRS are delivering and sustaining a high level of external customer service which stakeholders, partners and the community are satisfied with.
- **Advocacy** – These external groups would advocate SFRS as a good organisation to interact with.
How are findings from the Cultural Audit being used?

In addition, 48 staff focus groups took place across all employee groups. Staff were invited to help identify key actions which could be taken forward to the Cultural Audit action plan which would help improve working experience and reinforce constructive behaviours across SFRS.

The areas the audit helped identify focused on:

- Increasing **employee involvement** and **influence** so staff at all levels can help shape and influence our organisation.
- Improving **upward communication** so colleagues can share information with those in higher level posts more effectively.
- Ensuring that procedures for **selection** or **placement** in roles are rational and objective.
- **Use of rewards** to increase the likelihood that good performance will be noticed and reinforced.
- Encouraging **communication for learning** that takes into account the overall picture and how different areas of the organisation are dependent on each other.
Findings from the audit are also being used to help develop, and eventually embed, a new organisational SFRS Values Framework. To help build the framework, employees were asked what values they felt were unique and specific to working in the Service.

The new values, currently in draft form, centre around four themes:

• SAFETY
• TEAMWORK
• RESPECT
• INNOVATION

Feedback from the SLT, Board and staff will help to further develop the values. Input from employees at the strategic plan engagement workshops has also been used to shape these values, which will be integrated into our strategic plan for 2016 – 2019.

How to find out more
Further information on our cultural audit and its outcomes, including our new Values Framework, can be found on the intranet.