

## **Leadership**

This is the third update in our series reporting on the progress being made against recommendations from the Independent Culture Review, as part of our wider commitment to transparency, accountability, and delivering an inclusive and exceptional Service.

This update focuses on our progress in leadership, specifically the development of our executive and senior leadership teams.

“Through our transformation programme, Step Forward, we are taking a coordinated action to embed the changes needed in response to the Independent Culture Review and other key reports. This is being led by our new Service Strategy with a vision, mission and values. We have adopted and used the NFCC Fire Standards for leading the service and leading and developing our people as our foundation”, said Dominic Mika, Director of Strategic change and Transformation.

“Our aim is to build a stronger, more positive culture across the Service — one that reflects our shared values and supports a safer, more resilient South Wales.” He added.

### **Strategy with vision, mission and values**

Building on the Culture Statement signed by the Senior leadership team in early 2025, the new Service Strategy brings together all the areas of work that deliver the recommendations and set our vision for our ambitious future.

This work is encapsulated with a new vision and mission for the Service that sets out our approach and is supported by our agreed values that gives clarity on the way we will deliver for people in our communities.

### **Leadership frameworks and standards**

Alison Reed, Director of People services, said, “Our leadership approach is guided by the NFCC Leadership Framework, which outlines the skills and behaviours expected of leaders across the fire and rescue service.

“It is supported by the approved Fire Standard for ‘Leading and Developing People’, which details expectations for leaders, and the Core Code of Ethics, which promotes accountability and ethical behaviour.”

These frameworks emphasise the need for:

- Fostering a positive and inclusive culture
- Developing and empowering people
- Leading change effectively
- Adapting leadership styles
- Encouraging collaboration across teams.

Georgina Gilbert, Leadership and Personal Development Academy Strategic Lead added, “Since establishing the Academy, we have been focusing on how we go beyond the recommendations for leadership in the Service and are looking at how we strengthen the way people learn, grow and lead, so that great leadership is experienced and shared at every level, not just spoken about at the top.

We have set up the Academy to create a collaborative, future-focused approach to leadership and personal development, one that supports people across the service to lead with confidence, clarity and care.”

### **Strengthening representation in ELT and SLT recruitment and selection processes**

Four Commissioners were appointed following the publication of the Morris Report to help lead strategic and cultural transformation across the Service. They have a role to play in overseeing transparent, inclusive and fair recruitment of ELT and SLT roles.

Key actions include:

- Advertising all vacancies internally and externally, with skills-based job descriptions and person specifications which helped attract a diverse pool of candidates from various industries.
- Successfully recruiting external and non-operational candidates to a mix of new and existing roles, which means gender diversity at ELT has improved.

The roles are:

- Chief Fire Officer
- Director of Strategic Change and Transformation
- Head of Communications and Engagement
- Chief of Staff
- Treasurer
- Director of Service Support / Monitoring Officer (ACO)

We’ve also embedded broader engagement in recruitment by:

- Including internal staff stakeholder panels and external representatives in all permanent SLT and ELT recruitment processes
- Ensuring a member of People Services sits on every senior interview panel to enhance consistency and transparency.

There is still more we can do, and our recruitment and promotion processes are under continuous review to ensure fairness and effectiveness.

### **Conflict of interest declarations**

To support a deeper level of transparency, Commissioners, ELT and SLT members sign conflict of interest declarations relating to recruitment. This includes disclosure of memberships in external organisations, family relationships, and relevant social connections. These declarations are held by the monitoring officer, with those from Commissioners and ELT published on the Service's public website. They are also published on the Service's internal intranet, along with SLT Conflict of Interest Declarations.

Declarations are reviewed annually and updated promptly to reflect any changes in personnel, or potential interests.

Additionally, conflict of interest procedures have been extended to cover recruitment, disciplinary, and grievance panels. This remains an ongoing process, requiring active management to ensure accuracy and accountability are maintained.

### **CFO participation in oversight committee meetings**

The CFO has actively participated as a member of the oversight and ethics committee for the past year.

His continued engagement ensures that when issues arise, they are handled with transparency, fairness, and integrity, reinforcing our commitment to ethical leadership. This involvement also upholds the Service's core value of respect, by promoting a culture where all individuals are treated with dignity, concerns are taken seriously, and processes are managed impartially.

### **Wider changes and progress to develop leadership**

There has been a significant amount of other work delivered to go a step beyond the recommendations in the report and to support the development of excellent, empowered and selfless leaders. This includes:

- The establishment of a leadership academy that sets the standards for leadership across the Service, and harnesses the leadership potential of our people
- The introduction of a Future Fire Think Tank to embed a new philosophy of innovation for our future
- ELT structure has been reviewed to make sure the team are organised to support delivery of organisational excellence.
- The SLT have completed a series of training courses to support their ongoing professional development, including unconscious bias, misconduct, taking care of behaviours and having difficult conversations.
- We are working with the Academi team on a leadership development programme for the SLT to support ongoing learning and development.
- We have developed clear learning and development pathways for our people to become tomorrow's leaders.

We are committed to changing the way we develop and support our people, and we know that operational excellence comes from great leaders. There is a significant amount of work taking place over the coming months and years to deliver this change and to nurture our talent for our future success.

Additional milestones include:

- From January to June 2025, nine delegates participated in the Pioneer Programme, a development initiative designed to prepare future strategic leaders
- Since January 2025, there has been 88 PO visits to stations, corporate teams, occupational health, and Control, reinforcing leadership visibility and operational engagement. In addition to this, the CFO has visited every team in the Service since he joined.
- In June 2025, the team at Cardiff Gate Operational Training, Leadership and Personal Development Academy signed the Instructor Charter which champions a professional culture across our training centre. Inspired by the success of the Learner Charter, which every new recruit signs on arrival, the Instructor Charter was created to mirror that commitment from those delivering training to learners - with commitment to respect and excellence.
- For the recruitment of recent senior leadership roles, we have received 119 applicants for leadership roles, with 56 stakeholders actively involved across all roles, demonstrating strong engagement and commitment to leadership development.