



# **Your role as a culture change leader**



**6.00pm Monday, September 7 until  
3.30pm Tuesday, September 8 2020**

**Background Note and Agenda for our 48th Leadership Conversation**

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Society of Leadership Fellows, St George's House, Windsor Castle

## This Conversation will be the sixth in our theme on Leading culture change

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This Conversation will draw on insights people have already accessed on this theme, and will look at our experience of trying to live these out as culture change leaders - recognising that for some of us our lives and perspective may have been radically changed by current events. A link to the Insights Report covering the first five Conversations is on the final page. We will draw on the many insights into culture change from these Conversations, such as the one below from Chapter 2 (page 19). To some of us today maybe culture change may seem a 'luxury' when we have very pressing issues to tackle and address. But our leadership culture is both shaping, and being shaped by, *how* we respond to this crisis. What does it mean to take our responsibility seriously for modelling and shaping the culture in the context we now find ourselves in?

*As leaders we demonstrate candour and openness in sharing with others what might be holding us back from achieving our purpose and ambition as an organisation. We are willing to question ourselves and encourage others to challenge their own thinking.*

*We encourage our staff and Board members to work through issues where there is no single right answer. Our culture values everyone as a problem-raiser, whatever the problem, with the caveat that all are up for having a go at being problem-solvers too.*

**Extract from characteristic 4 of a healthy culture, page 19**

## Six benefits from joining us in September

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- 1** An opportunity to **sharpen up your own thinking** about how best to develop your role as a leader of culture change in today's environment, so that you really do "**let your brightness shine**", as described in the Insights report from this series
- 2** Some **practical tips** for how best to lead and model culture change in a way that maximises support across your top team and fellow leaders
- 3** **Sharing of ideas** about how best to generate a **strong groundswell** behind you so that it is not just the "usual suspects" who align with your approach
- 4** A chance to reflect on those specific aspects of your **personal leadership style** that are most likely to get in your way as a culture change leader unless you manage them with care
- 5** Supportive follow-up through the **special WhatsApp group** that we will set up at the end of the Conversation
- 6** **Sharing of progress** in implementing resolves at our online follow-up at 2.00pm on November 30th.

## From 6.00pm on September 7th to 3.30 on the 8th, our mission will be to:

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- **Gain** as much benefit as possible from the many ideas in the five previous Leadership Conversations on this theme, that participants believe to be among the best Conversations so far in this series
- **Support** each other in developing our distinctive styles as culture change leaders in ways that play to our strengths and enhance our leadership overall
- **Explore** those culture change strategies that Fellows have adopted that are working well, that have come to the fore in these challenging times and those that haven't worked so well, on the basis that we tend to learn the most through the sharing of our mistakes - and very high levels of honesty among Leadership Fellows make this possible in a way that is natural and incredibly enlightening!
- **Sharpen up** our own stretching personal resolves during the final part of the Conversation, to enable us to develop our distinctive roles as culture change leaders in ways that are high in impact in today's world, and in line with those aspects of leadership that we ourselves find most important.

"This is me!"

"Tell us more"

"Yes I can!"



# The three stages to our Conversation

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We will structure our discussions around three stages:

## 1 "This is me!"

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We put stage one under this heading because early on we want to encourage you to **share a story** that helps us understand better where you are coming from as a leader. To help us achieve strong connections across our group, please be up for sharing something about yourself in a way that helps others gain some sense of what it is about leading culture change that most engages or challenges you.

## 2 "Tell us more"

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Stage two is under this heading because we hope that by now we will all want to mobilise the power of questioning to draw each other out. We want to **get behind each other's stories** as we seek to draw on the wisdom of other Leadership Fellows, as individuals and as a group, and really learn from each other's insights.

## 3 "Yes I can!"

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Our third and final stage is about each of us **stepping into a really empowered place** where we have a greater sense of all that we can achieve by being more thoughtful about how we

**For every breakthrough in thinking during this third stage, we will be able to identify its origins in the stories that we have each shared and the curiosity that others have shown in response.**

# "This is me!"

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*From 6.00pm on Monday through to 10.00am on Tuesday*

After agreeing our Guiding Principles for this Conversation, we will explore our first question in small groups.

Our thinking at the moment is that we should ask you:

● *"Of all of the insights that came forward in the five previous Conversations on culture change, which one or two are proving the most real, relevant and useful for you - and WHY?"*

In some ways, the last two words in this question are the most important. It is the personal story that you bring behind why you go for one of the ideas that you select that is of the greatest interest to us. Or indeed you may have a new insight or story to share as you have placed yourself in the position of shaping and modelling a new way of being for yourself and your organisation in these times.

At the same time, we are also conscious of the fact that there is a lot of wisdom from a significant number of our Leadership Fellows invested in these reports, and we really want to draw out some of this wisdom to help create the **bedrock** on which we will build our own thinking at this Conversation.

## **Supportive curiosity**

The answers that you come up with will provide a pool from which we can select some crucial questions to explore over dinner in the House.

The idea behind this dinner is simply that we work together in fresh groups building on the discussion that we have already opened up in the Vicars' Hall, creating a spirit of supportive curiosity that is so incredibly important to us achieving all that we want during the course of our time together on the Tuesday.

# "Tell us more"

*From around 10.00am on Tuesday through to 12.45pm*

By around 10.00am on Tuesday we hope that everyone will have had a chance to make some sort of contribution to our discussion that helps the rest of us understand a little about how you would like to develop your role as a culture change leader.

We now want to draw out of our discussions so far two or three main themes for us to work through this morning as we go into the "Tell us more" part of the Conversation.

In the box below we capture the 11 steps to changing culture for the better that are written up in **Chapter 3**. They might be useful to you as prompts as you reflect on which particular issues you would like us to focus on at this stage.

## **Achieving successful culture change**

- 1** We need to offer passion and vision
- 2** Passion and vision are not enough
- 3** We need to hold the space for constructive conversation
- 4** We need to challenge contradictions within our culture
- 5** We need to engage with the cynics and would-be saboteurs
- 6** We sometimes need to act as disruptors
- 7** We need less doing - and more culture changing
- 8** We should commit to "no more workarounds"
- 9** We should cut out jargon and "tech talk"
- 10** We should reward culture-friendly behaviours
- 11** We should envisage the culture thriving WITHOUT us!

# "Yes I can!"

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*From 12.45 on Tuesday through to 3.30pm*

As we go through Tuesday morning we hope to move our thinking forward on some of the toughest challenges that we need to face if we are to achieve a greater impact as culture change leaders. One of the key insights emerging from the earlier Conversations was that this doesn't just come through challenging others' behaviours that we regard as inconsistent with the culture that we favour.

Also key (and in some ways more challenging) is the need for us to model the behaviours that we would like others to adopt through all of our own actions - and occasional inactions! - as leaders.

## **Building an ever-broader alliance of support**

One of the issues that we have returned to a number of times at previous Conversations has been the importance of building an ever broader alliance of support for the sort of culture that we are looking for.

Key to this, we know, is how we go about galvanising those at the Board/top Executive level who seem to be in favour of culture change and then do nothing whatsoever to promote it themselves.

- *Are there any fresh insights into how we might each go about building a broader basis of support for change?*

This seems to be such an important question, and is where we hope to learn a lot from Fellows' experiences of ideas that you have already tried out.

As quite a number of Fellows have said in the past,

*We come here to sort out stuff we can't sort out without the input of other Fellows. So it has to feel really difficult and challenging at times - and when that happens, that's when the breakthroughs start!*



# Creating a more reflective culture

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At a number of earlier Conversations, we have made a point of reminding ourselves of some of the benefits that flow out of having a healthy culture across your organisation.

One is that you should hopefully have a more reflective culture, as indeed we seek to create here in this community - where in everyone - including the whole top team - develops a habit of stopping, thinking and connecting before launching into their next campaign!

Pages 45-50 of the Insights report set out six ideas about creating a more reflective culture, that together should have a

## **A more reflective culture**

- 1** *Creating special time for "colleagues" meetings with no agenda*
- 2** *Putting on the table what needs to be left behind*
- 3** *Linking reflection time to Board discussions about strategy*
- 4** *Asking your front-line teams what **THEY** think*
- 5** *Sending round a "Friday note" with some personal reflections*
- 6** *Asking your direct reports what it's like to be on the receiving end of you!*

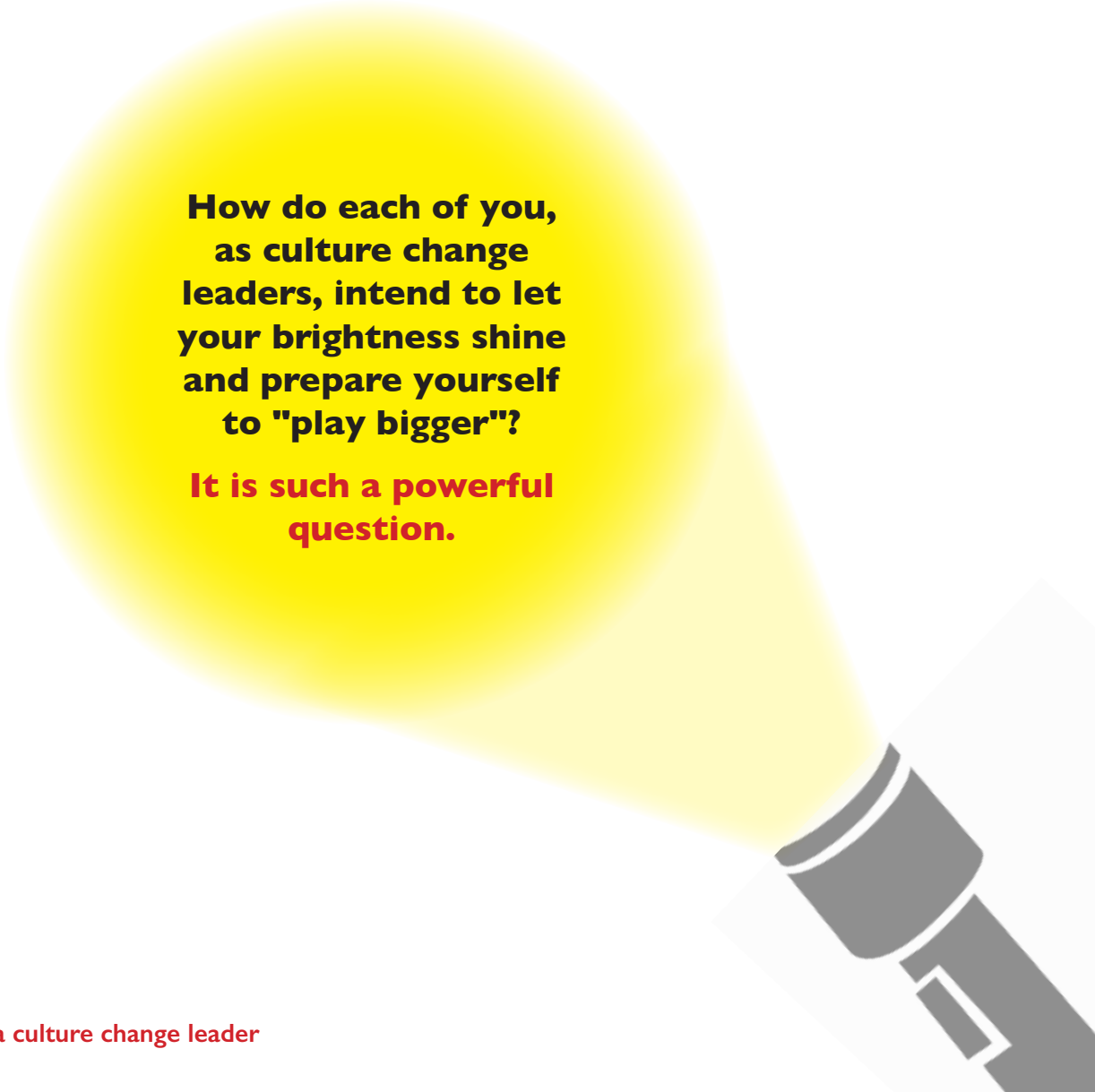
## "Playing bigger!"

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The other idea that we would like to flag up from the Insights report at this stage is that of "**connect not convince**", which is the theme of Chapter 1 (*a link is on the final page*).

We really hope that if you have a minute to skim this chapter you will want to explore these three words further. Many of us regard them as the single most powerful proposition to have come out of any of our Leadership Conversations so far.

When we are talking about how much you each see yourself as **strong connectors**, it will be easier to bring the discussion back to "letting our brightness shine" (*p10 of the Insights report*)!



**How do each of you,  
as culture change  
leaders, intend to let  
your brightness shine  
and prepare yourself  
to "play bigger"?**

**It is such a powerful  
question.**

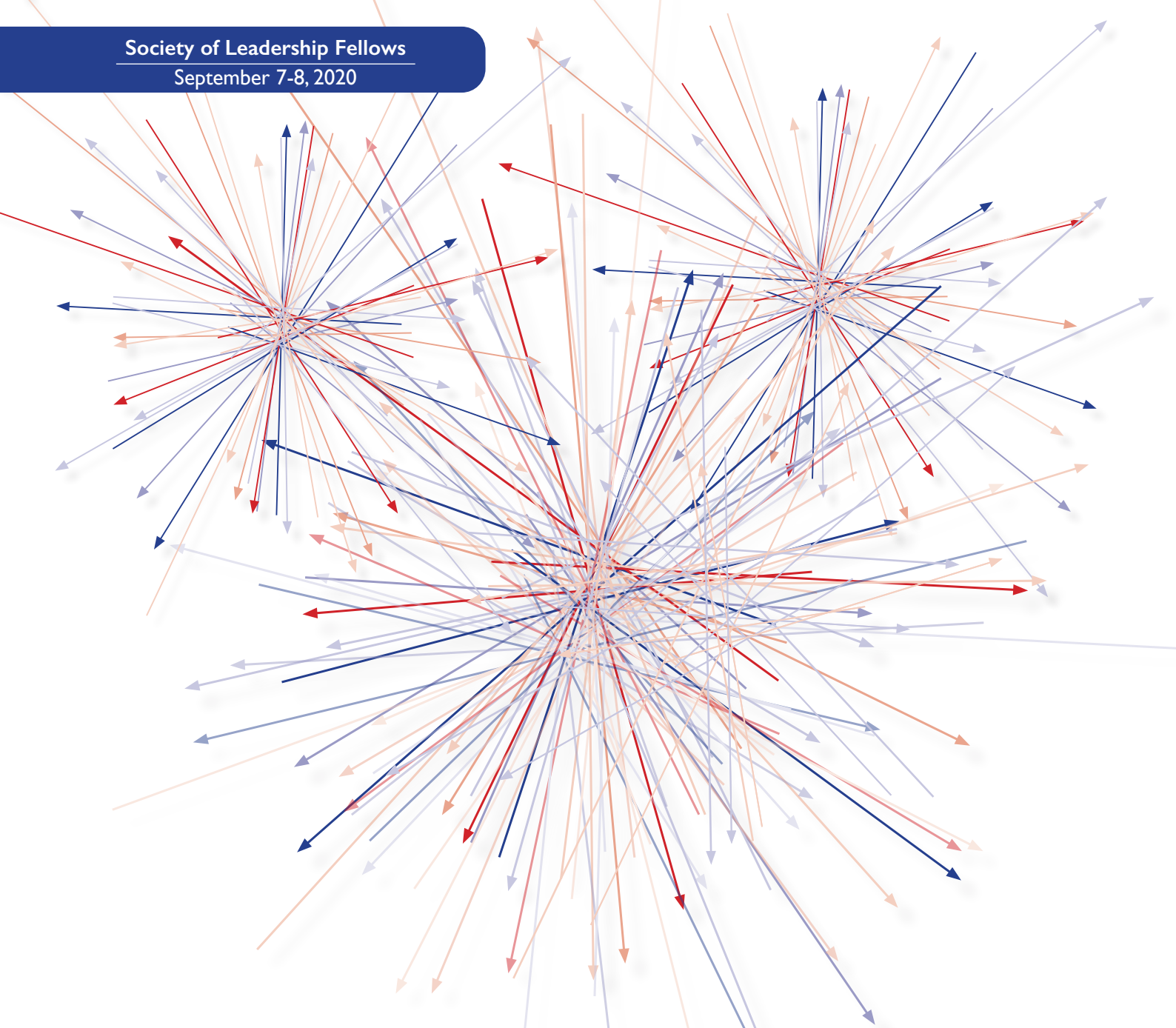
# Agenda

## Monday, September 7th 2020

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- 2.30pm+** You are welcome to check into your room in St George's House
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- 4.30pm** Tea in the House for those joining Evensong in the Chapel
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- 5.05pm** Evensong (*optional*)
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- 5.50pm** *Vicars' Hall.* Refreshments, then start of the Conversation at 6.00pm. Introduction to the Guiding Principles and then on to Stage One: *This is me!* We break for small groups (suggested question on page 6) and encourage you to share your answer in the form of a personal story about your role as a culture change leader and how you would like it to develop
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- 7.40pm** Free time/ drinks in the Sitting Room of St George's House
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- 8.15pm** Working dinner in the House Dining Room
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- 9.30pm** We go through to the Sitting room for tea/coffee and after-dinner drinks
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- 9.45pm** (Optional) Private floodlit tour of St George's Chapel, departing from the Sitting Room.
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## Tuesday, September 8th

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- 7.45am** Breakfast is served. Please clear your personal belongings from your room and bring them down to the Vicars' Hall, so that the domestic staff can prepare our rooms for the next group
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- 8.45am** We start again promptly in the Vicars' Hall. At **10.00am** or earlier we move on to Stage 2: *Tell us more* (page 7). We move in and out of small groups as we identify specific challenges that require quality thinking time. We capture key "take aways" as we go and at around 12.30 prepare to really stretch ourselves as we move into Stage 3: *Yes I can!* (page 8)
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- 12.45pm** A hot buffet lunch is served in the Vicars' Hall and we work together in our groups. At **1.40** we have a team photo on the West steps of the Chapel (*weather permitting!*)
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- 1.45pm** Back together as one group, we draw out the key outcomes of our lunchtime discussions. We prepare for our final round of small groups, after which we invite each of you to sharpen up your personal resolves to enable you to become more effective as a culture change leader, really playing to your strengths. We close the Conversation promptly at **3.30pm**.
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## **Video link-up: November 30th 2020**

In the final minutes of the Conversation we will arrange a time for a follow-up video link-up in November to hear how much progress we have each made in taking forward our resolves.

The key to us making the best possible use of our time in November is for Fellows to share a brief email beforehand updating the rest of us on how you have acted on your resolves, especially which one was the most successful for you and which one was the most challenging. We then take it from there!

**Suggested time for Video Link-up:  
2.00 to 3.00pm on Monday, November 30th 2020**

**Please click the  
cover to open  
the Insights  
report**



## **Leading Culture Change**

*Insights from five  
Leadership Conversations*

Society of Leadership Fellows  
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