Lancashire Combined Fire Authority

Planning Committee

Meeting to be held on Monday 16 November 2026

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Update.

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Executive Summary

This report provides an update on His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) activity.

Additionally, the report provides information regarding updates on the 25-27 HMICFRS inspection which started in Summer 2025.

Recommendation(s)

The Authority is asked to note the report.

HMICFRS 2025-27 Inspection:

The HMICFRS 2025–27 inspection programme continues with 16 reports published to date. The people pillar is expected to place particular focus on whether leadership, governance and scrutiny arrangements are helping to create a positive organisational culture. This is likely to include how effectively values and behaviours are embedded, how staff wellbeing is supported, how standards of conduct are understood and applied at every level, and how the Service responds to learning, feedback and areas of concern. HMICFRS is also expected to give greater attention to leadership at all levels, organisational values and culture, and the robustness of arrangements for major incident preparedness. As a result, it will be important that Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) can demonstrate clear ownership, accurate evidence, consistent messaging and visible progress against the areas most likely to be tested during inspection. As previously reported, this round of inspections places significant emphasis on the effectiveness of governance, oversight and accountability arrangements, and how these lead to clear, measurable outcomes for fire and rescue services. While HMICFRS will not inspect the Combined Fire Authority as a standalone body, it will

consider how far governance arrangements provide effective support, challenge and direction to LFRS, and whether this is clearly evidenced through service planning, decision-making, performance management and improvement activity.

Our inspection date has now been confirmed and will start week commencing 30 August 2027, which is slightly later than initially anticipated.

New HMICFRS Chief Inspector:

His Majesty the King has approved the appointment of Sir Andy Marsh as His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services. He will take up the role on 1 October 2026, bringing with him over 39 years of policing experience. Sir Andy has been the Chief Executive of the College of Policing since September 2021. He was previously Chief Constable of Avon and Somerset Police (2016-2021) and Hampshire Constabulary (2013-2016). Sir Andy was awarded the Queen's Police Medal in 2018 and was knighted in 2024 for services to policing. He succeeds Michelle Skeer OBE QPM, who was appointed to the role on an interim basis in April 2026. Michelle Skeer remains His Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services for the Northern Region including Lancashire.

Northern Region HMICFRS Chief Fire Officer (CFO) Roadshow:

As previously reported, LFRS hosted the Northern Region HMICFRS Chief Fire Officer Roadshow in July. It brought together representatives from HMICFRS, including HM Inspector Michelle Skeer, with Chief Fire Officers and Deputy Chief Fire Officers from fire and rescue services across the north of England.

The purpose of the roadshow was to provide an opportunity for senior leaders to engage directly with HMICFRS, supporting open and constructive dialogue around the current challenges facing the fire and rescue sector. The event also provided an opportunity to improve transparency and understanding of the HMICFRS inspection approach, share learning and experiences, and strengthen effective working relationships between the Inspectorate and fire and rescue services.
HMICFRS used the event to hear northern services' views and experiences. This insight will inform the 2028–30 inspection programme, helping ensure it reflects sector challenges, priorities and operating conditions.

The roadshow strengthened collaboration between HMICFRS and fire and rescue leaders, supporting improvement, learning and assurance across the northern region. Following the event, HM Inspector Roy Wilsher wrote to all Chief Fire Officers (CFOs) expressing their thanks for services attendance and engagement at the regional events, HMI Wilsher also stated how grateful they were to the four CFOs and services that co-hosted the sessions including Lancashire.

Cyber Security Thematic:

HMICFRS has published a report following a thematic inspection examining how effectively police forces and fire and rescue services (FRSs) manage cybersecurity risks. The inspection assessed how effectively these organisations:

- understand, assess and manage cybersecurity risks;
- protect their IT systems and networks from cybersecurity risks;
- implement cybersecurity detection measures proportionate to the known threat, harm and risk; and
- prepare for, and recover from, cybersecurity events or incidents.

The inspection was conducted in three police forces and three fire and rescue services, with additional engagement undertaken with other services, including LFRS. The report included a case study on LFRS, in which inspectors recognised the Service's comprehensive and proactive approach to strengthening cyber resilience through a combination of technical capability, organisational culture and governance.

The report highlighted that cybersecurity risks in the UK and globally are increasing in scale, complexity and impact. HMICFRS emphasised that opportunities to strengthen cybersecurity arrangements must not be missed and that leaders must prioritise and invest in these arrangements. The report made 13 recommendations to strengthen cybersecurity across police forces and FRSs. LFRS will undertake a gap analysis against these recommendations and develop an associated action plan.

2025– 27 Inspection Activity Update:

A total of 16 reports have now been published at the time of writing this report, with results detailed in the following table:

	Effectiveness	Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies	Preventing fires and other risks	Protecting the public through fire regulation	Responding to fires and other emergencies	Responding to major and multi-agency incidents		**Efficiency**	Making best use of resources	Making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future	Use resources to manage risk, making sure it is efficient and affordable		**People**	Promoting the right values and culture	Getting the right people with the right skills	Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	Managing performance and developing leaders
									Round 3		Round 4						
Bedfordshire R3		G	RI	RI	RI	A			RI	G	n/a			RI	A	A	A
Bedfordshire R4		G	G	G	A	G			n/a	n/a	A			I	RI	A	RI
Greater Manchester R3		G	G	G	G	A			G	G	n/a			G	G	G	G
Greater Manchester R4		G	O	A	G	G			n/a	n/a	G			O	G	G	G
Warwickshire R3		A	RI	RI	A	A			RI	RI	n/a			A	RI	RI	RI
Warwickshire R4		G	G	A	A	A			n/a	n/a	A			G	G	G	G
Essex R3		G	G	RI	RI	A			RI	G	n/a			RI	RI	RI	A
Essex R4		G	G	G	RI	G			n/a	n/a	G			A	RI	A	A
Merseyside R3		G	O	G	G	O			O	G	n/a			A	A	A	G
Merseyside R4		G	G	G	G	O			n/a	n/a	G			G	G	A	G

Cambridgeshire R3		G	G	G	RI	RI			O	G	n/a			G	A	G	RI
Cambridgeshire R4		G	A	G	RI	A			n/a	n/a	A			A	A	RI	RI
Cornwall R3		A	RI	A	A	RI			RI	RI	n/a			A	RI	I	RI
Cornwall R4		A	RI	A	G	RI			n/a	n/a	RI			RI	RI	RI	RI
Cheshire R3		A	A	G	A	A			A	G	n/a			G	G	G	G
Cheshire R4		G	G	G	G	G			n/a	n/a	G			G	G	G	O
Surrey R3		A	RI	RI	RI	RI			RI	A	n/a			G	A	RI	RI
Surrey R4		G	A	G	A	G			n/a	n/a	A			G	G	A	G
Avon R3		I	I	A	I	A			RI	RI	n/a			I	RI	RI	RI
Avon R4		A	RI	RI	RI	A			n/a	n/a	RI			A	RI	RI	A
Lincolnshire R3		A	A	RI	G	G			A	A	n/a			RI	G	RI	RI
Lincolnshire R4		G	G	A	A	A			n/a	n/a	A			A	G	RI	A
Northumberland R3		A	G	A	A	A			A	G	n/a			G	G	A	A
Northumberland R4		RI	A	G	I	RI			n/a	n/a	RI			I	I	I	I
Hereford & Worcester R3		A	A	G	A	A			A	A	n/a			A	G	G	G
Hereford & Worcester R4		G	G	G	G	G			n/a	n/a	G			G	G	G	A
Buckinghamshire R3		RI	RI	I	RI	A			RI	RI	n/a			RI	RI	RI	RI
Buckinghamshire R4		G	G	A	A	A			n/a	n/a	G			G	G	A	G

Gloucestershire R3		RI	A	I	A	RI			RI	RI	n/a			I	RI	I	RI
Gloucestershire R4		G	A	G	A	A			n/a	n/a	G			A	G	G	G
West Yorkshire R3		G	RI	A	G	G			A	G	n/a			A	G	G	G
West Yorkshire R4		G	A	G	G	G			n/a	n/a	G			A	G	G	G

Key:

Outstanding: The FRS has substantially exceeded the characteristics of good performance.	O
Good: The FRS has substantially demonstrated all the characteristics of good performance.	G
Adequate: The FRS has demonstrated some of the characteristics of good performance, but we have identified areas where the FRS should make improvements.	A
Requires improvement: The FRS has demonstrated few, if any, of the characteristics of good performance, and we have identified a substantial number of areas where the FRS needs to make improvements.	RI
Inadequate: We have causes for concern and have made recommendations to the FRS to address them.	I

National HMICFRS Report Themes:

The Organisational Assurance Team continues to monitor national trends and learning from HMICFRS reports, with key findings captured within the theme tracker. The tracker is available on a dedicated LFRS SharePoint page and provides the Service Management Team with a real-time overview of emerging sector-wide themes arising from HMICFRS inspections.

Department and Service Delivery Visits:

The Organisational Assurance Team has developed and implemented the new reality testing station visit for Service Delivery. The visit content has been systematically aligned to both the HMICFRS characteristics of good and the Fire Standards Board criteria, ensuring that assurance activity is focused on the most relevant and appropriate areas. The reality testing visit covers 33 HMICFRS characteristics of good performance and 43 Fire Standards criteria. The primary objective of the visits is to provide assurance to the organisation regarding operational crews knowledge and understanding across a range of critical topics. The station visits went live on 1 April 2026, and to date 17 units have now been completed with key findings reported into SMT P&A for strategic oversight.

The Organisational Assurance Team have also completed all departmental engagement visits which are again aligned to both HMICFRS characteristics of good as well as relevant Fire Standards Board criteria with key findings reported into the Service Management Team for strategic oversight.

HMICFRS Briefing Video - Leadership Event:

The Organisational Assurance Team have developed and produced a HMICFRS briefing video for the leadership event held at the Leadership and Development Centre on 28 July 2026. The briefing was designed to provide leaders with an overview of the key areas of focus and emerging themes identified through the current programme of HMICFRS inspections.

The primary purpose of the briefing video was to raise awareness across LFRS leadership and encourage individual reflection. Leaders were encouraged not only to consider their own position against the areas highlighted, but also to reflect on the

position within their respective teams and areas of responsibility. The briefing was intended to support individuals to fully understand HMICFRS expectations and reflect on how these expectations look for their own areas of responsibility.

Round 3 Area for Improvement (AFI) Progress to date:

The Service received one AFI in the previous inspection report concerning Equality Impact Assessments (EIA). An update has been provided by Director of People and Development – Liz Sandiford:

- Quarterly meetings continue to be held with the Organisational Assurance Team to track progress
- The Organisational Assurance Team have quality assured the EIA policy, guidance and SharePoint site
- The Quality Assurance (QA) checklist has been created and included in the new QA process that will be carried out on all submitted EIA's. The service policy has also been amended to detail the QA process. The checklist aides the approval process and ensures a consistent approach across the department regardless of who is completing the assurance.
- A SharePoint site has been developed for the action plans. Workflows ensure responsible persons are informed of their required action; are reminded when the action is due for completion and when it is overdue. Progress of actions for any EIAs will be monitored and reported to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Culture Board (EDICB), which is chaired by the CFO, on a quarterly basis.
- Further 'On the Menu' sessions have been held on EIAs and the SharePoint site.
- The EIA Forum has now been established and will share knowledge and learning on EIAs and review EIAs which are awaiting approval, as an additional level of scrutiny.
- EIA training sessions have been held at the Leadership and Development Centre for key stakeholders.

New Service Liaison Lead (SLL) for Lancashire:

Lancashire have been allocated a new Service Liaison Lead (SLL), Andy O'Brien. Andy is seconded from another fire and rescue service and will lead LFRS inspection in 2027. Andy has met members of the Executive Board virtually and is due to conduct an engagement session at Service Headquarters over the coming months.

Business risk

The inspectorate will monitor LFRS's direction of travel, it could cause reputational damage if it is perceived that we have not made reasonable progress during inspections.

Sustainability or Environmental Impact

None.

Equality and Diversity Implications

None.

Data Protection (GDPR)

Will the proposal(s) involve the processing of personal data? N

If the answer is yes, please contact a member of the Democratic Services Team to assist with the appropriate exemption clause for confidential consideration under part 2 of the agenda.

HR implications

None.

Financial implications

None.

Legal implications

None.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

List of background papers

Paper:

Date:

Contact:

Glossary

AFI – Area for Improvement

CFO – Chief Fire Officer

EDICB - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Culture Board

EIA – Equality Impact Assessment

FRSs – Fire and Rescue Services

HMICFRS - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services

LFRS – Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service

QA – Quality Assurance

SLL - Service Liaison Lead