

LANCASHIRE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

Meeting to be held on Monday 21 February 2022

HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY AND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES (HMICFRS) INSPECTION UPDATE (Appendix 1 refers)

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Executive Summary

This report provides an update regarding the inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) of Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) that started from week commencing 22 November 2021 and the work completed pre and during inspection. Additionally, it covers a summary of the national report, State of Fire 2021, which has recently been published.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note and endorse the report.

Information

The HMICFRS inspection of LFRS commenced on 22 November 2021, and concluded on 24 January 2022, the final interview being with the Chief Fire Officer. The inspections were scheduled over 6 weeks and resulted in 4 weeks being completed before the Christmas break, with the remaining 2 weeks afterwards. The inspection took a 'hybrid' approach, with interviews taking place on Microsoft Teams in addition to other activities, such as reality testing, taking place in person with our staff. The schedule was as follows:

Week 1 – The inspection started with the Strategic Brief led by the Chief Fire Officer and Executive Board team with Her Majesty's Inspector Andy Cooke, Service Liaison Lead, Jo Hayden, and other inspection team members. Thereafter, partner interviews were completed with NHS, Lancaster City Council, Adult Safeguarding Board, and Lancashire Partnership for Road Safety.

Week 2 – This was 'efficiency week' and there were interviews with various lead representatives for Fleet, Property, ICT and Finance.

Week 3 – HMICFRS came into service and worked with departmental teams to look at our systems and data collection and how this supports us to deliver our services. This included prevention, protection, risk information, promotion processes, staff absence, and training records.

Week 4 – Included interviews with colleagues from the Safety, Health and Environment team, and Response & Emergency Planning about our involvement with Lancashire Resilience Forum (LRF).

Week 5 – Included reality testing and focus groups, whereby HMICFRS visited staff at 15 stations across all duty systems, to ask questions about our procedures, training, and other work such as prevention activity.

Week 6 – In the last full week of inspection, HMICFRS completed interviews with certain department heads to ask further questions prompted during the previous 5 weeks. This was followed with the Chief Fire Officer's interview.

During early February there was a hot debrief with the Inspection team. The reports are expected to be published in late Spring 2022, although no specific dates have yet been confirmed. LFRS will receive a copy of its report ahead of this for a pre-publication check.

The Inspection process has once again focused our attention regarding some key areas and allowed the Service to “hold a mirror up” once more. Overall, the experience has been very positive and enables us to continue identifying the areas where we need to improve, helping shape many of the actions within our Annual Service Plan(s). When we receive our final report in Summer, it will provide further clarity and direction, therefore we can focus our resources on the areas requiring strengthening, to ensure we continue on our road to outstanding.

In terms of future planning, an internal debrief will take place shortly to capture the lessons learned through the process of preparing for and receiving the inspection, with a view to embedding the ongoing processes and findings into business as usual.

As part of the inspection programme, HMICFRS assess and make graded judgments on three principal areas, known as pillars. For each Fire and Rescue Service inspected the pillars assessed are: effectiveness, efficiency, and how well the Service looks after its people. These assessments are designed to enable the public to see each Fire and Rescue Service's performance, as well as how this compares with the performance of other Services.

State of Fire and Rescue 2021 Report

Shortly before Christmas, the State of Fire and Rescue 2021 report was released. This report is written by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services, Sir Thomas Winsor, and is presented to the Secretary of State under section 28B of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. It provides an evaluation in terms of the direction of travel from Fire and Rescue Services since the Round 1 inspections, additionally it covers findings from the Round 2 Tranche 1 inspections, which included 13 Fire and Rescue Services delivered between February and August 2021. The report states that all safety-critical, essential public services benefit from the scrutiny of inspection and reporting and therefore it is valuable for both the public and the fire and rescue sector.

State of Fire 2021 highlights progress against the 6 specific recommendations set out in the State of Fire 2020 report. Only 2 of these 6 have been completed and the report highlights that “progress remains slow on the remaining 4” (see appendix 1).

The report identifies that overall, there has been progress from round 1 with improvements in culture and people, and Protection. In the 2020 report, it was identified that many Fire and Rescue Services needed to improve their Protection work. However, the 2021 report recognises that many Services had made protection and risk planning more of a priority, leading to improvements. An area identified as being problematic was the resourcing and prioritisation of prevention work. HMICFRS highlighted that Services may have changed their focus to meet the needs of their communities, including at times of crisis such as during a pandemic but highlighted the importance of remembering the three statutory functions of Fire and Rescue Services are Response, Prevention and Protection. Therefore, these functions must all be resourced and prioritised continuously and appropriately for them to safely serve the public. However, it was identified that most Services were failing to evaluate their Prevention work.

Other areas identified as requiring further improvements included the diversity of recruitment and the lack of effective equality impact assessments being completed by Services. Furthermore, issues were identified with the use of On-Call staff, particularly in terms of providing effective fire cover, with challenges in recruitment, retention, and availability. The report acknowledges positive work that many Services have progressed around wellbeing.

Summary of Round 2, Tranche 1

In terms of the Services that were inspected in Round 2, Tranche 1, there was considerable movement with the gradings, with many Services being graded lower than their initial inspection. The final gradings were as follows:

	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate
Effectiveness	0	4	9	0
Efficiency	1	2	10	0
People	0	5	8	0

Table 1. Details the gradings from the Round 2 Tranche 1 reports.

The results of all inspections are published on the HMICFRS website, once the reports are completed.

Financial Implications

One temporary Station Manager (non-flexi) additional post to support pre and during inspection activity and coordination

Sustainability or Environmental Impact

n/a

Equality and Diversity Implications

n/a

Human Resource Implications

n/a

Business Risk Implications

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The inspection will monitor LFRS's direction of travel since 2018, it could cause reputational damage if it is perceived that we have not made reasonable progress.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

List of background papers

Paper:

Date:

Contact:

Reason for inclusion in Part 2 if appropriate:

Appendix 1 – SOFR 2020 recommendations

Recommendation	Completion date	Status
<p>Recommendation 1: As soon as is practicable the Home Office, NFCC and LGA in consultation with the Fire Standards Board (FSB) and Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, should establish a programme of work that will result in consistency in the following four priority areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identifying and determining risk as part of the IRMP process. 2. Identifying and measuring emergency response standards and approaches. 3. Defining what are high-risk premises for the purposes of fire protection; and 4. Setting an expectation for how frequently high-risk premises, and parts of those premises, should be audited for compliance with fire safety legislation 	<p>December 2021</p> <p>This date was originally set at December 2020 and will need to be revised again</p>	<p>The Home Office confirmed it has funded the NFCC’s community risk programme, which is designed to develop a single method for services to use so that they identify and assess risk in the same way. The programme will also provide support to services so that they can use this method successfully. The NFCC told us that it expected the community risk programme work to be completed by the end of 2021/22.</p> <p>In February 2021, the Fire Standards Board published the fire standards for operational competence, operational learning, and operational preparedness.</p> <p>In September 2021, the Fire Standards Board published its protection standard. Since then, a range of guidance documents have been published which are designed to support services in their implementation of the standard.</p> <p>In addition to its continued work on high-risk premises, the NFCC has been co-ordinating the building risk review programme. This programme provides the most up-to-date information on a subset of buildings that will be in the jurisdiction of the new building safety regulator. These projects are still in progress and the specific requirements of this recommendation must be met in its entirety for it to be considered as complete.</p>

<p>Recommendation 2: As part of the next spending review, the Home Office in consultation with the fire and rescue sector should address the deficit in the fire sector’s national capacity and capability to support change</p>	<p>Complete</p>	<p>Complete</p>
<p>Recommendation 3: The Home Office, in consultation with the fire and rescue sector, should review and with precision determine the roles of: (a) fire and rescue services; and (b) those who work in them.</p>	<p>Awaiting fire reform implementation plan from Home Office. This date was originally set as June 2020.</p>	<p>The Home Office intends to consult on this matter in its forthcoming White Paper on fire reform.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4: The Home Office, the Local Government Association, the National Fire Chiefs Council, and trade unions should consider whether the current pay negotiation machinery requires fundamental reform. If so, this should include the need for an independent pay review body and the future of the ‘Grey Book’</p>	<p>June 2021. This date was originally set as June 2020; it will need to be revised again.</p>	<p>The Home Office intends to consult on this matter in its forthcoming White Paper on fire reform</p>
<p>Recommendation 5: The Home Office should consider the case for legislating to give chief fire officers operational independence. In the meantime, it should issue clear guidance, possibly through an amendment to the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, on the demarcation between those responsible for governance and operational decision making by the chief fire officer.</p>	<p>Awaiting fire reform implementation plan from Home Office. This date was originally set as June 2020.</p>	<p>The Home Office is considering ways to make progress against this recommendation</p>

<p>Recommendation 6: The National Fire Chiefs Council, with the Local Government Association, should produce a code of ethics for fire and rescue services. The code should be adopted by every service in England and considered as part of each employee’s progression and annual performance appraisal.</p>	<p>Complete</p>	<p>Complete</p>
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Table 2. Summary of the State of Fire 2020 recommendations and status