

Lancashire Combined Fire Authority Planning Committee

Meeting to be held on 6 February 2023.

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

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Executive Summary

This is an update regarding the inspection methodology and framework for His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS). Additionally, it provides information regarding Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service's (LFRS) planning arrangements.

Recommendation

Planning Committee are requested to note and endorse the update.

Round 2 gradings summary

Since the previous report to Planning Committee the Services in tranche 3 of the current round of inspections have received their reports which are available here: [Fire and Rescue Service inspections 2021/22 – tranche 3](#). In relation to the overall findings from the completion of round 2 inspections, a summary of the gradings awarded for each pillar are as follows:

| Pillar | Outstanding | Good | Requires Improvement | Inadequate |
|---------------|-------------|------|----------------------|------------|
| Effectiveness | 1 | 26 | 17 | 0 |
| Efficiency | 3 | 18 | 21 | 2 |
| People | 0 | 23 | 19 | 2 |

Whilst some more 'Outstanding's' were awarded in round 2, the greater detail and scrutiny in assessment meant that most FRSs lost grading against the 11 diagnostics. This is likely to continue to be the approach going forward, which means that to maintain the same gradings in the next round of inspections it is expected that a demonstration of progress can be made.

Members are reminded that Lancashire received 10 'goods' and 1 'outstanding' (culture and values) when the Service was last inspected during late 2021 / early 2022.

Round 3 Overview

In the next round of inspections, known as 'Round 3', HMICFRS will continue to inspect how effective and efficient Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) are at carrying out their principal functions of fire safety, firefighting, and responding to road traffic collisions and other emergencies.

Round 3 will start in February 2023 and they will inspect all 44 FRSs in England over a two-year period, using a similar methodology to the Round 2 inspections. HMICFRS have moved away from a tranche system, where they previously grouped services in to three tranches, to a more rolling approach. It is anticipated that this will ensure that publication of the reports is sooner after the inspection has concluded, which will enable FRSs to be able to react to feedback in a timelier way. Whilst it is still not certain, our planning assumptions are that Lancashire will likely be inspected either late 2023 or early 2024.

HMICFRS have stated they want to maintain the focus of the sector on the areas that have been identified for improvement through the inspection process, therefore, moving forward they will continue to inspect the effectiveness and efficiency of FRSs and how well they look after their people.

However, to identify more precisely where it is considered improvement is needed, and how FRSs should achieve it, HMICFRS will move to a common grading approach throughout both FRS and Police inspections. They will expand the four-tier grading to five and introduce a new judgment of 'adequate'. The five judgement categories will be:

- **Outstanding** – The FRS has substantially exceeded the characteristics of good performance.
- **Good** – The FRS has substantially demonstrated all the characteristics of good performance.
- **Adequate** – The FRS has demonstrated some of the characteristics of good performance, but we have identified areas where the FRS should make improvements.
- **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.
- **Inadequate** – We have causes for concern and have made recommendations to the FRS to address them.

In the previous rounds of inspections, HMICFRS assessed and provided summary judgments for the three principal questions of the inspection methodology (efficiency, effectiveness, and people) and for 11 diagnostic questions. They will now assess and give graded judgments only for the 11 diagnostic questions only. This better serves the aims of promoting improvements in fire and rescue and highlighting where a FRS is doing well and where it needs to improve.

In future reports, HMICFRS will comment on progress made by the service since its last inspection. However, these changes mean it will not be possible to make direct comparisons between the grades in Round 3 inspections with those in previous rounds of inspection.

The assessment of effectiveness will continue to consider how well each FRS is performing its principal functions of preventing fires from happening, making sure the public is kept safe through the regulation of fire safety and responding to emergency incidents. They will continue to provide the public with clarity on how well FRSs are prepared to respond to major incidents with other FRSs and partner agencies.

The assessment of efficiency makes a clear distinction between the way each FRS uses its resources to manage its current risks and how well it is securing an affordable way of managing its risks in the future. During Round 3, there will be a greater focus on assessing how productive a service is and what productivity improvements it has made since our last inspection. HMICFRS will also continue to improve how they inspect value for money.

The assessment of how each FRS looks after its people will remain focused on leadership at all levels of the organisation. They will continue to look closely at training, values and culture, and there will be a particular emphasis on diversity and how services are trying to overcome inequalities.

State of Fire 2022

His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services' (Andy Cooke) is required to report to the Secretary of State under section 28B of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 on an annual basis. The report contains HMICFRS' assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of fire and rescue services in England during the second full round of inspections, which were carried out between February 2021 and August 2022, and as summarised above.

This report draws on findings from inspections of fire and rescue services (FRSs) in England, to provide an overall view of the state of the fire and rescue sector and is available here: [State of Fire and Rescue Annual Report 2022](#)

In his first annual assessment of England's fire and rescue services since being appointed in 2022, Andy Cooke, His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services, found that:

“Only two of the inspectorate's previous six recommendations for reform of the fire service have been implemented, which he described as extremely disappointing;

“the Home Office, the Local Government Association, the National Fire Chiefs Council and trade unions should work together to consider reforming structures for negotiating pay, terms and conditions, which would reduce the risk of industrial action; and

“many services need to improve their culture, and there are still some unacceptable levels of bullying, harassment and discrimination.”

His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services Andy Cooke said:

"I am continually struck by the dedication of firefighters and other staff, and I know the public feel the same – they are enormous assets to our communities.

"The fire service faces a difficult year ahead against the backdrop of industrial action. Some may see these challenges as a reason not to risk further change. On the contrary, reform of the fire service is still urgently needed – and until all our recommendations are addressed in full, fire and rescue services won't be able to provide the best possible service to the public.

"I am frustrated at the lack of progress since we first started inspecting fire and rescue services in 2018. Only two of our six recommendations for national reform have been completed.

"I expect to see further commitments from the Government – including timescales for completion – very soon. Both the public and fire and rescue services deserve better."

The inspectorate's four remaining recommendations are:

- the Home Office should precisely determine the role of fire and rescue services, to remove any ambiguity;
- the sector should remove unjustifiable variation, including in how they define risk;
- the sector should review how effectively pay and conditions are determined; and
- the Home Office should invest chief fire officers with operational independence, whether through primary legislation or in some other manner.

The inspectorate has also confirmed that it will produce a new report on values and culture in England's fire and rescue services, which will be published later this year.

Financial Implications

N/a

Sustainability or Environmental Impact

N/a

Equality and Diversity Implications

N/a

Human Resource Implications

N/a

Business Risk Implications

The inspection will monitor LFRS's direction of travel since 2022, 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: N/a