

# **Lancashire Combined Fire Authority**

## **Planning Committee**

Meeting to be held on 17 November 2025

### **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 Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service's (LFRS) HMICFRS Round 3 inspection report findings, and the national results.

#### **Recommendation(s)**

The Authority is asked to note the report.

#### **Round 3 Inspection Overview**

LFRS HMICFRS Round 3 inspection concluded in April 2025. The inspection lasted several weeks and included staff engagement across the organisation, from Firefighter to Chief Fire Officer, inspectors visited a number of fire stations and departments, hosted staff focus groups and analysed numerous data sets and documents. HMICFRS inspectors also engaged with some of our partner organisations and visited North West Fire Control.

The feedback from the HMICFRS inspectors acknowledged that every staff member they interacted with was highly engaging, and they felt genuinely welcomed throughout the organisation.

The official report was released publicly on 14 August 2025 along with a HMICFRS press release (Appendix 1).

#### **LFRS Round 3 Report**

The Service have been awarded an unprecedented six 'Outstanding' and five 'Good' ratings across all the 11 inspection areas. This remarkable achievement includes being the only service in the country to receive a minimum rating of 'Good' across every category. LFRS have received the best ratings of any fire and rescue service in England.

| Outstanding                           | Good                                        | Adequate | Requires improvement | Inadequate |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|----------|----------------------|------------|
| Understanding fire and risk           | Preventing fire and risk                    |          |                      |            |
| Public safety through fire regulation | Responding to fires and emergencies         |          |                      |            |
| Responding to major incidents         | Future affordability                        |          |                      |            |
| Best use of resources                 | Promoting fairness and diversity            |          |                      |            |
| Promoting values and culture          | Managing performance and developing leaders |          |                      |            |
| Right people, right skills            |                                             |          |                      |            |

LFRS attained two Outstanding ratings in the People pillar during the inspection, making it the only service in the country to receive Outstanding in this category. LFRS were among only 3 services, out of a total of 44, that attained an outstanding rating in protection, understanding risk, and making best use of resources. Five areas of promising practice were also recognised in the report.

Some of the highlights from the report include:

- Our excellent performance at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks.
- Our outstanding understanding of risk and how we use data and technology to keep our communities safe.
- Our sector-leading protection work, including our risk-based intervention programme and our commitment to reducing unwanted fire signals.
- Our strong values and inclusive culture, with staff feeling supported, listened to, and proud to work here.
- Our innovative use of resources, from mobile data terminals and drones to our investment in training and development.

The inspectorate praised the Service for its excellent performance and recognised our commitment to continuous improvement, our collaborative approach with partners, and our ability to adapt to new challenges and legislation. The Service's commitment to inclusivity, staff wellbeing, and community engagement were also highlighted as sector leading.

### National HMICFRS Results

HMICFRS have now completed their Round 3 inspection and have published all 44 reports.

The table below shows the summary of the gradings for all 44 FRSs inspected in Round 3 demonstrating the performance of each service based on grading.

|                      |                                                                                   |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Scoring Key</b>   |                                                                                   |
| Outstanding          |  |
| Good                 |  |
| Adequate             |  |
| Requires Improvement |  |
| Inadequate           |  |

|          | <b>Category Key</b>                                                 |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>A</b> | Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies                |
| <b>B</b> | Preventing fires and other risks                                    |
| <b>C</b> | Protecting the public through fire regulation                       |
| <b>D</b> | Responding to fires and other emergencies                           |
| <b>E</b> | Responding to major and multi-agency incidents                      |
| <b>F</b> | Making best use of resources                                        |
| <b>G</b> | Making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future |
| <b>H</b> | Promoting the right values and culture                              |
| <b>I</b> | Getting the right people with the right skills                      |
| <b>J</b> | Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity                           |
| <b>K</b> | Managing performance and developing leaders                         |

|      |                             | A             | B | C | D | E | F          | G | H      | I | J | K |
|------|-----------------------------|---------------|---|---|---|---|------------|---|--------|---|---|---|
| Rank | Region                      | Effectiveness |   |   |   |   | Efficiency |   | People |   |   |   |
| 1    | Lancashire                  |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 2    | Humberside                  |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 3    | Merseyside                  |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 4    | County Durham & Darlington  |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 5    | Kent                        |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 6    | Greater Manchester          |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 7    | Nottinghamshire             |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 8    | Staffordshire               |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 9    | Royal Berkshire             |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 10   | Derbyshire                  |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 11   | Cambridgeshire              |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 12   | Cheshire                    |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 13   | West Yorkshire              |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 14   | London                      |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 15   | Isles of Scilly             |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 16   | North Yorkshire             |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 17   | West Sussex                 |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 18   | East Sussex                 |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 19   | South Yorkshire             |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 20   | Hereford & Worcester        |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 21   | Northumberland              |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 22   | Dorset & Wiltshire          |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 23   | Leicestershire              |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 24   | Tyne and Wear               |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 25   | Cleveland                   |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 26   | West Midlands               |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 27   | Norfolk                     |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 28   | Northamptonshire            |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 29   | Lincolnshire                |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 30   | Cumbria                     |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 31   | Devon & Somerset            |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 32   | Bedfordshire                |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 33   | Essex                       |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 34   | Hertfordshire               |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 35   | Hampshire and Isle of Wight |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 36   | Oxfordshire                 |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 37   | Surrey                      |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 38   | Suffolk                     |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 39   | Warwickshire                |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 40   | Shropshire                  |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 41   | Cornwall                    |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 42   | Buckinghamshire             |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 43   | Gloucestershire             |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |
| 44   | Avon                        |               |   |   |   |   |            |   |        |   |   |   |

## **HMICFRS Inspection 2025 – 27**

HMICFRS have published their inspection schedule for 2025-27, the dates for the inspection programme will be released in three phases. The first inspections of the new round have recently concluded. Currently, LFRS are listed as the last service to undergo inspection, which is anticipated to take place around Spring 2027, although this is subject to potential amendments.

The 2025-27 inspection programme will involve a number of changes from the previous round, there will be some focus on the impact of governance on fire and rescue services, leadership, and a reduction in inspection areas from 11 to 10. The Service continue to engage with our Service Liaison Lead from HMICFRS.

## **HMICFRS Activity**

A formal letter was sent to HMI Michelle Skeer, officially closing the six Areas for Improvement (AFIs) identified during the Round 2 inspection. The inspectors for Round 3 expressed their satisfaction with the progress made to address the AFIs that were previously identified.

We have been in communication with our HMICFRS SLL, Phil Innis, who is scheduled to present a session to the Organisational Assurance team on 26 November 2025. This session is expected to cover our AFI regarding Equality Impact Assessments and the key changes for the upcoming round of inspections.

We are required to provide a quarterly report on the progress of our AFI and work is already underway to progress this area which has been identified. The Round 3 report has also been scrutinised to gather any further areas identified that that may assist us in elevating any aspects from good to outstanding. Department engagement is taking place to address any findings and actions will be tracked by the Organisational Assurance Team on the Assurance Monitoring System (AMS).

## **State of Fire and Rescue**

The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2024–25 was published on 5 November. This is His Majesty's Chief Inspector's third annual report to the Secretary of State under section 28B of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

It is his first annual report on fire and rescue since the new Government came into power in July 2024. The report contains his assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of fire and rescue services in England, which is based on the inspection reports published between February 2023 and August 2025.

Between March 2023 and August 2025, the HMICFRS carried out their third full round of inspections of all 44 fire and rescue services in England. Several services made improvements in the Round 3 inspections. They closed 416 of 695 outstanding areas for improvement (AFIs) and issued fewer AFIs in this round. They also identified 67 examples of promising and innovative practice across 25 services.

Overall, 73 percent of the graded judgments awarded in Round 3 were 'adequate', 'good' or 'outstanding'. This means services were able to show at least some of the characteristics of good performance in most areas and 43 percent of all grades met or

exceeded the benchmark for good performance, where they issued good or outstanding grades. Overall, in this round, the HMICFRS gave the following proportion of grades:

- 4 percent outstanding
- 39 percent good
- 30 percent adequate
- 24 percent requires improvement
- 3 percent inadequate.

LFRS were identified for positive practice on several occasions within the national report.

The full report can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-state-of-fire-and-rescue-2024-to-2025>.

### **HMICFRS Chief and Chairs event**

The annual Chiefs and Chairs event was held in Nottingham on 4 November 2025. Chief fire officers, authority chairs (and equivalents), sector leaders, and Government representatives were brought together to discuss key issues facing the sector. CFO Jon Charters and CC Usman Arif attended on behalf of LFRS.

The day consisted of several presentations that were delivered by sector leaders, and the new Minister for Building Safety, Fire and Democracy Samantha Dixon MBE MP was also in attendance to deliver the keynote speech. The presentations and discussions focussed on:

- Key findings from the round 3 inspections
- Internal Governance
- Protection and Risk Based Inspection Programme
- Use of technology

### **HMICFRS Data Collection**

The HMICFRS have discontinued the collection of Autumn data returns and transitioned to an annual return, which will next be requested in Spring 2026. The information included in the return is expected to be similar to the information requested in Spring 2025.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service congratulated for excellent performance**

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service is outstanding in many areas, including understanding risk and protecting the public through fire regulation, the fire inspectorate has said.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) has graded Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service's performance across 11 areas. It found the service was 'outstanding' in six areas and 'good' in five areas.

HMICFRS said the service is outstanding at understanding risk. It builds a comprehensive risk profile using information from a wide range of sources, including consultation with local communities. The service uses IT effectively to share incident information quickly. It has invested in an automated post-incident system which supports a shared understanding of risk across the service.

Inspectors said the service works well to protect the public by regulating fire safety. The service's protection strategy is clearly linked to the risks identified in its community risk management plan, which allows effective information sharing between staff across the service. The service also proactively works with local businesses and organisations to promote compliance with fire safety legislation. For example, the service has reduced attendance to unwanted fire signals leading to efficiency savings.

HMICFRS also found that the service is well prepared for major and multi-agency incidents, working closely with the local resilience forum and investing in innovative equipment to respond to wildfire incidents and wide-scale flooding. It is also familiar with the significant risks neighbouring fire and rescue services may face and works well with other services to respond to emergency incidents.

Inspectors said the service continues to be outstanding at promoting its values and culture. Leaders demonstrate the service's values, and staff feel appreciated and included. Staff told inspectors that they felt the service was inclusive, supported individuals and took action against those who didn't model the values and behaviours expected.

However, the service needs to do more to make sure that its equality impact assessment process is robust, and the assessment findings are acted on appropriately.

### **His Majesty's Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services Michelle Skeer said:**

"I congratulate Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service on its excellent performance in keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks. I was pleased to see that the service has made good progress since our last inspection.

"The service is outstanding in six areas, including understanding risk, protecting the public by regulating fire safety and responding to major and multi-agency incidents. It uses a wide range of data to understand risk at a

local level, and it has a robust plan and resources in place to inspect its highest-risk buildings.

“The service continues to be outstanding at promoting its values and culture. Leaders demonstrate the service’s values and staff feel appreciated and included. It also works hard to make sure its staff are trained and skilled, with a culture of continuous learning throughout the service.

“The service’s current leadership, management, and staff, alongside the contributions of former Chief Fire Officer Justin Johnston, have further improved its services to the public. I am confident the service will address the area for improvement we have identified around its equality impact assessment process.”

## **Ends**

### **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:



Reason for inclusion in Part 2 if appropriate: Insert Exemption Clause