

Lancashire Combined Fire Authority

Planning Committee

Meeting to be held on 2 February 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 2025-27 HMICFRS inspection process is well underway; there is a greater focus on governance arrangements and their effects on services. HMICFRS will not evaluate the governing authority itself; instead, they will assess how CFA governance directly influences LFRS. The people assessment will consider whether governance and oversight frameworks promote a positive organisational culture, as well as whether established code of conduct standards effectively support workforce health and well-being. Leadership at all levels, values and culture, and a more detailed review of major incident preparedness will also be examined by HMICFRS. HMICFRS plans to share key insights from the fire and rescue services (FRS) inspected so far during their next External Reference Group (ERG) meeting, scheduled for 24 February 2026. The inspection timetable for Phase 1 and Phase 2 has now been published: Phase 1 will include inspections of 14 FRSs, and Phase 2 will cover another 15, making 29 in total. LFRS will be included in Phase 3, with dates yet to be confirmed.

Changes at the Inspectorate:

His Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) Sir Andy Cooke will leave office in March 2026, HMICFRS have assured the sector that the inspection programme will continue without disruption during the process to appoint his successor.

Digital and Cyber Thematic Inspection:

His Majesty's Inspector (HMI) Michelle Skeer wrote to all Chief Constables and Chief Fire Officers to announce that the HMICFRS will be conducting a joint thematic inspection examining police forces' and FRSs' response to increasing areas of cybersecurity risk. Three FRSs have already been chosen for this process. Although Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) volunteered to participate in the inspection to help refine its procedures and identify both strengths and areas needing improvement, HMICFRS clarified that the selection of the three FRSs was already complete. Nevertheless, they expressed interest in holding engagement sessions with LFRS and reviewing documentation related to its cyber security practices. As this is a thematic inspection, the evidence will be used to inform the HMICFRS's understanding of the management of cybersecurity in FRS's generally. The HMICFRS won't be publishing reports on individual services or making graded judgments but will highlight positive practice when identified.

National HMICFRS Report Themes:

The Organisational Assurance Team will continue to monitor national patterns and insights from all HMICFRS reports, adding essential findings to the theme tracker. From January 2026, the theme tracker will be available on the Organisational Assurance Team's SharePoint page. The tracker will provide the Executive Board, Service Management Team (SMT), and Department Heads with a "real-time" overview of sector-wide key themes that are emerging from the HMICFRS inspections. The Organisational Assurance Team are anticipating the first reports to be published around February 2026.

Characteristics of good:

The HMICFRS has updated the characteristics of good performance. These characteristics describe the levels of performance a Fire and Rescue Service needs to achieve to be graded 'good'. They help the HMICFRS to make consistent assessments across all services and show services what they are being graded against.

Round 3 Area for Improvement (AFI):

The Service received one AFI in the report concerning Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs).

AFI SPoC: Director of People and Development – Liz Sandiford

The service should make sure it has robust processes in place to carry out Equality Impact Assessments and review any actions agreed as a result.

“Although the service has a process in place to assess equality impact, we found inconsistencies with EIAs. We found that most EIAs we reviewed had been completed following the completion of a project or activity. Some only had the initial assessment completed, not the full assessment. Although the service has introduced a quality assurance process for EIAs since our last inspection, four out of the five assessments we reviewed hadn’t been quality assured. Where EIAs had been completed, most recommendations weren’t transposed into the strategy or document. For example, although an EIA was completed for the prevention strategy, there was no mention of the significant findings or mitigations in the strategy itself. This is an area for improvement.”

AFI Update:

1. The EIA Form and Guidance has been updated and published on the intranet.
2. The mechanism for administering EIAs has been built into a SharePoint site, this is currently being tested and should make it easier from a quality assurance and tracking of actions perspective.

Forward Look:

HMICFRS requires quarterly updates on progress against this AFI through their online portal, and progress will also be reported into the SMT Performance and Assurance meeting for review.

While LFRS only received one AFI, the report included several recommendations and observations for ongoing development. The Organisational Assurance Team has identified 13 actions from these suggestions, which they will monitor and track.

The Organisational Assurance Team has conducted engagement sessions with the following departments to review the areas highlighted within the report and clarify expectations for future actions.

- Prevention
- Protection
- Service Improvement
- Finance
- Property
- Human Resources

After the engagement sessions concluded, the Organisational Assurance Team entered the actions into the Assurance Monitoring System and assigned them to the appropriate stakeholders for updates.

Service Liaison Lead (SLL) Visit to Lancashire:

Phil Innis, our HMICFRS SLL, conducted a session with the Organisational Assurance Team on Wednesday 26 November, to highlight the changes and expectations regarding the 25/27 inspection. A presentation has been prepared to capture some of this essential information. This has been forwarded to SMT along with a copy of the updated characteristics of good. Phil Innis will also be in Service on Thursday 29 January 2026 for further engagement at the SMT Development at the Leadership and Development Centre.

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