



COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

25 FEBRUARY 2020

HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY AND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES UPDATE

REPORT OF AREA MANAGER TRAINING, ASSETS AND ASSURANCE

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the current position and next steps of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

2019 Inspection

2. The HMICFRS inspection of County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) was completed on 19 July 2019 with the final report published on 17 December 2019.
3. The inspection assessed how effectively and efficiently CDDFRS prevents, protects the public against and responds to fires and other emergencies. It also assessed how well it looks after the people who work for the Service.
4. The following grades and sub-diagnostic grades were awarded within the report:

EFFECTIVENESS	GOOD
Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies	Requires Improvement
Preventing fires and other risks	Good
Protecting the public through fire regulation	Requires Improvement
Responding to fires and other emergencies	Good
Responding to national risks	Good
EFFICIENCY	GOOD
Making best use of resources	Good
Making the FRS affordable now and in the future	Good
PEOPLE	REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT
Promoting the right values and culture	Good
Getting the right people with the right skills	Good
Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	Requires Improvement
Managing performance and developing leaders	Requires Improvement

Action Plan

5. An action plan to address all improvement areas identified in the report has been developed. The action plan highlights all the areas formally highlighted in the report as needing improvement and also any text in the report which identifies where the Service is not as good as it could be.
6. In total there are 57 actions across the three pillars of Effectiveness, Efficiency and People. The action plan is attached as Appendix A.
7. Periodically, progress against the action plan will be reported to the Performance Committee and the Combined Fire Authority (CFA).

Service Liaison Lead and Round Two Inspection

8. Davinder Johal has been appointed as the new HMICFRS Service Liaison Lead for CDDFRS. She will visit the Service in March 2020.
9. HMICFRS have informed all FRS of the dates of the Round Two inspections. CDDFRS will be inspected in July 2021.

State of Fire and Rescue 2019

10. On 15 January 2020, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services, Sir Thomas Winsor published the 'State of Fire and Rescue – The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2019'.
11. This is the first report to the Secretary of State under section 28B of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. It contains his assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of FRS in England, based on the inspections HMICFRS carried out between June 2018 and August 2019. He will publish an annual report on the state of the fire and rescue sector from now on.
12. The report can be accessed online at:
<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/state-of-fire-and-rescue-annual-assessment-2019/>
13. The report is in three parts. Part 1 contains his assessment of the state of FRS in England. Part 2 gives an overview of the gradings and the findings from HMICFRS's first round of inspections. Part 3 sets out the full list of HMICFRS fire and rescue reports and other inspection publications for the period covered by the report.
14. The key headlines outlined in Part 1 of the report are listed below:
 - Services are generally highly skilled and able to respond to all kinds of challenges, but significant reform is needed to modernise the sector;
 - The role of the fire sector needs greater clarity;
 - National terms and conditions need reviewing;
 - Trade union influence is not always in the best interests of the public;
 - Chief Fire Officers (CFO) need operational independence;
 - Operational response is strong, but many Services need to improve their protection work;
 - The degree of variation between Services is undesirable;
 - Almost every Service we inspected that employs on-call firefighters faces problems;

- Staff need to be treated better. There is a toxic culture in too many Services;
 - Better performance and talent management is needed;
 - Some watches develop their own culture, sometimes to the detriment of the Service;
 - Diversity must be addressed;
 - More and more wellbeing provision is being made available with Services rapidly expanding the range of wellbeing support available to their staff;
 - Some Services are financially strapped; others are inefficient;
 - The sector is missing opportunities to use data and technology effectively;
 - Significant savings could be achieved through combining FRS.
15. Part 1 also contains four recommendations which Sir Thomas Winsor has made to the fire and rescue sector:
- a. By June 2020, the Home Office (HO), in consultation with the fire and rescue sector, should review and with precision determine the roles of:
 - (a) FRS; and
 - (b) those who work in them.
 - b. By June 2020, the HO, the Local Government Association (LGA), the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) 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'.
 - c. By September 2020, the HO should consider the case for legislating to give CFO 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 CFO.
 - d. By December 2020, the NFCC, with the LGA, should produce a code of ethics for FRS. The code should be adopted by every service in England and considered as part of each employee's progression and annual performance appraisal.
16. CDDFRS features in the Efficiency summary of Part 2. The report positively highlights the movement of work carried out by central teams to operational crews, with the aim of making better use of firefighter capacity which has resulted in a notable increase in productivity levels. Commenting in the year to 31 March 2018, CDDFRS carried out around three times the England rate per 1,000 population for home fire safety checks and more than four times the England rate for fire safety audits per 100 known premises.
17. Additionally, it highlights the Service's performance regime that guides work in priority areas. Giving an example of how this drives station-based work such as home fire safety checks, safe and well visits and fire safety inspections.
18. The report also comments on the survey "Public perceptions of FRS in England 2019". HMICFRS commissioned BMG Research to identify the public's views and experiences of FRS'.
19. Ten thousand members of the public across England were surveyed which identified the following:
- a. The sector is admired by the public (only 2% of just over 10,000 respondents said they were dissatisfied with their local Service);

- b. Most respondents are interested in knowing what their local FRS is doing in their area (78%);
 - c. Compared with a similar previous survey BMG Research did, fewer respondents feel informed about what their local FRS is doing (52% in 2018, compared with 57% in 2019);
 - d. The main reason respondents don't feel informed is because they haven't seen any information about their FRS (79% of those who don't feel informed stated this);
 - e. Only a small proportion of respondents have been asked about their views on FRS in the past 12 months (8%);
 - f. Respondents were asked about their knowledge of the staffing arrangements for stations in their local FRS. The respondents had low awareness of this (42% gave an incorrect answer and a further 28% said they didn't know).
20. Other areas for Members to note are:
- a. The report advises that HMICFRS will devise and consult on a methodology to inspect fire and rescue authorities, if they have concerns that the governance may be negatively affecting the effectiveness and efficiency of a Service.
 - b. It highlights that during this cycle of inspections, HMICFRS may also choose to carry out a thematic inspection on an issue or issues of cross-sector relevance and importance. The report also states that "The effect of fire and rescue authorities on the work of CFO is something we will consider further in our next round of inspections, including whether it should form part of a thematic review into the sector's leadership."
 - c. Although the report highlighted "The on-call model needs attention to make it work now and in the future" and stated "There needs to be a continued, concerted effort from Services and Government to attract enough firefighters to crew engines when they are needed" the report did not include a recommendation for the Government to take action in this area.
21. The Service are reviewing the content of the report and any areas of improvement identified will be added to the HMICFRS Action Plan.

Recommendations

22. Members are requested to:
- a. note the contents of this report;
 - b. receive further reports as appropriate.

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