



**Safest People, Safest Places**

## **Combined Fire Authority**

**21 September 2020**

# **Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services Update**

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## **Report of the Area Manager Assets and Assurance**

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### **Purpose of the 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).

### **Thematic COVID-19 Inspection**

2. Under section 28A(3) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, HMICFRS have been commissioned by the Home Secretary to inspect the response to the COVID-19 pandemic of the fire and rescue sector in England.
3. Specifically, the inspectorate has been asked to consider:
  - (a) what is working well and what is being learnt;
  - (b) how the fire sector is responding to the COVID-19 crisis;
  - (c) how fire services are dealing with the problems they face; and
  - (d) what changes are likely as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

4. The scope of the inspection will include:
  - (a) Activity to protect communities and limit the spread of COVID-19, including the tripartite agreement;
  - (b) Safety and wellbeing of staff during COVID-19;
  - (c) Maintenance of statutory functions during COVID-19;
  - (d) Sharing and promoting best practice during COVID-19; and
  - (e) Capability to co-ordinate and broker requests for mutual aid during COVID-19.
5. In order to inspect every service in this tight timeframe, each service will be allocated a two-week period between September 2020 to November 2020. County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service's two-week period begins on 2 November 2020.
6. The inspection will be conducted entirely virtually. It will include:
  - (a) Desktop review of business continuity of pandemic plans and absence management policy;
  - (b) Surveys for the Service, staff and local representative bodies;
  - (c) A specific COVID-19 data collection;
  - (d) A stakeholder interview with the Deputy Chair of the Local Resilience Forum;
  - (e) Interview with the Chair of the Combined Fire Authority;
  - (f) Interview with the Chief Fire Officer; and
  - (g) Interviews related to People, Finance, Protection, Prevention, Response and Control.
7. All interviews will be conducted virtually using Microsoft Teams.
8. Following the inspection, the findings will be published in a letter to the Chief Fire Officer and Chair of the Combined Fire Authority. It will contain a narrative and not a graded judgment.

### **Round Two Fire and Rescue Service Inspections**

9. HMICFRS have also confirmed their round two inspection plans. They intend to restart the fire and rescue services inspection programme in early 2021, running through to autumn 2022.
10. They plan to reconsider the inspection methodology, and should any changes be thought necessary, they will consult the external reference and technical advisory groups.

11. HMICFRS have also notified the sector they are considering whether they need to change the order in which services were scheduled to be inspected. If any changes are required, they have stated they will ensure services are given sufficient notice.

### **Recommendations**

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