



**Hampshire
& Isle of Wight**
FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

HIWFRA Standards and Governance Committee

Purpose: Noted

Date: **22 MARCH 2022**

Title: **HMICFRS INSPECTION ROUND 2 REPORT**

Report of Chief Fire Officer

SUMMARY

1. The purpose of this report is to provide awareness of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services Round 2 Inspection report findings for Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service (HIWFRS). This report sets out the Service's approach to address the areas for improvements and notes the Service's next steps in terms of liaison with HMICFRS. The report also outlines some key changes made to the Round 3 Inspection (anticipated to commence in Autumn 2024).
2. The report adds detail to the Member's briefing and awareness session that took place earlier this year.

BACKGROUND

3. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection, much like internal audit, is a crucial part of our wide-ranging assurance programme and we are committed to using inspection as an opportunity to learn. The report also provides our communities with a view of how we are performing across the Service, for example in terms of how we understand, prevent and respond to fires and other incidents and risks.
4. The inspection reviews the Service as a whole. From how senior leaders set the strategy to how well our teams perform in their day-to-day tasks. They do this in many ways, from reviewing our documents, analysing our data, carrying out staff and public perception surveys, staff focus groups, visits to stations and more. Much of the activity throughout the year takes place remotely. Some field work visits were completed where they visited our teams right across the organisation.

5. Our first inspections in Round 1 took place in 2018 and therefore we were inspected as two separate services, HFRS and IWFRS. However, both Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Services received the same ratings for each area ('pillar') of assessment:
 - Effectiveness – Good
 - Efficiency – Good
 - People – Requires Improvement
6. In addition to the overall ratings in 2018, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Services both received the same "cause for concern" under the People pillar:
 - *"The service does not do enough to be an inclusive employer."*
7. In response to the Round 1 Inspections, we put together a joint action plan to address all areas that the inspection found to be requiring improvement. We subsequently delivered a range of improvement activity, with progress reported into the [Fire Authority Standards and Governance Committee](#) and the and [Isle of Wight Council Corporate Scrutiny Committee](#). All actions contained within these plans were closed in the summer of 2020 (Appendix B and C).
8. After the 2018 inspection, a positive joint report on the [Services' response to the COVID-19 pandemic](#) was also published in January 2021. The Inspectorate reflected on many to significant improvements within the Services, such as the work to develop and embed Values and Behaviours and the creation of the People and Organisational Development directorate within its supporting strategy.

ROUND 2 INSPECTION

9. The HMICFRS Round 2 inspection took place from April to June 2022 and was the first full inspection of HIWFRS since the Service became a Combined Authority. We received a draft report in early November and then engaged in a period of thorough internal review for as well as discussions with the Inspectorate which according to their procedure is the Pre-Publication Check (PPC) Our report was then published on 20 January 2023 – with the following ratings:
 - Effectiveness – Good
 - Efficiency – Requires Improvement
 - People – Requires Improvement

10. The report includes many positive findings. Where HIWFRS has been graded as 'requires improvement', our work already underway to remedy issues has been recognised.
11. Our 'cause for concern' from the previous inspection, for not doing enough to be an inclusive employer, has also been removed because of the significant progress we have made in this area.
12. The only area that saw a decline from the 2018 inspection was our rating for how the Service uses its resources, which has gone from 'good' to 'requires improvement'. This has changed the overall efficiency rating. This is largely focused on how we allocate resources between prevention, protection and response activities, and suggests the Service is not using our fleet as efficiently as we could and that we are not always meeting our targets in Protection (risk based inspection fire safety audits delivered), Prevention (Safe & Well visits delivered) and Response (critical response times).
13. Some of the challenges that were raised were in relation to our On Call availability. We plan to invest time and money into improving our On Call model and how we recruit and retain people in the future. This is at the forefront of our Safety Plan priorities for 2023/24 which were agreed by the Fire Authority in February.
14. Despite these findings, we were praised for our response to incidents - including major incidents – so the public can be reassured that we are able to respond properly when called. We also made various representations to the inspectorate on this issue (as part of the report fact-checking process) as the overall size of our fleet meets the amount we need to maintain adequate fire cover across both Hampshire and the Isle of Wight according to our most recent assessment of risk. This also provides us with sufficient resilience to cope with peaks of incident demand and to meet our core purpose that "Together, We Make Life Safer".
15. It is also important to note that the inspectorate also concluded that the service is good at identifying risk, finding that HIWFRS has assessed an appropriate range of risks and threats after a thorough integrated risk management planning process to develop our Safety Plan – considering relevant information collected from a broad range of internal and external sources and datasets. This included social, financial and health data as well as information from external organisations.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

16. As noted above, following the Round 1 inspection, we undertook an extensive exercise to capture actions against each area for improvement and the cause for concern. This was reported regularly to the Executive Group and the two separate Fire Authorities (Hampshire Fire & Rescue Authority and the Isle of Wight Council).
17. As we no longer have a cause for concern, there is no longer a mandatory requirement for us to produce an action plan in this same way. Also, the vast majority of areas for improvements that were identified are already being progressed with actions underway or are planned in our Year 4 Safety Plan.
18. In total there were 23 areas for improvement identified and these are set out in **Appendix A** of this report. Of these 23 areas, 18 of them are being responded to in the Year 4 Safety Plan (presented to the full Authority in February 2023) and the supporting Directorate Plans. The below outlines the position on the remaining five areas:

- **The service should make sure it effectively addresses the burden of false alarms.**

This is an area that we made representations to the inspectorate on, as they fail to acknowledge that the majority of our false alarms (61% of all false alarms from April 2020 to December 2022) are at domestic premises, meaning non-attendance could potentially create a risk to life. Furthermore, attending these domestic false alarms also give us a valuable opportunity to offer community safety advice. The Service will continue to raise this issue within the NFCC, for a wider consideration of policy regarding false alarms.

- **The service should assure itself that its use of enforcement powers prioritises the highest risks and includes proportionate activity to reduce risk.**

Again, this is an area we made representations to the inspectorate on. This is because the data they used is dated (from 2020/21) and the report is drafted from a position that asserts more enforcement activity is good, and less activity is bad. In fact, less enforcement activity is a positive as we are influencing behaviour and practice upstream proactively negating escalation to formal enforcement action. This is in part, done by our proactive engagement with businesses – something that is identified as ‘promising practice’ elsewhere in the report.

- **The service should have effective measures in place to assure itself that its workforce is productive and that their time is used as efficiently and effectively as possible to meet the priorities in the integrated risk management plan.**

The forthcoming Community Risk Management Planning process will assess the use and deployment of resources. However, at this stage, we do not intend to come up with an overarching productivity measure for the Service or in particular teams. There will, however, be a continued and renewed focus on performance reporting and management across the Service, and, where appropriate we use data on time spent to deliver certain activities. We also continue to be a part of the National Fire Chiefs' Council (NFCC) productivity working group.

- **The service should ensure its expected values and behaviours are understood and demonstrated at all levels of the organisation and that managers actively promote these standards.**

This is an ongoing activity, for example in part of our assurance against our compliance with the Code of Ethics; and is explored through the Service's various engagement forums. Therefore, there is not a specific planned activity in this area.

- **The service should assure itself that senior managers are visible and demonstrate service values through their behaviours.**

As above, it is also important that in exploring this via existing routes and forums we more fully understand who our staff define as "senior management" and what effective "visibility" would look like in practice to ascertain what additional action needs to be undertaken.

SPOTLIGHT REVIEW ON BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

19. Following the publication of its annual national report, and in response to the London Fire Brigade (LFB) Independent Culture Review, the HMICFRS announced on 16 January that they are going to produce a 'Spotlight Review' on bullying and harassment across the fire sector.
20. This review will use existing data gathered from previous HMICFRS inspections, including ours, as well as evidence from a recent data request; and a report will be published with their key findings. At the time of writing this report, the approximate publication date for the Spotlight Review has not been announced.

21. The Service's Year 4 Safety Plan improvements, presented to the Fire Authority in February, also includes consideration of what the LFB Independent Culture Review findings mean for us, and any specific action that is required.

HMICFRS NATIONAL REPORT

22. In addition to the published report, HMICFRS published its annual assessment of the fire and rescue sector on 20 January 2023. The report makes no reference to HIWFRS other than our gradings, but provides overarching summary findings from its various inspections and concludes:

"The dedication, expertise and work of fire and rescue services provide invaluable sources of security to our communities... However, the sector urgently needs improvement and reform... In particular, the Government should make sure it implements the White Report proposals and (HMICFRS') recommendations as soon as reasonably practicable..."

"In the face of industrial action, services must keep their communities safe. Many services have told [HMICFRS] that the threat of industrial action can tangibly affect how well they can respond to incidents. This is a serious matter, which requires careful attention; the risk to the public is too great. Unions and employers should prioritise the safety of their communities above all else."

"One of (HMICFRS') outstanding recommendations stresses the need for a review of how effectively pay and conditions are determined. The current circumstances present just one reason for the need for urgent reform"

ROUND 3 INSPECTION CHANGES

23. Round 3 inspections commenced in January 2023, however, our next inspection will not likely be until Autumn 2024.
24. HMICFRS will no longer be grading services at the pillar level: effectiveness; efficiency; and people. Instead, they will only grade the diagnostics underneath the pillars, to try and focus services on the specific areas rather than chasing overall ratings.
25. Another significant change in Round 3, is the addition of a fifth graded judgement 'adequate'. This is to acknowledge that whilst some services may have some areas for improvement, they are still largely performing at the expected level. The hope is that this will separate ambiguity from those that were close to receiving a good rating but just fell slightly short from

those that need significant improvements to key areas, including any cause for concerns.

SUPPORTING OUR SAFETY PLAN AND PRIORITIES

26. The following activity was a Year 3 Safety Plan deliverable under the Learning and Improving Safety Plan priority:
 - *“Begin to implement the findings of the reviews we did in Y2 and our 2022 inspection by HMICFRS. To ensure HIWFRS delivers against national best practice and identifies any risks that need to be resourced to; and to support the Service in embedding this activity into the core activity of all our Directorates.”*
27. Furthermore, all of the latest areas for improvements are either covered in the Year 3 Safety Plan deliverables or have been aligned to proposed Year 4 deliverables.

COLLABORATION

28. Collaboration takes place with the Fire Standards Board, the National Fire Chiefs Council, the Local Government Association and various other fire and rescue services, including HIWFRS, in the development and continuous improvement of the HMICFRS framework.
29. We do this through attendance at Chief and Chair events, Service Liaison Officer events, representation on the HMICFRS External Reference Group and on the HMICFRS Technical Advisory Group.
30. Also, the work undertaken to support the development of the Fire Standards contributes directly to the inspection framework as they increasingly incorporate this into their programme.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

31. Year 4 (2023/24) will be a significant year for the Service where we advance the next iteration of our Community Risk Management Plan, setting the foundation for the longer term, 2025-2030 and begin responding, where required, to the HMICFRS inspection report, as well as advancing various other improvements to support and complement Directorate Plans, all with the ultimate aim of further supporting Our People and Our Communities.
32. Our organisational planning, to establish both the Year 4 Safety Plan improvements and Year 4 Directorate Plans, has given early consideration

to the HMICFRS 2022 inspection findings and areas where we need to undertake improvement activity. Therefore, any additional resource requirements have already been identified and factored into our budget planning process.

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

33. Impact assessments have not been required for this report as the production of the report will not result in the implementation a new change activity, and/or introducing, or amending, a Service Policy or Procedure.
34. However, individual actions required to meet the areas for improvements will be subject to conformity with the Service's Change Management and Impact Assessment procedures, and therefore may require unique impact assessments for those changes.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

35. The HMICFRS inspection is a requirement of the Fire Service Act (2004) and National Framework for Fire and Rescue Services in England (2018).

RISK ANALYSIS

36. Failure to deliver actions to the HMICFRS areas for improvement before the next Inspection in Autumn 2024, leaves the Service exposed to the risk of a poor outcome from inspection but also will show little organisational improvement.
37. Failure to adequately prepare for the next inspection, will leave the Service open to poor outcomes from the HMICFRS Inspection Round 3.

EVALUATION

38. Evaluation will play a key role in many of our HMICFRS improvement actions as they will be subject to the Change Management Framework procedure, which sets out the requirement to identify benefits at the start of the change and evaluate them after.
39. Feedback from staff involved in the Round 2 inspection has been captured through various mechanisms and will be discussed at the Integrated Performance and Assurance Group (IPAG) and Executive Group to inform our approach to the Round 3 Inspection.

CONCLUSION

40. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services inspection, much like internal audit, is a crucial part of our wide-ranging assurance programme and we are committed to using inspection as an opportunity to learn.
41. Whilst we have seen one rating reduce to 'requires improvement' we welcome the progress noted in the 2022 inspection report; and beyond the overall ratings the tone and content of the report is more positive than in the 2018 reports. Nevertheless, following the round 2 inspection, we are clear on what improvements need to be prioritised in order to build upon the positive progress we have made since the last inspection. We acknowledge that there is still work to do across some specific areas and this is helping to shape our Year 4 Safety Plan and Directorate priorities.

RECOMMENDATION

42. That the Standards and Governance Committee notes the outcome of the HMICFRS Round 2 inspection, and the Service's approach to embedding its improvements into the Safety Plan delivery.

APPENDICES ATTACHED

43. Appendix A – Areas for Improvement
44. Appendix B – HFRA Standards & Governance Committee HMICFRS action plan close report
45. Appendix C – Isle of Wight Council Corporate Scrutiny Committee HMICFRS action plan close report

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

46. [Hampshire & Isle of Wight - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services \(HMICFRS\) – Home \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/)
47. [State of Fire and Rescue: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2022 - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(HMICFRS\) – Home \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/)

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