HIWFRA Standards and Governance Committee

Purpose: Noted

Date: **18 MARCH 2024**

Title: **ASSURANCE REPORT: FIRE STANDARDS AND HMICFRS AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT PROGRESS UPDATE**

Report of Chief Fire Officer

SUMMARY

1. This report provides Members with an assurance update on the Service's progress in adopting and embedding Fire Standards within the Service and also on the progress being made against the His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Areas for Improvement (AFIs).

RECOMMENDATION

2. That the HMICFRS AFI and Fire Standards update report be noted by the HIWFRA Standards and Governance Committee

BACKGROUND

3. Members receive updates on the progress of the Services adoption of Fire Standards and on the progress being made against the HMICFRS AFI's at Standards and Governance meetings every six months. The report is for Members to note and if necessary, seek further assurances on any of the areas raised.

FIRE STANDARDS

4. Fire Standards are an important mechanism that set out how fire and rescue services operate. Fire Standards cover the whole spectrum of what we do as a Fire Service and provide the assurance framework to give us an

understanding of areas where we are performing well, with strong controls in place, and areas where we can learn and improve. Fire Standards have been designed to bring consistency to the sector, to support the delivery of legislative requirements and drive change and improvement.

5.   Currently there are 16 approved Fire Standards. Each Fire Standard has a number of desired outcomes for which we carry out an analysis to determine the overall assurance rating for the whole Fire Standard

6.   There are three ratings that can be given to a Fire Standard:

(a)   Substantial: this means that there is deemed to be a sound system of assurance in place that can be evidenced over a number of different areas.
(b)   Reasonable: this means that there is a sound system in place with some controls however non-compliance is identified, and actions are created for areas of improvement.
(c)   Limited: this means that there is deemed to be significant weakness or non-compliance and improvement is required.

7.   All 16 Fire Standards are at varying stages of assurance as described below:

(a)   Initial first assurance in progress

(b)   Initial assurance rating given

(c)   Deep dive in progress

(d)   Deep dive assurance rating given

8.   The tables below illustrate the current position of all 16 Fire Standards. The text in italics highlights those Fire Standards that have completed the assurance process since the last Standards and Governance Committee report in September 2023. As part of our rolling programme of assurance, the Organisational Learning and Assurance team are currently completing a deep dive of some Fire Standards with the intention that all will be completed by the end of the year. The purpose of the deep dive is to identify if the previous position has changed at all thus contributing to our self-awareness and continuous learning. We seek evidence to illustrate compliance and ensure actions are taken where non-compliance is identified. Deep dives are a collaborative process involving the Organisational Learning and Assurance team, subject matter experts, Heads of Service and Directors. The deep dive process is a continuous one and once all Fire Standards have received a deep dive rating, the

Organisational Learning and Assurance team will continue with a third-round analysis of the Fire Standards.

Initial assurance in progress:

Fire Standard	Date Published	Current position
Communication and Engagement	30/03/2023	Initial first assurance rating in progress
Leading the Service	21/12/2022	Initial first assurance rating in progress

Initial assurance process complete with rating:

Fire Standard	Date Published	Assurance rating
Emergency Response Driving	16/02/2021	Initial Assurance Rating: Substantial
Operational Competence	16/02/2021	Initial Assurance Rating: Substantial
Operational Preparedness	16/02/2021	Initial Assurance Rating: Substantial
Emergency Preparedness & Resilience	31/05/2022	Initial Assurance Rating: Reasonable
Data Management	02/08/2022	Initial Assurance Rating: Reasonable
Fire Control	*30/03/2023*	*Initial Assurance Rating Substantial*
Leading and Developing People	*21/12/2022*	*Initial Assurance Rating: Reasonable*

Deep dive in progress:

Fire Standard	Date Published	Current assurance rating
Operational Learning	16/02/2021	Initial Assurance Rating: Reasonable

		Deep Dive in progress
Community Risk Management Planning (CRMP)	18/05/2021	Initial Assurance Rating: Substantial Deep Dive in progress (as part of the CRMP process)
Protection	03/09/2021	Initial Assurance Rating: Substantial Deep Dive in progress

Deep Dive process complete with assurance rating:

Standard	Date Published	Assurance rating
Code of Ethics	*18/05/2021*	*Deep Dive Assurance Rating complete: Reasonable*
Prevention	*30/07/2021*	*Deep Dive Assurance Rating complete: Substantial*
Safeguarding	*31/01/2022*	*Deep Dive Assurance Rating Complete: Substantial*
Fire Investigation	*31/03/2022*	*Deep Dive Assurance Rating Complete: Substantial*

9. There are currently three new Fire Standards that we are expecting during 2024:

   (a)   Internal Governance and Assurance

   (b)   Commercial and Procurement

   (c)   Asset Management

HMICFRS AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT (AFI)

10. The HMICFRS Round 2 inspection for Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service (HIWFRS) took place from April to June 2022. Our report was published on 20 January 2023 with the following ratings:

    (a)   Effectiveness – Good

    (b)   Efficiency – Requires Improvement

    (c)   People – Requires Improvement

11. The HMICFRS report resulted in 24 Areas for Improvement (AFIs) being identified. 20 of the 24 Areas for Improvement are being addressed as part of Safety Plan 2020-2025 activity, Directorate plan activity or as part of Business as Usual activity. For the remaining four areas, there is no specific plan in place to address these at this time however Internal Audit will be auditing two of the Areas for Improvement to test our thinking and provides views around the control mechanisms we currently have in place.

12. The table below lists all the HMICFRS AFIs received by HIWFRS and provides a progress update.

HMICFRS diagnostic	Area	Status Update	Completion
Effectiveness: Responding to Major Incidents	The service should put in place a programme of multi-agency exercises so its procedures for responding are well tested and understood.	To support this area evidence of both multi agency and cross border exercises that have taken place over the past year has been gathered. This is being used to support the development of a platform to record exercises. Operational Learning and Assurance is becoming more embedded across the service through a range of resources now available to staff however more work is planned, specifically including the	25%

		development of platform to record exercises.	
Effectiveness: Responding To Fire and Other Emergencies	The service should ensure it has an effective system for staff to use learning and debriefs to improve operational response and incident command.	A significant amount of work has been undertaken in this area for both 'on scene' and structured debriefs. National Operational Learning good practice, Joint Operational Learning, control incident awareness forms and training being planned for flexi duty officers in Spring 2024, all contribute to more effective procedures which enable us to learn and improve from incidents. Newly established debrief mechanisms ensure learning and improvement is identified. Target completion is May 2024.	75%
	The service should make sure it puts in place and delivers its plan to adopt national operational guidance (NOG)	Progress continues to be made in this area and all NOG compliant tactical guidance has been finalised. The first NOG product pack (transport) was published in December 2023 and further packages will be published over next 15 months through to Spring 2025. The Service's Maintenance of Competence Scheme is being revised and completion is expected by Summer 2024 – this will further support NOG alignment.	25%

		Communications are planned for 2024 to implement the cultural change. Additionally the NOG team's work has now been broadened to ensure inclusion of initial acquisition training.	
	The service should make sure it participates in a programme of cross-border exercises, with learning from them obtained and shared.	To support this area evidence of both multi agency and cross border exercises that have taken place over the past year has been gathered. This has been used to support the development of a platform to record exercises. Operational Learning and Assurance is becoming more embedded across the service through a range of resources now available to staff however more work is planned, specifically including the development of platform to record exercises. In addition, a revised process is being developed to enable partner agencies to share learning and to support future exercises. Target completion date is May 2024.	25%

Efficiency: Best use of Resources	The service needs to show a clear rationale for the resources allocated between prevention, protection and response activities. This should reflect, and be consistent with, the risks and priorities set out in its integrated risk management plan.	Work is underway to produce the Service's next Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). This plan will be presented to the Fire Authority in Autumn 2024 ahead of publication on 1 April 2025. Change activity is already underway across the Service as part of business as usual and our existing Safety Plan year four activity. As part of this, the Service is creating a permanent strategic planning function to oversee this work. In January 2024, following a period of consultation, Operations Management Board supported proposals to release £1.25 million of efficiencies for reinvestment within the Ops Directorate. Work is now underway to implement the key areas of investment.	50%
	The service should make sure there is a testing programme for its business continuity plans, particularly in high-risk areas of service.	The service Business Continuity Manager is currently reviewing the exercising schedule for Business Continuity plans, taking into account the plans that have been adequately exercised against real time events (e.g. loss of utilities - local power cuts, loss of water; adverse weather - Storm	50%

		Ciaran including flooding of HIWFRS estate; industrial action - planning and preparation and Fire Control Departmental BC Plan following the outage of 999 last year). In addition to this a national power outage was exercised as part of national 'Mighty Oak' Exercise in March 2023. A full evacuation of Fire Control was also carried out at recent HQ Fire evacuation drill.	
	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 Service are actively engaged in the Home Office workstream to define and report on productivity measures for FRS staff including Firefighters. We will continue to invest our energy and resources to this approach to align nationally with other FRS and the Home Office and will not generate separate thinking at this stage.	n/a
Effectiveness: Preventing Fire and Risk	The service should make sure it quality assures and evaluates its prevention work so it understands the benefits better	Work continues in the development of the Quality Assurance and Evaluation framework. Best practice from other services has been used to develop the framework, to better support, assure and evaluate the range of prevention work being completed.	25%

Effectiveness: Fire Safety through Regulation	The service should assure itself that its use of enforcement powers prioritises the highest risks and includes proportionate activity to reduce risk.	The Service are confident that we use our enforcement powers effectively. Since the previous S&G report it has been agreed that internal audit will audit this area in quarter four of the 2023/2024 audit plan to review and examine current policy and procedure. We are content that the Authority uses Fire Safety enforcement powers adequately. The Authority has recently approved a new policy which describes the checks and tests used to ensure evidence and cases are handled appropriately. We have an ongoing approach to engage with businesses with our local inspectors. We are strengthening our community engagement approach through a new team, and this will include businesses.	100%
	The service should make sure it meets the targets it sets for its risk-based inspection programme.	The number of Fire Safety Audits being undertaken has increased by 18% on the same time last year and work is being undertaken to ensure that all information is correctly recorded within the system.	50%
	The service should make sure it has an effective quality	Work continues in the development of the Quality Assurance and	25%

	assurance process, so staff carry out audits to an appropriate standard.	Evaluation framework. Prioritisation has been given to a Safe and Well framework and Fire Safety Audits Framework. Best practice from other services has been used to develop the framework, to better support, assure and evaluate the range of prevention work being completed.	
	The service should make sure it effectively addresses the burden of false alarms.	The Service are confident that we have an effective policy in place to address false alarms. Since the previous report it has been agreed that internal audit will audit this area in quarter four of 2023/2024 audit plan to review and examine current policy and process. The service views domestic false alarm calls as a valuable opportunity to offer community safety advice. For non-domestic premises, we adopt a call challenge policy which continues to screen out unwanted mobilisations. This area has been raised with the NFCC, for a wider consideration of policy regarding false alarms.	100%

Effectiveness – Understanding Fire and Risk	The service should ensure it gathers and records relevant and up-to-date risk information.	Work continues to implement an improvement plan to enhance how the Service captures and uses premises-risk information. The number of Site-Specific Risk Information (SSRIs) in date as of December 2023 is now 98%. Additional resource is being recruited to strengthen the central team to support local teams to carry out necessary risk gathering work.	50%
	The service should ensure that all risk and safety-critical information has been read and understood by staff.	All the premises-risk information work is linked to the improvement plan mentioned above. There is also a system in place for the collection and sharing of risk and safety critical information to crews.	50%
People – Promoting Values and Culture	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.	Work to address this AFI forms part of the Service's Culture Improvement Action Plan. The governance around Culture, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and Wellbeing has been strengthened including the creation of a Culture Ethics and Behaviours Group. This	75%

		group is made up of a diverse membership across all areas of our Service with the purpose of driving continuous improvement in our Service culture - this will be achieved through listening to our teams and encouraging people to feel safe to say what they feel without fear of criticism or negative consequences. The group will encourage positive behaviours through recognition and identify how we can ensure negative behaviours are understood and discouraged. The group will also be responsible for delivering products to support cultural improvement which can be used by us all in our everyday work.	
	The service should assure itself that senior managers are visible and demonstrate service values through their behaviours.	We have interpreted this to mean how we engage and communicate across the Service and as such, there is a high level of activity. We have commissioned an independent Culture review and engaged with our teams to determine their view of visibility and what it means to them. The Culture Ethics & Behaviours Group are scoping ways to further improve social bonds with senior leaders.	75%

		Directors continue to engage with their teams on a regular basis, mixing online and in person events and meetings. The Chief Fire Officer hosts a regular briefing to the Service, located at a station, interviewed by staff and broadcast (and filmed) to all staff. The Internal Comms team continues to visit middle manager forums and shares "hot topics" across all levels of the organisation to help shape conversations and disseminate information.	
	The service should monitor secondary contracts to make sure working hours are not exceeded.	The data has been sourced from GARTAN. The next stage is to review the data which is expected by March 2024.	75%
People – Right People, Right Skills	The service should review its succession planning to make sure that it has effective arrangements in place to manage staff turnover while continuing to provide its core service to the public.	Succession Planning Model developed for WT now in use by Resource Management Team. Middle Manager development pathways now live and we will shortly be publishing a calendar of gateways for promotional opportunities to allow individuals to build individual development timelines and understand the predicted organisation	75%

| | | need over the coming years.

This will start to populate a pool of appointable individuals to be utilised for permanent and temporary opportunities in the future.

Supervisory Manager process has now concluded, and a pool of appointable individuals is being maintained for future vacancies.

Planning work is underway for a WT recruitment campaign in 2025. Currently utilising existing recruitment pools to fill initial training courses until Jan 2025.

Further review of On-call succession planning to be undertaken with plans to produce a model for this too. | |
| People – Managing Performance and Developing Leaders | The service should ensure it has an effective system in place to manage staff development, performance and productivity. | Effective systems are in place to manage staff development and performance.

Staff development forms the majority of Talent & Organisational Development priorities. There are a number of projects which contribute to the development of our people including new Leadership Courses, People | 75% |

		essentials courses, Coaching and mentoring opportunities, PDR and 360 feedback. The review and update of the PDR app has provided individuals and managers with the opportunity to conduct meaningful talent conversations and set SMART objectives. The Talent management toolkit and Talent matrix (included on the PDR) provides our people with a mechanism to develop both themselves and their teams, whether that be through Education, Exposure or Experience. The Leadership Pathways remains under review with new emphasis being on self-directed learning. Structured feedback was provided to candidates on the recent CM/WM promotion processes with the emphasis being on personal development. The Transform programme has been developed using the NFCC's Supervisory Leadership Development Pathway and provides our Supervisory Managers	

		with a blended programme of Leadership theory and experiential learning during facilitated sessions. We are in the process of procuring a new Learning Management System (Totara) which will improve managers visibility of their teams learning and development	
People – Managing Performance and Developing Leaders	The service should improve all staff understanding and application of the performance development review process.	Following a review of the PDR app, improvements will be implemented in March 2024. Following this, the app will continue to be reviewed and amended accordingly to meet the needs of all employees.

The PDR completion rate as of the end of December 2023, were 68%, which is an improvement on the 53% for the previous reporting year 22/23.

Alongside the improve app, the Talen and Organisational Development Team have delivered training sessions to 440 users, provided drop-in sessions, and delivered presentations to the Group Manager and Station Manager forums to ensure users have the support they need. | 100% |

		A new 5-star PDR bitesize course has been introduced to the service to improve awareness and understanding of PDR and to allow individuals to get the most out of their PDR conversations.	
People – Promoting Fairness and Diversity	The service should make sure staff understand the value of positive action and having a more diverse workforce.	The EDI team have refreshed our mandatory training packages, including 'introduction to EDI', this module includes understanding the difference between positive action and positive discrimination. This module is being rolled out to our people, as a face to face or e-learning. Reference to the benefits of diversity are reflected in all EDI training packages.	50%
	The service should make improvements to the way it collects equality data to better understand its workforce demographic and needs.	The service has seen improvements to non-disclosure rates. Further work is required to increase disclosure in ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation in particular. Work is planned to develop a comms plan to ensure our people understand the how this data is used and encourage further disclosures using ESS.	50%
	The service should make sure it has robust processes in place to undertake equality impact	PIAs being monitored and tracked by EDI team. Engagement with EG and HOST to ensure	50%

	assessments and review any actions agreed as a result.	resources are prioritised to complete this work.	
	The service should make sure that all staff understand the benefits of equality, diversity and inclusion and their role in promoting it.	The EDI team have refreshed our training packages, including three mandatory modules. These are being rolled out to all staff (via both face to face and e-learning). Reference to the benefits of equality, diversity and inclusion are reflected in all EDI training packages, and the role individuals play to promote this. We have also launched the refreshed culture, ethics and behaviours group and membership is growing across the service. This group are championing our inclusive service culture and contributing towards initiatives to ensure an inclusive working environment.	50%

13. Outside of an HMICFRS inspection period, Officers continue a programme of engagement with our HMICFRS Service Liaison Lead to ensure the relationship between both parties grows and develops.

14. HIWFRS have been informed that our round three inspection period will be February 2025. Ensuring the Service is ready for inspection is a really important aspect for everyone across the Service and inspection readiness work is already underway.

15. Alongside the round three HMICFRS inspection, HMICFRS are currently carrying out a Misconduct Handling thematic inspection. This is following on from the Values and Culture spotlight report published on 31 March 2023. The HMICFRS Misconduct Handling thematic inspection involves

inspecting 10 Fire and Rescue Services (FRS), with results published in June 2024. HIWFRS are not one of the 10 FRS however we have submitted data as part of the thematic inspection and have also completed the HMICFRS cultural survey.

SUPPORTING OUR SAFETY PLAN AND PRIORITIES

16. **Learning and Improving**: we have the support of policy and guidance with the freedom to use our discretion to do the right thing, learning from ourselves and others.

17. The outcome of our HMICFRS inspection has provided a great opportunity for self-reflection along with the identification of areas where we can improve. Many of the areas for improvement can be linked to activity identified in year four of our Safety Plan 2020-2025, as well as Directorate Plans and business as usual activity. In year four of our Safety Plan 2020-2025 we committed to a Safety Plan activity: identify any gaps or risks, by undertaking assurance activity against and responding as necessary, to external reviews and reports including the HMICFRS report. This report provides Members with an update on the assurance activity linked to the Safety Plan activity stated above.

18. The adoption of the Fire Standards framework throughout the Service plays an important role in supporting our objective of 'learning and improving' and ensuring 'high performance.' Ensuring that we have an accurate reflection of whereas a Service we can develop ourselves to be better, will in turn lead to higher performing teams and safer communities.

COLLABORATION

19. For Fire Standards, 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 implementation of new Standards across the Fire Sector.

20. Once the Fire Standards Board releases a new standard to Fire and Rescue Services, the Organisational Learning and Assurance team collaborate across the Service with all colleagues who can contribute towards the assessment of the status of that particular Fire Standard.

21. 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. HMICFRS also collaborate 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.

22. HIWFRS ensure collaboration with HMICFRS through our engagement programme with our Service Liaison Lead and 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.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

23. The Fire Standards Board have released 16 Fire Standards with further standards to be released. HIWFRS have committed to fully embedding Fire Standards across the Service and plan to use the Fire Standards framework as our Assurance Framework moving forward. The Organisational Learning and Assurance Team oversee Fire Standard assurance, with input provided by the relevant teams and specialists across the Service. Each Fire Standard also has an Executive Group sponsor who signs off the Assurance Rating.

24. During an HMICFRS inspection, resource requirements increase dramatically. However, currently, HIWFRS are not being inspected so are managing the requirements for engagement and tracking progress against the Areas for Improvement with current resources as part of the Organisational Learning and Assurance Team.

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

25. For the purpose of reporting this update to the Authority, no impact assessment is required. However, change activity underway that contributes towards an HMICFRS Area for Improvement or a Fire Standards desired outcome, will be assessed separately as part of the change process.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

26. The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England states that every Fire and Rescue Service will be subject to inspection by HMICFRS. Fire Standards are subject to scrutiny from HMICFRS, and they have been particularly interested in our approach to the adoption of Fire Standards in previous inspections. HMICFRS inspection is also a requirement of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

27. The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England also states that every Fire and Rescue Service must implement the approved standards through

its work and that HMICFRS will incorporate the standards into their inspections.

RISK ANALYSIS

28. Failure to complete activity that has been highlighted through HMICFRS Areas for Improvement before the next Inspection in February 2025, leaves the Service exposed to the risk of a poor outcome from inspection and reputational risk. It also demonstrates the absence of a learning and improvement culture and does not meet the Services priority to learn and improve and be a developing organisation.

29. Failure to comply with Fire Standards, in some areas, would mean that we are not meeting our statutory and legal responsibilities including, but not limited to, community risk management, emergency response driving and complying with health and safety legislation when delivering operational response. The latter, as an example, could also have potential financial impacts where we found to be breaching health and safety legislation.

30. Failure to comply with the Fire Standards may also lead to reputational damage and missed opportunities to identify and embed learning and improvement, a priority of the Safety Plan.

EVALUATION

31. HIWFRS acknowledge the importance and value that HMICFRS brings. It provides an opportunity for the Service to understand where we can improve to make life safer and increases our self-awareness and ability to learn.

32. The adoption of Fire Standards across the Service provides an opportunity to carry out an appraisal which results in the identification of areas for improvement. It provides an evaluation of the current position which can be taken as a measure for future success and progress. All which contributes to strengthening the Service, facilitating learning, and improving.

CONCLUSION

33. This assurance report provides an update to the Authority on the progress the Service have made in adopting Fire Standards across the Service and also the work being carried out to acknowledge the HMICFRS Areas for Improvement.

34. Further reports will be presented to the Standards and Governance Committee on a six-monthly basis, the next update being Thursday 26 September.

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