

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
COMMUNITY SAFETY & WASTE MANAGEMENT
CABINET PANEL
MONDAY, 10 FEBRUARY 2020 AT 10.00AM

HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARIES AND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES (HMICFRS) ACTION PLAN – UPDATE REPORT

Report of the Director of Community Protection and Chief Fire Officer

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Executive Member: Terry Hone, Community Safety & Waste Management

1. Purpose of report

1.1 To provide the Cabinet Panel with a summary and update regarding the progress on actions taken to date to address the “areas for improvement” identified by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire & Rescue Services(HMICFRS) in their report published in December 2018.

2. Summary

2.1 Progress against the action plan, last reported to the Panel in September 2019, is set out in detail in Appendix A of this report. The story is largely one of continued, steady, progress in completing the HMICFRS Action Plan. The nature of many of the areas identified for improvement involve programmes of work which, though not yet concluded in their entirety, have nevertheless already delivered significant improvement. Raising the profile of the support available for mental health, for example, has been the subject of a suite of well-received initiatives which will continue to run throughout the year alongside other ‘well-being’ initiatives as this area for improvement is delivered as part of the service’s People Strategy.

2.2 Work to progress some of the key elements which support the service’s new Integrated Risk Management Plan, most obviously a rigorous, evidence-based, assessment of risk, using a validated and approved model is a major undertaking which is making good progress. However, the product from this review will not be realised until March on the completion of a full review of the county’s risk profile – drawing on existing station profiles and new data sets from within the County Council and from partner organisations. The revised risk profile will then be used to inform the fire cover review and underpin any rationale which links resourcing to risk such as the balance between our response, prevention and fire protection activity.

- 2.3 Whilst the previous report to Panel detailed strong progress in many areas, it did acknowledge a lack of expected progress on the East Coast Consortium telephony upgrade where delays continued to be incurred due to problems with the installations of Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) lines and a consequent delay to formal testing. It is pleasing to now report that these issues have been largely resolved and the remaining elements of the DS3000 telephony replacement have now been delivered. This, alongside Humberside going 'live' with the Vision 4 system, represents an important achievement and is one which has been well received by Control staff in particular, delivering increased resilience in the service's mobilising capability.
- 2.4 However, with only a finite resource available to support the delivery of the service's Digital Strategy and the concentrated efforts which have gone into delivering improvements in the service's call handling arrangements, inevitably this has meant that some other IT related projects also linked to delivering improvements and supporting the HMICFRS action plan, have made a little less progress than was anticipated. The new availability system for our 'on call' firefighters (Gartan), for example, which the last panel report predicted was to have been tested in the autumn, will now take place in the New Year with a view to a full-roll-out of the new system by June. In the meantime, the introduction of new alerters has increased HFRS's ability to mobilise 'on-call' fire fighters in harder to reach parts of the county and will deliver further improvement to the resilience of the present arrangements.
- 2.5 The service has also been working for some time now to improve its management of information about vulnerability and its interventions to keep people safe and well in their homes. The most recent report to Panel explained the difficulties which had been encumbered in procuring, alongside two other Fire & Rescue Services (F&RS), an effective recording tool for 'Safe and Well' visits to remove the paper-based systems. Whilst this remains an area where it is anticipated that a solution will not be delivered before the return of the Inspectorate, (hence the 'red' status), encouraging progress has been made in the meantime, working with colleagues in Adult Care Services (ACS), to develop a greater understanding of those most at risk to improve our risk stratification and better target 'Safe and Well' visits. It is anticipated that operational crews will be sent a revised list of Hertfordshire residents judged to be at highest risk in March 2020 in time to commence a refreshed set of 'Safe and Well' visits, commencing in April 2020.
- 2.6 In the next quarter, as the implementation of the new Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) widens and deepens, many of the HMICFRS recommendations relating to operational response and risk will be subsumed within the IRMP implementation plan - the progress of which is now monitored by the IRMP Board.
- 2.7 Predicting where the service will be in June/July this year (when it is currently predicted the service might expect a reinspection) is quite a challenge and may depend on some variables outside of the service's own control. Nevertheless, the progress to date, as recorded in Appendix A, would suggest

that the service is well on track to be able to evidence significant improvement in those areas where the service was assessed to be performing less strongly in the summer of 2018. Inevitably, where introducing new technology plays an integral part in delivering several of those improvements, there is a degree of vulnerability which must be acknowledged. However, recent progress in this area and additional resource now supporting some of those projects gives strong grounds for optimism.

- 2.8 Whilst the IRMP is still in its relative infancy the opportunity this provides to evidence a sound understanding of risk and an informed and proportionate allocation of resource to manage or respond to those risks will put the service in a strong position to address one of the Inspectorate's primary interests. Strong progress has been made in the last year delivering the People Strategy which, though only a draft at the time of the original inspection, had already identified areas where improvement was required. The actions identified within that strategy have now delivered tangible improvements, which are expected to widen and deepen as major initiatives around 'values and behaviours', recruitment and selection and competency become embedded within the service.
- 2.9 The service has received two informal 'familiarisation' visits in recent months from its HMICFRS Service Liaison Lead Officer (SLLO) who has begun to develop a good understanding of the service and its position within the County Council. This was most obviously lacking during the first inspection and it is hoped that this will also facilitate a more positive outcome from the inspection as well as an improved understanding of the progress the service has made in the last year. As part of a recent wholesale reallocation of SLLOs by HMICFRS, the service has recently learnt that it has now been allocated a new SLLO, though one of considerable experience, including leading the inspection of two County FRSs.
- 2.10 In recent weeks, HMICFRS has announced details of its inspection programme for the first tranche of services who will be visited in the second round of inspections which is to start shortly. Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue Service will be inspected in the week commencing 11 May 2020. This will be preceded by a 'Discovery Week' which has been scheduled for the week beginning 20 April 2020.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 The Cabinet Panel is asked to note the content of the HMICFRS Action Plan 2019/20, attached as Appendix A to this report, and make any additional comments or observations.

4. Background

- 4.1 On the 20 December 2018, HMICFRS published an inspection report detailing their findings following inspection of Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service. The report identified a number of "areas for improvement".

- 4.2 Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRA) must give due regard to reports and recommendations made by HMICFRS (section 7.5 of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018). Where recommendations are made by HMICFRS, fire and rescue services are required to prepare, update and regularly publish an action plan detailing how the recommendations are being actioned. If a FRA does not propose to undertake any action as a result of a HMICFRS recommendation, reasons for this should be given.
- 4.3 HMICFRS has recently issued the inspection reports from the last tranche of Fire & Rescue Services who had yet to be inspected. Accordingly, we now have a much fuller picture of performance across the country's fire and rescue services. Amongst the key points highlighted within the latest HMICFRS' summary report were continued concerns with how services carry out their protection duties as, all too often, HMICFRS believed that these teams are under-resourced, (this was an area where HFRS had scored well). Hertfordshire was judged by HMICFRS as 'Good' in our Fire Protection arrangements, the services emergency response arrangements (including the quality of related training and the Service's contribution to the county's national arrangements. Now that all services have been assessed, Hertfordshire continues to remain above the national average in all three areas.
- 4.4 In addition to the publication of the last tranche of inspection reports, the 'State of Fire & Rescue' report has recently been published. The report, written by Sir Tom Winsor, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services, is his 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 fire and rescue services in England, based on the inspections carried out between June 2018 and August 2019.
- 4.5 The report recognises the commitment of firefighters across the country to their profession and their communities; their life-saving prevention initiatives; and their highly skilled emergency response. However, Sir Tom raises concerns about some particular themes: some services not doing enough in relation to building safety; barriers to becoming more effective and efficient; a notable lack of diversity; and, *in a few services*, a damaging, bullying culture.
- 4.6 Whilst considerable effort continues to be spent on addressing the recommendations contained within the HMICFRS report, it is important that the service also continues to ensure that those areas of work which were singled out by the Inspectorate as being particularly strong such as its emergency response arrangements, the training which goes on to ensure that the service can continue to deliver a strong and effective emergency response and its fire safety enforcement work, remain performing at a high level. Work continues to strengthen and develop each of these areas of the service.
- 4.7 HMICFRS has recently concluded a consultation about their proposals for their second round of inspections which, it is understood, are due to

recommence in the Spring. It is anticipated that, as last time, Hertfordshire will be included in the first cohort of repeat inspections which are expected to be undertaken between May and August this year. Though HFRS has yet to publish the results of the consultation exercise it is firmly expected that the second round of inspections will closely follow the format and content of the first round, covering the three themes of Effectiveness, Efficiency and People.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no immediate financial implications.

6. Equalities

6.1 When considering proposals placed before Members it is important that they are fully aware of, and have themselves rigorously considered the equalities implications of the decision that they are taking.

6.2 Rigorous consideration will ensure that proper appreciation of any potential impact of that decision on the County Council's statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. As a minimum this requires decision makers to read and carefully consider the content of any Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) produced by officers.

6.3 The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

6.4 Equalities Impact Assessments (EqIA) will be undertaken as part of each individual action, where required.

6.5 There is no EqIA relating to this report.

Background information

Appendix A – HMICFRS Action Plan 2019/20

[HMICFRS report Dec. 2018](#)

HMICFRS State of Fire & Rescue: [The Annual Assessment of Fire & Rescue Services in England 2019](#)