

**HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY
AND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE (HMICFRS): COVID-19
INSPECTION – CLEVELAND FIRE BRIGADE****REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER****For Information****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform Members of findings from HMICFRS COVID-19 Inspection of Cleveland Fire Brigade; as detailed in the Report attached at Appendix 1.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are asked to note:
- the outcomes of Cleveland Fire Brigade's HMICFRS COVID-19 Inspection 2020 as detailed in the Report at Appendix 1
 - that any identified areas of improvement/development will be captured and progressed within the Brigade's Corporate Internal Operating Plan

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In August 2020, the Home Secretary commissioned HMICFRS to inspect the response to the COVID-19 pandemic of the fire and rescue sector in England. The commission has been issued under section 28A(3) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.
- 3.2 The inspectorate has been specifically 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.
- 3.3 The aim of these inspections is to understand the sector's overall response and how well it worked across boundaries and with other organisations. This was to enable the HMICFRS to form a picture of the fire and rescue sector's overall response to the COVID-19 pandemic which is captured in the national report which has been published along with individual service reports.

4. CLEVELAND FIRE BRIGADE'S COVID-19 INSPECTION REPORT 2020

4.1 Cleveland Fire Brigade's COVID-19 Inspection Report was published on 22nd January 2021 and is attached as Appendix 1; an embargoed copy was circulated to Elected Members on 20th Jan 2021.

4.2 The findings within the Report are structured under the following headings:

- Preparing for the Pandemic
- Fulfilling Statutory Functions
- Staff Health and Safety and Wellbeing
- Working with Others, and making changes locally
- Use of Resources
- Governance of the Service's Response
- Looking to the Future

4.3 In summary, the headline findings were:

- the brigade had adapted and responded to the pandemic effectively by prioritising the health, safety and wellbeing of both its own staff and the community.
- in line with good governance, the brigade had a pandemic flu plan and business continuity plans in place.
- the brigade had continued to provide its core statutory functions throughout the pandemic.
- staff wellbeing was a clear priority for senior leaders during the pandemic, who actively promoted wellbeing services and encouraged staff to discuss any worries they had.
- to protect communities, the brigade had worked directly with local partners and through the Cleveland LRF to offer support and assistance where requested. Staff (corporate, whole-time and on-call fire-fighters) were encouraged to carry out extra roles beyond their core duties. This included support to other local blue light services and other public service providers that were experiencing high levels of demand, and support directly to its communities. The brigade had carried out the following new activities: assisting vulnerable people, face fitting for masks, delivering PPE, packing and repacking food for vulnerable people, providing training packages and temperature testing members of the public as part of the Middlesbrough Local Outbreak Plan.
- The brigade's resources were well managed, and its immediate financial position was mostly unaffected as additional costs were covered by a government grant.
- Members of Cleveland Fire and Rescue Authority were actively engaged in discussions with the chief fire officer on the service's ability to discharge its statutory functions during the pandemic; and
- During the pandemic, services were able to adapt quickly to new ways of working.

Improvement Planning

- 4.4 HMICFRS recognised that the arrangements for managing the pandemic may carry on for some time, and that the brigade was now planning for the future. In order to be as efficient and effective as possible, Cleveland Fire Brigade should focus on the following areas:
- a) It should determine how it will adopt for the longer-term, the new and innovative ways of working introduced during the pandemic, to secure lasting improvements.
 - b) It should work with all staff to determine how it can identify and address any longer-term impact Covid-19 may have on their wellbeing; and
 - c) It should make sure whole-time firefighters are fully productive, while minimising the risk of them contracting or spreading the virus.
- 4.5 Since the Brigade's Inspection we continue to review our approach and any areas identified for improvement will be captured and progressed through our Corporate Internal Operating Plan that is regularly reported to Members.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 As Chief Fire Officer, I strongly believe that, once again, we have clearly demonstrated that Cleveland Fire Brigade is one of the top performing FRSs in the country. There is no doubt that this has been achieved as a result of the excellent support that it gets from the CFA; outstanding relationships that it has built with its communities, businesses, partner agencies and other organisations and the professionalism, dedication and hard work of its staff - all of which has made a positive difference to the safety and lives of the people in Cleveland Fire Authority's area during these unprecedented times.

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