

## HMICFRS: FRS INSPECTION PROGRAMME 2020/21 & COVID-19 INSPECTION 2020

### REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER



**For Information**

#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the HMICFRS fire and rescue service inspection programmes.

On 13 March 2020, Sir Thomas Winsor wrote to inform the police and fire sectors that they were suspending the inspection activity as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. This report sets out HMICFRS plans for the ongoing inspections of fire and rescue services.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Elected Members note the report.

#### 3. FRS INSPECTION PROGRAMME 2020/21

- 3.1 In July 2017, HMICFRS began a programme of inspection into the effectiveness and efficiency of fire and rescue services in England. This was the first time in over a decade that the sector had been subject to independent inspection. We have just finished the first full inspection of every service and our final tranche of reports were published in December 2019.
- 3.2 We have learned much about the fire sector over the past two years. We welcome the response to our work from services and authorities, who have generally viewed inspection as a positive development.
- 3.3 Our principal approach at this stage is to evolve and improve our existing methodology, rather than reinvent it. Our inspection process worked. We inspected every service, giving clear judgments on three pillars and 11 questions covering effectiveness, efficiency and people.

3.4 The HMICFRS document entitled Fire and Rescue Services Inspection Programme and Framework 2020/21 is an inspection programme and framework prepared under Section 28A of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and can be found at <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/frs-inspection-programme-and-framework-2020-21.pdf>. The document provides details of HMICFRS's inspection programme and framework for fire and rescue services for 2020/21. It concerns the second full cycle of inspection of all the fire and rescue services in England.

3.5 The fire and rescue services inspection programme enables HMICFRS to draw together evidence from inspections of all 45 fire and rescue services in England. Our focus is on the operational service provided to the public. Our inspection is a rounded assessment of every fire and rescue service and covers the effectiveness and efficiency of each service and how it looks after its people.

It includes an assessment of:

- the operational service provided to the public (including prevention, protection, and response);
- the efficiency of the service (how well it provides value for money, allocates resources to match risk, and collaborates with other emergency services); and
- how well the service looks after its people (how well it promotes its values and culture, trains its staff and ensures they have the necessary skills, ensures fairness and diversity for the workforce, and develops leadership and service capability).

3.6 HMICFRS's assessments are designed to enable the public to see how each fire and rescue service is performing, including changes over time and in relation to the performance of other services. The resulting assessments include graded judgments of performance. This inspection programme and framework has the approval of the Home Secretary, which is required before inspectors act in accordance with it.

### 3.7 **The Inspection**

Fire and rescue services inspection As in our first round of inspections, HMICFRS will inspect how effective and efficient fire and rescue services are at carrying out their principal functions: fire safety, firefighting and responding to road traffic collisions and other emergencies. 2 We will inspect all 45 fire and rescue services in England, beginning in 2020. The principal questions which the fire and rescue services inspection programme is designed to answer are set out below, along with the corresponding inspection focus

| PRINCIPAL QUESTION  | INSPECTION FOCUS   |
|---|--|
| How effective is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks? | How well the fire and rescue service understands its current and future risks, works to prevent fires and other risks, protects the public through the regulation of fire safety, and responds to fires and other emergencies, including major and multi-agency incidents. |
| How efficient is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks? | How well the fire and rescue service uses its resources to manage risk, and secures an affordable way of providing its service, now and in the future.   |
| How well does the fire and rescue service look after its people?  | How well the fire and rescue service promotes its values and culture, trains its staff and ensures that they have the necessary skills, ensures fairness and diversity for its workforce, and develops its leaders.  |

- 3.8 HMICFRS will publish the more detailed FRS inspection methodology on their website.
- 3.9 The assessment of **effectiveness** will continue to consider how well each fire and rescue service is performing its principal functions of preventing fires happening, ensuring the public is kept safe through the regulation of fire safety, and responding to emergency incidents. During the second cycle of inspections we will provide the public with more clarity on how well fire and rescue services are prepared to respond to major incidents with other fire services and agencies.
- 3.10 The assessment of **efficiency** will now make a clearer distinction between the way each fire and rescue service uses its resources to manage its current risks, and how well it is securing an affordable way of managing its risks in the future. New questions have been added which focus on whether a service can demonstrate what savings it has made, the effect of these on its operational performance, and whether its use of reserves is sustainable.
- 3.11 The assessment of **how each fire and rescue service looks after its people** will remain focused on the leadership at all levels in the organisation, including training, diversity, values and culture. The question sets have been altered slightly to reflect an additional focus on the behaviours within the workforce, and to also consider individuals' career pathways.
- 3.12 Each inspection will result in a rounded assessment and graded judgments for each fire and rescue service.

3.13 HMICFRS will publish a report on each fire and rescue service inspection with their judgments. They may also report on particular themes emerging from their inspections if they consider it appropriate.

3.14 HM Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services for England is required to report each year on the carrying out of inspections, including an assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of the fire and rescue authorities in England. His first assessment was published in January 2020.

3.15 **Timeframe**

It is currently scheduled that Cleveland Fire Authority's Round Two Inspection will commence in Summer 2023.

#### **4. COVID-19 INSPECTION 2020**

4.1 On the 12 August 2020, Sir Tom Winsor HMICFRS confirmed that the Home Secretary has commissioned, under section 28A(3) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, the Inspectorate to support the fire and rescue sector by carrying out an inspection on the response to Covid-19 pandemic.

4.2 The approach to the inspection is on focusing on **promoting improvement** and **identifying notable practice**. Every FRS will be inspected to determine:

- how the fire sector is responding to the Covid-19 outbreak;
- what is working well and what is being learned;
- how the sector is dealing with the problems it faces; and
- what changes are likely or appropriate for the fire and rescue sector as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

4.3 The scope of the inspection will include:

- Activity to protect communities and limit the spread of Covid-19, including the tripartite agreement
- Surveys for the FRS, staff, FRAs and staff associations
- Desktop review of pandemic plans and absence management policy
- Remote interviews, including the Chair of the CFA; the CFO and stakeholders
- Evaluation of virtual inspection methodologies

4.4 The proposed themes for the CFA interviews:

- Scrutiny of the FRS response and recovery plans
- The main challenges the FRS faced
- Oversight of the tripartite agreement
- How value for money was secured
- What learning and best practice was identified

Inspection reports will be with a narrative assessment rather than graded judgments.

## 5.1 TIMETABLE

5.1 The timetable for the inspection has now been finalised and dates are set out in the table at Appendix 1.

- August 2020 – 3 weeks pre-inspection
- October 2020 – National Interviews
- **Cleveland Fire Authority's inspection date is w/c 9 November 2020.**
- December 2020 – Publish **National Covid-19 Report** and **FRS Service Letters**

IAN HAYTON  
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

KAREN WINTER  
ASSISTANT CHIEF FIRE OFFICER  
STRATEGIC PLANNING AND RESOURCES