

HMICFRS INSPECTION 2023/25 ('ROUND 3') UPDATE REPORT



REPORT OF CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

For Information

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) 'Round 3' Inspections 2023/24.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the update of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) 'Round 3' Inspections 2023/24 as set out in this report.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 As part of its reform agenda, the Government has introduced an independent inspection regime for Fire and Rescue Authorities in England – and the fire and rescue service they oversee. The inspections are delivered by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). The chief fire and rescue inspector and inspectors of fire and rescue authorities in England have powers of inspection given to them by the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, as amended by the Policing and Crime Act 2017.
- 3.2 The Inspectorate provides a crucial assurance function to consider how effective and efficient fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) are, how well they manage their people and whether they are fulfilling their statutory obligations. The Inspectorate also highlights good practice and identifies areas where improvement is needed so that remedial or constructive action can be taken.
- 3.3 The first round of Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) Inspections took place in 2018/19 and comprised three tranches of inspections; a further round of inspections also comprising three tranches took place in 2021/22. Inspections are now underway for 2023/25.

4. CLEVELAND FIRE BRIGADE'S INSPECTION 2021/22

- 4.1 Cleveland Fire Brigade's latest Inspection took place over the period May - Jul 2022 and comprised the completion of a self-assessment, a visit to the Brigade by an Inspection team, interviews and focus groups with various stakeholders, and an assessment of performance data. A staff survey was undertaken as part of the inspection process but as highlighted by HMICFRS 'due to self-selection sampling methodology and relatively similar sampling sizes, we do not consider the staff survey to be representative of the opinions and attitudes of the entire service's workforce'.
- 4.2 Cleveland Fire Brigade's Inspection Report 2021/22 was published and distributed to Members in January 2023. The Report can be found here <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/frs-assessment-2021-22-cleveland/>.
- 4.3 The HMICFRS found that Cleveland Fire Brigade:
- is '**good**' at effectively keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks.
 - is '**good**' at how efficiently it manages its resources.
 - is '**good**' at looking after its people.
- 4.4 In his summary HMICFRS Roy Wilshire stated that he was 'pleased with the performance of Cleveland Fire Brigade in keeping people safe and secure from fires and other risks' and positively highlighted the continuous quick response to fires and other emergencies, the good range of prevention activities for the local community, and the active fire protection service to help ensure local businesses are safe and legally compliant.
- 4.5 Mr Wilshire was pleased with the Brigade's improvement journey noting the improvements made against all 16 areas highlighted in the 2018 inspection; with 12 being resolved and 4 being progressed.
- 4.6 His principal findings in his assessment of the Brigade are as follows:
- The Brigade has made clear changes to its culture.
 - The Brigade also has a strong set of values, which are now underpinned by the national Core Code of Ethics.
 - The Brigade has improved at recruiting women into operational roles.
 - The Brigade has made improvements to its prevention, protection, and operational response.
 - The Brigade has improved staff productivity to drive efficiencies.

'Overall, this is a good performance from Cleveland Fire Brigade, both for the communities it serves and for the people who work for the Brigade'.

- 4.7 The Inspection Report and its findings clearly show that Cleveland Fire Brigade continues to be one of the top performing FRSs in the country. There is no doubt that this has been achieved because of the excellent support that it gets from the Fire Authority; 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 Teesside.

Improvement Planning

- 4.8 Our approach to Inspection was one of 'no surprises' and as part of the preparations for CFB's Inspection the Executive Leadership Team undertook a self-assessment of the areas of efficiency, effectiveness, and people; we entitled our work 'This is US'. The outcomes of this comprehensive self-assessment informed our Improvement Plans for 2021/22.
- 4.9 On publication of the Brigade's Inspection Report 2021/22 we reviewed the outcomes and captured any new areas for improvement in a Plan for 2023/24 onwards; this was presented to Elected Members on 10th Feb 2023. The actions within this Plan have been progressed through our Corporate Internal Operating Plan that is regularly reported upon to Members of the Executive Committee. To provide assurance that the 'areas for improvement' arising from the HMICFRS 2021/22 Inspection Report have been addressed a specific Progress Report is attached as Appendix 1.

5. HMICFRS INSPECTION 'TRANCHE 3' FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES 2023/25

- 5.1 In Jan 2023 the HMICFRS started their third full programme of inspection of FRSs in England. Again, inspection findings, analysis and professional judgement are being used to assess how effective and efficient FRSs are at fire safety, firefighting and responding to road traffic collisions and other emergencies, as well as assessing how well the service looks after its people.
- 5.2 Whilst the inspection methodology is similar to Round 2, the outcomes will be a grade against the eleven assessment questions as opposed to the three pillars of Effectiveness, Efficiency and People; Table 1 demonstrates this.
- 5.3 The gradings for Round 3 has also changed – the previous inspection had four grades for each pillar of inspection namely Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement and Inadequate. Round 3 Inspection will have five i.e., Outstanding, Good, Adequate, Requires Improvement and Inadequate for each assessment questions.

Table 1	Principal Questions (graded in previous inspection)	Assessment Questions (graded in next inspection)
Effectiveness	How effective is the FRS at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?	How well does the FRS understand the risk of fire and other emergencies?
		How effective is the FRS at preventing fires and other risks?
		How effective is the FRS at protecting the public through the regulation of fire safety?
		How effective is the FRS at responding to fires and other emergencies?
		How well prepared is the FRS to respond to major and multi-agency incidents?
Efficiency	How efficient is the FRS at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?	How well does the FRS use resources to manage risk?
		How well is the FRS at securing an affordable way of managing the risk of fire and other risks now and in the future?
People	How well does the FRS look after its people?	How well does the FRS promote its values and culture?
		How well trained and skilled are FRS staff?
		How well does the FRS ensure fairness and diversity?
		How well does the FRS develop leadership and capability

- 5.4 To date twelve FRSs have been inspected in Round 3; these are Avon, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Cheshire, Cornwall, Hereford and Worcester, Lincolnshire, Merseyside, Northumberland, Surrey and Warwickshire. The reports and gradings from these inspections are available at <https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/frs-assessment/frs-2023-25/>
- 5.5 Table 2 below highlights the gradings of these FRSs following inspection. It can be seen from the Table that from the FRs inspected four, Avon, Buckinghamshire, Cornwall and Warwickshire, received no areas of good and Surrey, Bedfordshire and Lincolnshire only got one, two and three respectively. Mersey and Cheshire are the only FRSs to receive areas of outstanding.
- 5.6 It should be noted that because the areas for assessment and the gradings have changed somewhat, comparisons to previous years inspection results make assessing improvement challenging.

TABLE 2	Understanding risk	Preventing	Protecting public	Responding to fires and other emergencies	Responding to major and multi-agency incidents	Best use of resources	FRS affordable now and in future	values and culture	The right people with the right skills	Ensuring fairness, promoting diversity	Managing performance developing leaders
Avon											
Bedfordshire											
Buckingham											
Cambridgeshire											
Cheshire											
Cornwall											
Hereford and Worcester											
Lincolnshire											
Merseyside											
Northumberland											
Surrey											
Warwickshire											

Key
Outstanding
Good
Adequate
Requires Improvement
Inadequate

6 CLEVELAND FIRE BRIGADE'S HMICFRS INSPECTION 2023/25

- 6.1 Cleveland Fire Brigade's HMICFRS Inspection is scheduled for week commencing 7th October 2024 and a draft timeline of activity is attached at Appendix 2.
- 6.2 Michelle Skeer OBE QPM has been appointed as His Majesty's Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services for the northern region and Spencer Rowland has been appointed as the Brigade's Service Liaison Lead.

7. HMICFRS THEMATIC INSPECTION ON HANDLING OF MISCONDUCT 2023

- 7.1 On 13th July 2023, the Home Office commissioned HMICFRS to undertake a thematic inspection on the handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services in England. This commission builds on the findings of the spotlight report on culture in the fire and rescue services published in March 2023 and other high-profile reports of unacceptable behaviour.
- 7.2 The terms of reference for this inspection include:
- the extent to which services are identifying and investigating misconduct.
 - the effectiveness of misconduct processes and how consistently they are applied.
 - how confident fire and rescue staff are in raising concerns and in misconduct processes.
 - the role of fire and rescue authorities and other organisations in handling misconduct
- 7.3 To support the inspection, HMICFRS will survey and request data from all 44 fire and rescue services, as well as inspecting a sample of ten fire and rescue services, large and small, rural and urban, to understand the handling of misconduct more thoroughly. Cleveland Fire Brigade is not one of the sample FRSs.

8. VALUE AND CULTURE IN THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE: SPOTLIGHT REPORT

- 8.1 On 30 March 2023 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published a 'spotlight' report on 'Values and culture in fire and rescue services'. This was reported to CFA AGM on 9 June 2023.

- 8.2 Members may recall that the Report has nine themes underpinned by thirty-five recommendations relating to:
- raising concerns
 - background checks
 - misconduct handling
 - leadership
 - management and leadership training and development
 - diversity data
 - improving diversity
 - core code of ethics
 - The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England
- 8.3 All FRSs, alongside the Government and national fire bodies were urged to implement the relevant recommendations. CFB has undertaken a gap analysis against those recommendations for CFOs and has put in place an action plan to address any identified gaps. Progress on the implementation of the action plan is set out in a separate report at this meeting of the Executive Committee.

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