



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority
Policy and Strategy Committee

HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY AND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES – STATE OF FIRE REPORT

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 30 April 2021

Purpose of Report:

To present Members with an overview of the 'State of Fire' report published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services.

Recommendations:

That Members note the update on the 'State of Fire' report.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In January 2020, the Chief Inspector of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), Sir Thomas Winsor, published the first 'State of Fire' report and made six recommendations.
- 1.2 The recommendations were directed at fire and rescue services, the Home Office and fire sector structures and demanded reform across a number of areas.
- 1.3 On 17 March 2021, HMICFRS published the second, annual 'State of Fire' report which covered the period of COVID-19 thematic inspections, and can be accessed via the following link:
<https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/state-of-fire-and-rescue-2020-single-page-format.pdf>
- 1.4 At the February 2021 Combined Fire Authority meeting, the Chief Fire Officer presented an update to Members on the outcome of Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's (NFRS) thematic inspection by HMICFRS for the response to COVID-19.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 HMICFRS have highlighted, in the State of Fire report, their opinion that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the practical implications of outdated and inflexible working arrangements in the fire service, reinforcing the need for national reform.
- 2.2 In his annual assessment of England's fire and rescue services, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services, Sir Thomas Winsor, highlighted that:
 - Fire services rose to the challenge of the pandemic, with many fire and rescue staff taking on additional activities;
 - Changes to improve fire and building safety in the wake of the Grenfell Tower fire are necessary and welcome; and
 - Progress has been made on introducing a code of ethics to address '*toxic working cultures*' found in a few fire services.
- 2.3 However, the Chief Inspector said that Chief Fire Officers were not always able to quickly deploy firefighters to support the pandemic response – for example the COVID-19 national vaccination programme – because fire National Employers and the Fire Brigades Union failed to reach a national agreement.

- 2.4 In his report, Sir Thomas questioned why such an agreement was even necessary during a public health emergency, given there were strong safety protections in place for all fire and rescue staff.
- 2.5 The Chief Inspector has previously made six recommendations for national reform of the fire service, which he said remain necessary and need to accelerate. Sir Thomas re-emphasised his recommendations for fire service reform with revised completion dates due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic:
- The National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) and Local Government Association (LGA) should produce a Code of Ethics for fire and rescue services – *deadline of March 2021*;
 - The Government should change the law to give chief fire officers operational independence, which if put in place before the pandemic, could have helped them deploy firefighters more quickly to do tasks beyond their normal duties – *awaiting fire reform implementation plan from the Home Office*;
 - The way the Government allocates funding to the fire sector should be reviewed, as fire services are worried about their long-term financial future once the full effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are known - *to be completed in the next spending review*;
 - The Home Office, NFCC and the LGA should establish a programme of work to improve consistency in four priority areas: Integrated Risk Management Planning; identifying and measuring emergency response standards; defining high risk premises for fire protection work; and setting an expectation frequency of inspections on high-risk premises - *deadline of December 2021*;
 - The Home Office, in conjunction with fire and rescue services, should review and determine the role of fire and rescue services and those who work for them - *awaiting fire reform implementation plan from the Home Office*; and
 - The Home Office, LGA, NFCC and Trade Unions consider if current pay negotiation structures require fundamental reform including the need for an independent pay review body and the future of the 'Grey Book' - *awaiting fire reform implementation plan from the Home Office*.
- 2.6 The Government announced on 16 March 2021 that it would consult on fire sector reform in a new White Paper, which will include changes to fire governance, later in 2021.
- 2.7 Sir Thomas highlighted that he would not make any more national recommendations, at this point, as it is important for the sector to act on the previous recommendations, which are about fundamental reform.
- 2.8 The report focussed on the requirement for fire and rescue service to continue to address the lack of diversity across their workforces and commented that

the lack of diversity and equality is a “*conspicuous failure of fairness that shames the sector*”.

- 2.9 There is focus in the report on the importance the On-Call duty system stating that “*the On-Call workforce demonstrated its value even more than usual during the pandemic*”.
- 2.10 The HMICFRS also highlight that, during their Round Two of inspections, there will be a greater focus on:
- Race and diversity, and how Services are overcoming undue inequalities;
 - Productivity of Services;
 - How Services are identifying and planning against their risks; and
 - Case file reviews in relation to protection and building safety.
- 2.11 NFRS is not directly reported on within the report and it should be noted that many of the comments do not reflect the specific findings detailed in the COVID-19 thematic inspection outcome letter received by the Service.
- 2.12 Since the publication of the NFCC Code of Ethics, the Service has adopted the document and reflect the principles within the Service’s Behavioural Framework. This is being rolled-out to all personnel across the Service and builds upon the Service’s focus in this area since the refresh of the Service Values in 2016.
- 2.13 The Service is engaged in the development of National Fire Standards in relation to the Integrated Risk Management Planning, Prevention and Protection standards. This is supporting the Service’s revised approach to the Risk Based Inspection Programme for fire protection activities, a person-centred approach in Prevention and a revised approach to the Service’s Integrated Risk Management Planning process.
- 2.14 The Service continues to build upon the success of recent wholetime recruitment campaigns, on increasing the diversity of the workforce, through continued positive action around all vacancies and increased work with communities.
- 2.15 The recently established BAME and LGBTQ+ Inclusion Forums, the Equality Steering Group and the Strategic Leadership Team continue to address areas within the Service to improve equality and diversity across the organisation and ensure that progress continues to be focussed upon, and made, in this area.
- 2.16 The Service maintains close links with the HMICFRS Service Liaison Officer (SLO) ahead of the Service’s forthcoming inspection later in 2021/22. Regular meetings are arranged between Service Officers and the SLO to share Service updates and ensure exchange of information.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no human resources or learning and development implications arising from this report.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken because the information contained in this report does not relate to a change in policy or procedure.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Police and Crime Act (2017) Chapter 4 Section 11, outlines that the English inspectors must inspect, and report on the efficiency and effectiveness of, fire and rescue authorities in England.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk management implications arising from this report.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

There are no collaboration implications arising from this report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the update on the 'State of Fire' report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

John Buckley
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER