



**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**  
**Fire & Rescue Service**  
*Creating Safer Communities*

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham  
Fire and Rescue Authority

# **UPDATE ON HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY AND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

**Date:** 25 February 2022

**Purpose of Report:**

To update Members on the latest developments of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

**Recommendations:**

That Members note the contents of this report.

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## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) is, by Royal appointment, the inspectorate body for fire services in England.
- 1.2 HMICFRS started its second full round of fire service inspections in Spring 2021 with an aim to inspect all fire and rescue services in England over three tranches covering an 18-month period.
- 1.3 Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) was inspected during September and October 2021, in tranche two of the inspection programme.
- 1.4 Each year, the Her Majesty's Chief Inspector publishes a 'State of Fire and Rescue' report which summarises the findings from the year's inspections of the sector. In December 2021, Sir Thomas Winsor released his third, and final, State of Fire and Rescue report.
- 1.5 Also, in December 2021, HMICFRS published the inspection reports for Services that were inspected in tranche one of the round two inspections.

## **2. REPORT**

### **NFRS HMICFRS INSPECTION**

- 2.1 The format of HMICFRS's inspections during round two had developed from the first-round inspections. The format for this inspection was predominantly 'virtual', due to Covid-19 restrictions, and undertaken over a longer period of time with a greater level of scrutiny, examination of evidence and engagement with the Service.
- 2.2 The inspection consisted of the submission of data and documents, a 'strategic briefing', led by the Chief Officer, staff engagement sessions, interviews, and a wider staff survey.
- 2.3 Her Majesty's inspectors visited five on-call Sections and seven wholetime Watches.
- 2.4 Following the evidence gathering phase, the Strategic Leadership Team and Chair of the Fire Authority received initial feedback through a 'hot debrief'.
- 2.5 Whilst there are no indications of gradings or outcomes given during a 'hot debrief', HMICFRS had recognised the Service's improvement journey since the first-round inspection and the direction of travel, as well as thanking the workforce for their positive engagement during the inspection.
- 2.6 The Service has, since the hot debrief, reviewed the initial feedback and developed an internal action plan to support the Service's continued improvement, prior to publication of the formal report.

2.7 The Service will receive their draft inspection report, to check for factual accuracy, around June 2022. All tranche two inspection reports are due to be published around July 2022. A further briefing will be provided to Members following the receipt of the Service’s inspection report.

**THE ANNUAL STATE OF FIRE AND RESCUE REPORT 2021**

2.8 The 2021 State of Fire and Rescue report, authored by Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector Sir Thomas Windsor, was published in December 2021. This was the third annual report since the advent of the fire service inspection programme and Sir Tom’s last report.

2.9 The report highlights that fire and rescue services in England have made improvements but states that “*more change is urgently required*”.

2.10 The report details that:

- Services have made good progress on protection activities, which includes auditing the safety of premises at risk of fire.
- Services are better at promoting a positive professional culture.
- Outdated and ineffective structures for negotiating pay, terms and conditions are where reform is most needed, which would reduce the risk of industrial action.
- If no progress is made on national reform, then the removal of firefighters’ right to strike should be considered.

2.11 Sir Thomas makes no new national recommendations in the report. However, he has expressed disappointment on the slow progress of previous recommendations. It is highlighted that four of the six recommendations, originally detailed in the 2019 report, are still outstanding.

2.12 The table below reports the six national recommendations and progress that has been made:

<b>Report Recommendation</b>	<b>Reported Progress</b>
<b>The Home Office should precisely determine the role of fire and rescue services, to remove any ambiguity</b>	Consultation with forthcoming White Paper on Fire Reform
<b>The sector should remove unjustifiable variation, including in how they define risk</b>	Home Office has funded the NFCC community risk programme. A single method for Services to identify and assess risk
<b>The sector should review, and reform how effectively pay and conditions are determined</b>	Consultation with forthcoming White Paper on Fire Reform

Report Recommendation	Reported Progress
<b>The Home Office should invest chief fire officers with operational independence, whether through primary legislation or in some other manner</b>	Home Office considering how to progress this
<b>There should be a code of ethics</b>	<b>Complete</b>
<b>The Home Office should ensure that the sector has sufficient capacity and capability to bring about change</b>	<b>Complete</b>

2.13 Sir Thomas concludes that “FRSs continue to be an enormous asset to our communities. The sector’s response to the pandemic has been exemplary. While improvements have been made, much more needs to be done. The issue of fire reform needs to be prioritised considerably more”.

### **HMICFRS ROUND TWO, TRANCHE ONE REPORTS**

2.14 On 15 December 2021, HMICFRS released thirteen reports from the first tranche of their second round of inspections. Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service’s report was delayed in publication due to the recent death of their Chief Fire Officer.

2.15 Changes to the inspection process for round two included:

- A greater focus on equality, diversity and inclusion;
- Assessing the productivity of Services;
- Assessing how Services identify and plan against known risks;
- Broadened case file reviews;
- Assessing how Services collect and assure risk information;
- Ensuring that those who need risk information have access to it when they need it.

2.16 Themes identified across the thirteen Services inspected were:

- i. *“Services are making good progress on protection”* - Many Services have made protection and risk planning more of a priority in the wake of the Grenfell tragedy and national focus in this area. There have been increases in the number of competent protection staff, with the right knowledge and skills to carry out audits at high-risk premises.
- ii. *“Services need to do more on prevention”* – This area highlighted a general lack of progress made to address improvements being highlighted as required in round one inspections. A disconnection was

identified between public-facing Service plans and action by public-facing staff.

- iii. *“Inconsistent funding and governance arrangements persist”* – the report highlighted that Services are still operating with a lack of financial certainty, caused by differences in their governance models.
- iv. *“Some Services do not allocate resources appropriately”* - Previous inspections identified too much spending on Response, and not enough on Prevention and Protection. The report highlighted that there is an over-reliance on overtime and a lack of qualified staff in areas other than Response; which is well-resourced and maintained at the expense of other statutory functions.
- v. *“Many Services rely on dual contracts and overtime, which can create inefficiencies”* - The report highlighted that the On-Call model is essential to ensuring Services can crew appliances, but there are misgivings on its sustainability, with a national solution required. More innovative ways to develop and maintain skills were highlighted as being required, to support the competency training of On-Call personnel.
- vi. *“Good intentions to promote equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are not always successful* - Inspections found a lack of training on EDI among managers and a poor understanding by staff. However, Services were better at promoting their Values, with staff behaving consistently with their Services’ values and demonstrating respect for one another. Diversity and race equality in the fire sector was highlighted as ‘woeful’. The report highlighted that measures are required to remove unfair barriers experienced by women and black and other ethnic minority staff and ensure they do not suffer unlawful discrimination in the workplace. It was highlighted that Services must ensure that staff are aware of the value of having an inclusive workforce and the associated benefits.

2.17 A review of all of the reports for Services inspected in round two, tranche one, identifies that the direction of travel, for a number of Services, had gone backwards when comparing their graded judgements to those from their round one inspection.

2.18 Of note, in the whole of the first round of inspections (45 fire and rescue services), 10 Cause for Concerns (CFCs) were awarded. This is the lowest grading possible in the inspections. In comparison, in the first tranche of the second round of inspections (13 Services) 11 CFCs have already been awarded.

2.19 HMICFRS have expressed a view that a number of Services have not delivered the required level of improvement, quickly enough. Specifically, a number of Services have not addressed the Areas for Improvement (AFI) given in round one inspections.

2.20 It is highlighted that Members approved a robust monitoring approach to addressing AFIs that the Service received from the round one inspection,

which have been reported through the Fire Authority Committee structures. A final closure of AFIs is due to be reported to the full Fire Authority meeting in July 2022.

- 2.21 For the first time, HMICFRS is now reporting on “*innovative practices*”. The Service’s Corporate team are reviewing these areas to identify any potential learning for the Service.

### **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 of the nature of this report.

### **6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

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

### **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The Local Government Act 1999 places a statutory duty on the Service to ‘*secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised*’.
- 7.2 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 contents of this report.

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

None.

John Buckley  
**CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**