



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority

UPDATE ON HIS MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY AND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 14 July 2023

Purpose of Report:

To provide Members with an overview of national reports published by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services and to provide an update on Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's inspection preparation activities.

Recommendations:

That Members note the contents of this report.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) is, by Royal appointment, the inspectorate body for fire services in England.
- 1.2 Each year, His 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 January 2023, Andy Cooke QPM DL, released his first State of Fire and Rescue report following his appointment as HM Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services.
- 1.3 In January 2023, HMICFRS commenced the third full round of inspections, aiming to inspect all 44 fire and rescue services (FRSs) within an 18 month period. Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's inspection falls into Tranche 2 and is anticipated to take place around September 2023.

2. REPORT

STATE OF FIRE

- 2.1 The HMICFRS State of Fire report is an annual report which consolidates learning and findings from all inspections conducted by HMICFRS in FRSs in England within the review period.
- 2.2 The purpose of the State of Fire report is to support and drive continuous improvement through the identification of common areas of improvement and by exemplifying good practice.
- 2.3 The report identifies improvements under the three inspection pillars of efficiency, effectiveness and people.

EFFICIENCY

- 2.4 Efficiency in FRSs is assessed based on resource management and affordability. Tranche 3 Services showed decreased efficiency with some receiving lower grades than in the first round of inspections.
- 2.5 There were a range of issues identified, including inadequate pre-planning for collaborative arrangements, a lack of fully developed savings plans, staff shortages, issues with resource management and challenges associated with funding and governance arrangements.
- 2.6 HMICFRS believes that most FRSs had scope to improve their productivity, including through the use of more effective performance management arrangements, increasing the use of wholetime firefighters in prevention and protection activities and more efficient use of technology.

- 2.7 National productivity targets have been developed and aim to allocate wholtime firefighter capacity towards prevention and protection work. Services must ensure that increases in activity in any given area should be aligned to local risk and their Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

EFFECTIVENESS

- 2.8 The effectiveness of FRSs in ensuring public safety is assessed based on five key areas:
- Understanding the risk of emergencies;
 - Preventing risk;
 - Protecting against risks;
 - Responding to emergencies;
 - Preparedness for major incidents.
- 2.9 It was found during the last round of inspections, that many FRSs lack a clear link between their risk management plans and daily operations, however it was recognised that Services respond well to incidents, although availability and response standards could be improved in some cases.
- 2.10 Nationally, there has been an increase in fire fatalities, indicating a better understanding of local risks is required and that fire prevention should be a higher priority with prevention strategies aligning to identified risks.
- 2.11 It was noted that fire protection has improved, although the recruitment of fire safety inspectors remains challenging. The progress made in reducing fire risks in high-rise buildings was recognised.

PEOPLE

- 2.12 The people element focuses on how Services develop, look after and lead staff. Common themes in this area included challenges in recruiting staff in specialist roles and the difficulties Services are having in diversifying their workforces via recruitment.
- 2.13 Risk critical training was seen as being a strength and some Services are recognised for their efforts to develop training in other skills including leadership, management and equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)
- 2.14 It was identified that there is sector-wide and immediate need for better EDI practices, and such was the level of concern, a separate Spotlight Report on values and culture was published on 30 March 2023.
- 2.15 A summary of the report findings was provided to Human Resources Committee on 23 April 2023, together with an outline of the approach the Chief Fire Officer is adopting to respond to the report findings.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE (NFRS) INSPECTION PREPARATION

- 2.16 The third round of HMICFRS inspections began in January 2023. NFRS remains within the second tranche of Services to be inspected, and it is anticipated that the inspection will likely commence around September 2023.
- 2.17 There has been some adjustments to methodology following consultation with the sector. Perhaps the most notable difference is a change to the grading system. This will expand grading categories from four to five, with the addition of an 'adequate' grading between 'good' and 'requires improvement'.
- 2.18 The three overarching pillar judgements will no longer be issued. Instead, an assessment of the 11 areas which make up the inspection framework will be provided as individual gradings. This will enable greater understanding of specific areas of strength and areas for development.
- 2.19 Tranche based assessments will also be discontinued, with Service reports being published as soon as they are available. This will reduce the time interval between inspection and report publication.
- 2.20 In order to support the forthcoming HMICFRS inspection, the Service has ensured appropriate resources are in place. This is to support co-ordination of the forthcoming inspection, and to ensure that the Service is communicating effectively both with HMICFRS via the Service Liaison Lead, and internally with staff.
- 2.21 In addition, the Service's Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) continues to provide oversight and assurance of progress against the Areas for Improvement (AFIs) identified during the last inspection, together with the learning that has been taken from both the State of Fire and Spotlight on Values and Culture reports.
- 2.22 SLT continues to monitor progress against the Year 2 Annual Delivery Plan . This forms the basis of supporting the Authority to demonstrate how the Authority's CRMP translates into operational practice to support risk mitigation in communities.
- 2.23 HMICFRS will take account of implementation of the national fire standards created by the Fire Standards Board as part of their inspections. The Service continues work in both departments and at a strategic level to assess current arrangements and implement best practice from the suite of fire standards currently available.

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 the 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 content of this report.

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

None.

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CHIEF FIRE OFFICER