

Performance Scrutiny Committee – 7 November 2019

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Report on the Inspection of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service 2018/19

Report by the Chief Fire Officer

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Performance Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:
 - a) Accept this action plan for publication
 - b) Advise on the frequency of reporting on the action plan for the Committee by Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Executive Summary

2. The Performance Scrutiny Committee considered the HMICFRS Inspection report into Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service at its meeting on 4 July 2019. This report provides a summary of the HMICFRS's recommendations and commentary on actions undertaken to date.

Introduction

3. In November 2018 HMICFRS carried out an inspection of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service over the course of a week. A team of ten inspectors carried out the inspection, speaking to staff, our partners and the public. To assess how good OFRS are at providing a service to the public. This inspection focused on three areas, these are:
 - **Effectiveness:** How effective is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
 - **Efficiency:** How efficient is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
 - **People:** How well does the fire and rescue service look after its people?

Inspection Judgement

4. HMICFRS provide judgement on these three areas giving one of the following grades:
 - Outstanding
 - Good
 - Requires Improvement
 - Inadequate

5. Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service received the judgement of “Good” overall in all three areas of the inspection.
6. The inspectorate inspected 11 areas of the service known as sub-diagnostics. Of these 11 sub-diagnostics the service received the following judgment:
7. One area of “Outstanding” for “Promoting the right values and culture”, eight areas of “Good” and two areas “Requiring Improvement”, see table below for detail.

The full report can be found on the following link

<https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/frs-assessment/frs-2018/oxfordshire/>

Areas	Sub-diagnostic	Judgment
Effectiveness	Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies	Requires Improvement
	Preventing fires and other risks	Good
	Protecting the public through fire regulation	Good
	Responding to fires and other emergencies	Good
	Responding to national risks	Good
Efficiency	Making best use of resources	Good
	Making the fire and rescue service affordable now and in the future	Good
People	Promoting the right values and culture	Outstanding
	Getting the right people with the right skills	Good
	Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	Good
	Managing performance and developing leaders	Requires Improvement

What HMICFRS says about Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue (FRS) service

8. “We are pleased with the performance of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service in keeping people safe and secure.
9. The service is good at keeping people safe. We judged it to be good at:
 - preventing fires;
 - protecting the public through fire regulation;
 - responding to emergencies; and
 - responding to national risks

10. Oxfordshire FRS is good at providing an efficient service. It is good at making the best use of resources and at providing an affordable service.
11. The service is good at looking after its people. In particular, we judged it to be outstanding in how it promotes the right values and culture. And it is good at getting the right people with the right skills and at ensuring fairness and promoting diversity.
12. Overall, we commend Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service for its performance. This provides a good foundation for improvement in the year ahead.”

National Report

13. Oxfordshire has also been cited in the Tranche 2 National Report for the following areas of good practices:
 - **Identifying and mitigating risk in the communities** - Oxfordshire does this well with service-wide plans and station plans helping to drive local activities.
 - **Influencing improvement to fire protection** - Oxfordshire successfully worked with Oxford City Council to fit sprinklers in their high-rise residential blocks
 - **Incident call handling** - Thames Valley Control Service effectively handles emergency calls for Oxfordshire ensuring a quick response to emergencies.
 - **Responding to emergencies at high risk sites** - Oxfordshire carries out command training with staff based on the high risk sites in the county ensuring that staff are well trained for any emergencies in these buildings
 - **Collaboration with others** - Oxfordshire collaborate well with other Fire and Rescue Services in various areas to maintain services and make savings to deliver an effective service to the public
 - **Promoting the right values and culture** - Oxfordshire has a new senior leadership team that has created an inclusive and positive culture with staff feeling comfortable to raise ideas and feeling valued throughout the organisation
 - **Resolving staff concerns** - Oxfordshire has low levels of grievances
14. The service has welcomed this independent inspection of the service and has taken onboard these areas of improvement, creating an action plan to address these areas. The action plan will be monitored quarterly internally by our Risk and Performance Meeting. The service anticipates closing the action plan by March 2021, however HMICFRS will return to reinspect the service in 18months time. The inspection will review our progress of the recommendations made on the previous inspection.

Areas Requiring Improvement

Effectiveness “Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies”

15. The service should ensure its firefighters have good access to relevant and up to date risk information
16. Action to date: A review of risk information has been carried out to ensure the current information is in date. The service is moving from a paper-based system to a digital solution. Staff will be provided more training to improve greater understanding

People “Managing performance and developing leaders”

17. The service should put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders
18. Action to date: The service is currently visiting other fire and rescue services to look at their processes to understand how they have delivered this and will then consider how to implement in Oxfordshire.

Areas for Improvement

“Preventing fire and other risks”

19. The service should evaluate its prevention work, so it understands the benefits better
20. Action to date: Our prevention work is currently under review as part of our CRMP project for 2019/20 and will evaluate the effectiveness of our Safe and Well activities

“Protecting the public through fire regulations”

21. The service should ensure it allocates enough resources to a prioritised and risk-based inspection programme
22. The service should ensure it addresses effectively the burden of false alarms (unwanted signals)
23. Action to date: Our Risk Based Inspection Program has been further improved to make it easier to use and reflective of our definition of High Risk. The service has invested in resources to complete more proactive work.
24. Our approach to unwanted fire signals is currently under review, with a view to reduce the burden of these types of incidents to the service.

“Responding to fires and other emergencies”

25. The service should ensure it has effective systems in place to reliably understand the operational capabilities of resources available to respond to incidents
26. The service should ensure it has an effective system for staff to use learning and debriefs to improve operational response and incident command
27. Action to date: The service has set up a task and finish group to determine the risk and potential actions on how to address this area.
28. The service has an debrief process and this is being reviewed to ensure that any improvements captured from the process, are actioned and communicated to staff. Once this has been completed this will be communicated to the staff to increase awareness of the process.

“Responding to national risks”

29. The service should ensure consistent knowledge and application of incident command across the service
30. Action to date: The service has reviewed the training provided and has produced new training packages for staff, to ensure that this area is covered

Efficient - “Making best use of resources”

31. The service should implement a more robust way of recording prevention and protection information
32. Action to date: The service is designing the requirements for a new system.

People - “Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity”

33. Ensure all staff are provided with appropriate uniform
34. Action to date: A new uniform contract has been awarded and it has been ensured that it provides the correct uniform for all staff.

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Background papers:

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November 2019