

**Divisions Affected – N/A**

**Performance Scrutiny Committee –11 March 2021**

**Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue  
Report on the Inspection of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service  
Carried Out in 2018**

**Report by Corporate Director  
Commercial Development, Assets and Investment**

**RECOMMENDATION**

1. The Performance Scrutiny is RECOMMENDED to note the report and accept the update from the Director of Community Safety setting out the continuous improvements being made by Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service.

**Executive Summary**

2. HMICFRS released the report on their inspection of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service in Spring 2019. This report graded the service as good in the three areas of the inspection, Effectiveness, Efficiency and People, and also highlighted ten areas for improvement. This report is an update of the actions that have been worked on over the past 18 months by the service, to address these areas. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and diverting resources to support the wider County Councils response, and other blue light partners there has been some delay in closing out of all the action plan. Of the ten recommendations the service has closed out six of these to date and is on course to close the majority by the end of 2021.

**Her Majesty’s Inspectors of Crime and Fire and Rescue Service  
(HMICFRS)**

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:
  - a) **Effectiveness** - How effective is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?

## PSC10a

- b) **Efficiency** - How efficient is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
- c) **People** - How well does the fire and rescue service look after its people?
4. Inspection judgement - 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. The inspectorate inspected 11 areas of the service known as sub-diagnostics. Of these 11 sub-diagnostics the service received the following judgment:
1. area of “Outstanding” for “Promoting the right values and culture”
  2. 8 areas of “Good”
  3. 2 areas “Requiring Improvement, see detail in the main report.

### **Key Issues**

6. HMICFRS inspection highlighted ten areas for improvement for the service, the service has worked on these actions over the past 18 months. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and diverting resources to support the wider County Councils response, there has been some delay in closing out of all the action plan, however six of the ten actions have been closed.

<b>Areas Requiring Improvement</b>		
<b><u>Effectiveness</u></b>		
<b>“Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies”</b>	1. The service should ensure its firefighters have good access to relevant and up to date risk information	Action to date: <b>Action Closed</b> A review of risk information has been carried out to ensure the current information is in date. The service has moved from a paper-based system to a digital solution. Staff have been provided more training to improve greater understanding
<b><u>People</u></b>		
<b>“Managing performance and developing leaders”</b>	2. The service should put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders	Action to date: Action to date: Nationally, the sector is looking at options on how to achieve this and is undertaking a leadership survey to support exploration with respect to talent management. Locally the service is exploring the development of a talent management framework and is reaching out to external commercial partners to support this work.

PSC10a

		<b>Potential closure date September 2021</b>
<b>“Preventing fire and other risks”</b>	3.The service should evaluate its prevention work, so it understands the benefits better	Action to date: <b>Action Closed</b> The service has started an evaluation program of our prevention work that will be an ongoing program. To date it has evaluated the effectiveness of our Safe and Well activities.
<b>Areas for Improvement</b>		
<b>“Protecting the public through fire regulations”</b>	4.The service should ensure it allocates enough resources to a prioritised and risk-based inspection programme	Action to date: <b>Action Closed</b> 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 received support from the fire authority and has invested in resources to complete more proactive work.
	5.The service should ensure it addresses effectively the burden of false alarms (unwanted signals)	Action to date: The service is part of a Thames Valley collaboration project to look at how to reduce false alarms across the region. There has been an evaluation completed and submitted to Buckinghamshire FRS, who are leading on the project, for consideration. <b>Potential closure date March 2022</b>
<b>“Responding to fires and other emergencies”</b>	6.The service should ensure it has effective systems in place to reliably understand the operational capabilities of resources available to respond to incidents	Action to date: A solution has been agreed to amend our availability system to indicate the competencies of the crews available. This will be implemented in March 2021 <b>Closing date April 2021</b>
	7.The service should ensure it has an effective system for staff to use learning and debriefs to improve operational response and incident command	Action to date: <b>Action Closed</b> The service’s debrief process has been reviewed to ensure that any improvements captured from the process, are actioned and communicated to staff. Staff have been reminded of the process to increase their understanding and awareness.
<b>“Responding to national risks”</b>	8.The service should ensure consistent knowledge and application of incident command across the service	Action to date: <b>Action Closed</b> The service has reviewed the training provided and has produced new training packages for staff, to ensure that this area is covered

## PSC10a

Efficient		
<p><b>“Making best use of resources”</b></p>	<p>9.The service should implement a more robust way of recording prevention and protection information</p>	<p>Action to date: The service has created new digital system for recording Fire Protection audits with a company called Active informatics. This new system is in the implementation stage and is being rolled across the department. This will enable inspection officers to complete audits whilst on site, making them more efficient, and will create a data base of the inspections that can be interrogated. Fire Prevention have created an app with the assistance of ESRI, for Safe and Well visits which again will hold the gathered information in a database making it simpler to interrogate.</p> <p><b>Potential close out date October 2021</b></p>
People		
<p><b>“Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity”</b></p>	<p>10.Ensure all staff are provided with appropriate uniform</p>	<p>Action to date: <b>Action closed</b> Full range of fire kit is now available. The service has discussed with the women’s rep that sizing for individuals is available if required, the service is now in discussion with the National Uniform Contractor and will look to move over to them in August. The service has put in interim arrangements for anyone that require uniform that is not held centrally.</p>

The full report can be found on the following link  
<https://www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/covid-19-inspection-oxfordshire-fire-and-rescue-service/>

### Financial Implications

7. No financial implications  
 Comments checked by: Rob Finlayson, Finance Business partner (Finance),  
 Rob.Finlayson@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

### Legal Implications

8. No implications  
 Comments checked by: Jennifer Crouch, Principal Solicitor (Environment Team), for and on behalf of Anita Bradley, Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council,  
 Jennifer.Crouch@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

## **Risk Management**

9. There is a risk associated with not actioning these recommendations, as the HMICFRS will look to see how the services has progressed these in their next inspection in Autumn 2021.

## **Consultations**

10. No formal consultation is required, and the report has been communicated both internally and externally

Steve Jordan, Corporate Director Commercial Development, Assets and Investment

Contact Officer: Paul Bremble, Strategic Risk Assurance Manager, 07990780805

Date: February 2021