

## **Performance Scrutiny – 05 July 18**

### **Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services**

**Report by Simon Furlong, Director for Community Safety**

#### **Introduction**

1. The Home Office have commissioned Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary to complete inspections of all English Fire and Rescue Services. This is the first inspection regime of this type for over a decade so the methodology, approach and judgement criteria are all being developed and tested now. This means that we have no previous knowledge or experience in preparing for the inspection other than working from the guidance provided by the Inspectorate.
2. Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary has now been renamed as Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)
3. HMICFRS is an independent inspectorate, inspecting fire & rescue services and policing in the public interest. It assesses and reports on the efficiency and effectiveness of fire & rescue services and police forces.
4. In May 2016, the Home Secretary established a wide-ranging reform programme for the fire and rescue services in England. This included a proposal to establish a rigorous and independent inspection regime for fire and rescue authorities.
5. In July 2017, the Home Office confirmed that HMIC would take on the role of inspecting fire and rescue services in England, and of assessing and reporting on the effectiveness and efficiency of each service. To reflect these new responsibilities, HMIC's name changed to HMICFRS.
6. The Policing and Crime Act 2017, which amended the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, contains provisions to strengthen existing powers to inspect fire and rescue authorities.

#### **Key Issues**

7. The fire and rescue services inspection programme enables HMICFRS to draw together evidence from inspections of all 45 fire and rescue services in England. This rounded assessment of all fire and rescue services will cover the effectiveness and efficiency of each service and how it looks after its people. This will include an assessment of:

- the operational service provided to the public (including prevention, protection, resilience, and response);
  - the efficiency of the service (how well it provides value for money, allocates resources to match risk, and collaborates with the police and ambulance services); and
  - the organisational effectiveness of the service (how well it promotes its values and culture, trains its staff and ensures they have the necessary skills, ensures fairness and diversity for the workforce and develops leadership and service capability).
8. The resulting assessments will include graded judgments of performance. HMICFRS' assessments are designed to enable the public to see how each fire and rescue service's performance changes over time and in relation to the performance of other services.
  9. The fire and rescue services inspections will not include an assessment of corporate governance or the accountability structures provided by the fire and rescue authority, police, fire and crime commissioner, locally elected mayors and, in London, the Mayor's Office.
  10. HMICFRS have completed three pilot inspections to test their methodology. Three sets of inspections will follow with fifteen fire services in each set. Oxfordshire are in the second set and we will be inspected between October and December 2018; our inspection date has not been released yet. HMICFRS have released the question set which contains 61 sub-diagnostic questions also referred to as key lines of enquiry.
  11. The inspection is also being supported by data requests and we have responded to the first one of these. There are aspects of the data request where our data collection does not match what is being asked for and this is requiring manual activity to collect, filter and sort our data to extract the data required by HMICFRS.
  12. We are currently completing self-analysis against the 61 sub-diagnostic questions and will be producing an action plan to address any areas of concern prior to our inspection. This is being led by a small team of officers and involves all heads of department. With this and the data request there is a significant impact on business as usual and some impact on our ability to deliver the improvement plans within our annual planning objectives.
  13. The inspection will last four days and is likely to involve eight inspectors who will be a mix of HMI employees, including our Service Liaison Lead Steve Brown, and seconded officers from other Fire and Rescue Services. Two weeks prior to the inspection the Chief Fire Officer, supported by the leadership team, will deliver a Strategic Briefing to the inspection team. This is designed to provide the context, challenges, future plans and areas of good practice for Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service.

14. The inspection results in a grading of either Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement or Inadequate for each of the three main areas of focus. HMICFRS have released guidance on the grading which we are using as part of our self-assessment but as this is the first inspection there is no knowledge of which aspects are critical and no previous results to use as a benchmark. Our recent Operational Assurance Peer Review will be helpful and we will be using that as part of our evidence and preparation.
15. Both Buckinghamshire and Berkshire Fire and Rescue Services will be subject to the same inspection process. Berkshire are in the same set as Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire are in the third set. The Inspectorate are the same for Thames Valley Police. The Police have a PEEL assessment (police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy) and in 2017 Thames Valley Police recorded a Good grading for effectiveness, an Outstanding grading for efficiency and a Good grading for Legitimacy. There is a risk that the inspections of the Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services could result in a renewed interest from the Police and Crime Commissioner to open discussions about them taking on responsibility for the Thames Valley Fire Services.
16. These inspections are being conducted on a consistent basis across England. They are not taking governance into account. As one of only fourteen (soon to be less) County Council Fire and Rescue Services, we do have concerns that our level of integration will, at best, not be recognised as part of the assessment and will not have a positive impact on our grading and, at worst, there is a possibility that it will be viewed as unique in some areas and this could be viewed negatively. This is only a concern for the inspection outcome and we remain committed to further integration and the use of our skills and resources across the council.
17. We will be provided with an inspection report seventeen weeks post inspection. There will be a "State of the Fire and Rescue Services in England" report produced. We welcome the inspection regime; we will use the opportunity to prepare for this, the outcome of our inspection and the national report as a basis for continuous improvement. However, this will be in the context of our position as part of the County Council which provides us with many advantages and enables us to contribute to the Council's objectives and provide high-quality services to our communities in a way many Fire and Rescue Services are not able to.

## **Financial and Staff Implications**

18. The Fire Service are meeting the requirements through existing posts and budgets so there are no additional costs associated with the preparatory or inspection stage. There could be additional pressures as a result of the inspection outcomes.

## **Risk Management**

19. There is a risk that the inspection process and outcomes will result in renewed interest from the Police and Crime Commissioner.
20. The inspection outcomes will assist OFRS to be open and transparent with the public and provide details of our performance.
21. There is a risk that if the service received anything lower than a rating of good then all non-core fire service activity could be threatened until a rating of good could be achieved.
22. New or additional pressures could be identified as a result of the inspection outcomes.
23. There is a reputational risk associated with the outcomes.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

24. **The Committee is RECOMMENDED to:**
  - (a) note the content of the report, and**
  - (b) identify future reporting requirements.**

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Background papers:

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