



# Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

<b>MEETING</b>	Overview and Audit Committee
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	22 July 2020
<b>OFFICER</b>	David Norris, Head of Prevention, Response and Resilience
<b>LEAD MEMBER</b>	Councillor Lesley Clarke OBE
<b>SUBJECT OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) Improvement Plan Update</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<p>Following completion of the first inspection round of all 45 fire and rescue services, HMICFRS published the report into Buckinghamshire Fire &amp; Rescue Service on 17 December 2019, as part of the final tranche of reports.</p> <p>An improvement plan has been developed addressing specifically the report recommendations and identified areas for improvement. At the meeting of the Authority on the 12 February 2020, it was agreed that progress against this plan will reported to this committee.</p> <p>Our Service Liaison Lead, Paul Kay, visited on the 10 March 2020 and indicated our approach to improvement, and addressing matters raised in the report, was sensible. On the 13 March 2020 Sir Tom Winsor (Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services) wrote to all fire and rescue services (FRSs) confirming;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All inspection work is suspended (FRS performance would continue to be assessed based on available information)</li> <li>• Arrangements for secondees (GC Richard Priest is our seconded officer)</li> </ul> <p>On the 20 March 2020, HMICFRS confirmed suspension of the HMICFRS survey of staff for FRSs in round 2, tranche 1 inspections.</p> <p>CFO Thelwell is a member of the HMICFRS External Reference Group (ERG). Formed of representatives from Home Office, Local Government Association, Police Fire and Crime Commissioners, National Fire Chiefs Council and HMICFRS Portfolio team, the ERG is a mechanism through which HMICFRS test the</p>

	<p>effectiveness and impact of the inspection regime.</p> <p>At the last ERG meeting on the 12 May 2020, HMICFRS discussed approaches to inspection post-COVID-19. It is clear that there will be on-going postponement of inspection activity. Our next inspection was due to commence in June 2021 (discovery work) and July 2021 (fieldwork). These dates are now expected to be put back to later in 2021, possibly Spring 2022. Any delay has little impact on our improvement programme.</p> <p>On 7 July 2020, Her Majesty’s Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services, Zoe Billingham, issued the letter shown at Appendix B updating interested parties on the Inspectorate’s proposals for resuming inspection activities during the period of disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. In particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A ‘working assumption’ that round two inspections will recommence in early 2021 (see paragraph 6);</li> <li>• An intention to approach the Home Secretary for permission to undertake an inspection on the Fire and Rescue Service’s response to Covid-19 (see paragraphs 7 - 9); and,</li> <li>• A proposal to follow-up, later this year and ahead of the recommencement of round two inspections, with each of the 14 Services (which includes BFRS) that were given a cause, or causes, of concern (see paragraph 10).</li> </ul> <p>We continue to monitor developments and work closely with HMICFRS to support the inspection programme established for fire and rescue services.</p>
<b>ACTION</b>	Noting.
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	That Members note current position regarding HMICFRS inspection programme, and the BFRS inspection improvement plan.
<b>RISK MANAGEMENT</b>	There remain reputational corporate risks to the organisation should we have been judged as inadequate. The Service had already taken steps to mitigate this through having extensive internal and external audits of a number of areas of the Service. Notably, our operations have been subject to external independent assurance. Our Health, Safety and Wellbeing function has been independently audited by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents and received a Gold Award.
<b>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</b>	FRSs are not funded for the burden of preparation for, resource implications of, HMICFRS inspections, nor is the Service charged. This round of inspections was

	<p>funded directly by the Home Office. The Police are top sliced from their government grants to fund the HMICFRS inspections of Police Forces. There has been no indication yet that this might be a future funding model for the inspection of FRSs.</p>
<p><b>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</b></p>	<p>The current Fire and Rescue Service National Framework issued under section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, to which the Authority must have regard when carrying out its functions, states as follows at paragraph 7.5:</p> <p>'Fire and rescue authorities must give due regard to reports and recommendations made by HMICFRS and – if recommendations are made – <b>prepare, update and regularly publish an action plan detailing how the recommendations are being actioned.</b> If the fire and rescue authority does not propose to undertake any action as a result of a recommendation, reasons for this should be given.'<i>[emphasis added]</i></p> <p>It continues: 'When forming an action plan, the fire and rescue authority could seek advice and support from other organisations, for example, the National Fire Chiefs Council and the Local Government Association'.</p>
<p><b>CONSISTENCY WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF DUTY TO COLLABORATE</b></p>	<p>Officers have developed our approach to inspection with our Thames Valley FRS partners, and with 'peer' support from Thames Valley and Gloucestershire Police Forces.</p>
<p><b>HEALTH AND SAFETY</b></p>	<p>There are no Health, Safety or Wellbeing implications from this report.</p>
<p><b>EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY</b></p>	<p>There are no Equality and Diversity implications as part of the report.</p>
<p><b>USE OF RESOURCES</b></p>	<p>Following this Service's inspection, an improvement plan was presented to the Fire Authority and approved on 12 February 2020.</p> <p>We maintain a robust and enduring relationship with HMICFRS. Our ongoing approach to HMICFRS inspections is now being led by the Head of Prevention, Response and Resilience, as the designated Service Liaison Officer.</p> <p><u>Communication with stakeholders</u></p> <p>Engagement and briefings have regularly been carried out, and points of communication with Members and staff have been scheduled.</p> <p><u>The system of internal control</u></p> <p>Specific areas for service improvement have been</p>

	<p>identified through a number of workshops. These are being captured in relevant departmental plans and in the Operational Assurance Plan. These will be reported on in the usual way and ultimately to the Overview and Audit Committee.</p> <p><u>The medium-term financial strategy</u></p> <p>No direct implications for the strategy are identified at this time. There may be future implications depending on the long-term funding model for HMICFRS.</p> <p><u>The balance between spending and resources</u></p> <p>No new capability requirements have been identified as being required to prepare for, and support an inspection. The Corporate Planning Manager oversees preparation of evidence with support from the Service’s Resilience and Business Continuity Manager. The Viper system has been designed to capture evidence on an ongoing basis. This allows managers to provide evidence as part of their usual reporting process. Performance Management Board provides further scrutiny of progress towards the delivery of the corporate plan.</p> <p>The ethos of the Service will be to continue to deliver the Service’s vision and strategic aims and gather the relevant evidence for the HMICFRS on a business as usual basis, rather than as an extra burden. While we develop an understanding of the inspection process and monitor the experience and effect on other Services we will revisit the resourcing needs. We have identified that preparations for aspects of the new Public Safety Plan (PSP) due in 2020 need to be closely aligned with preparations for the HMICFRS. This is reflected in the Public Safety Plan 2020-2025.</p>
<p><b>PROVENANCE SECTION &amp; BACKGROUND PAPERS</b></p>	<p><b>Background</b></p> <p>Background Chapter four of the Policing and Crime Act 2017 established the legal framework for the inspection of English Fire and Rescue Services. Wales and Scotland have their own mechanisms for assuring Services. The Home Office subsequently awarded a contract to Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and consequently they changed their name to Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services.</p> <p>Our preparation plans together with our response to HMICFRS’ consultation on the inspection methodology was presented to, and considered at, the 14 February 2018 Fire Authority meeting (see pages 131 – 162):</p> <p><a href="https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/140218_fire_authority_agenda.pdf/">https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/140218_fire_authority_agenda.pdf/</a></p> <p>14 November 2018 O &amp; A preparation update (see</p>

	<p>pages 185-192):</p> <p><a href="https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/overview_and_audit_committee_agenda_and_reports_141118-min.pdf/">https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/overview_and_audit_committee_agenda_and_reports_141118-min.pdf/</a></p> <p>13 February 2019 – Fire Authority preparation update (see pages 155-244):</p> <p><a href="https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/130219_fire_authority_agenda.pdf/">https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/130219_fire_authority_agenda.pdf/</a></p> <p>23 January 2020 - Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) Inspection Findings Report: <a href="https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/230120_item_7_hmicfrs_cover_report_23012020_appendix-min.pdf/">https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/230120_item_7_hmicfrs_cover_report_23012020_appendix-min.pdf/</a></p> <p>12 February 2020 - HMICFRS Inspection Findings Report – Action Plan: <a href="https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/120220_item12_hmicfrs_inspection_findings.pdf/">https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/120220_item12_hmicfrs_inspection_findings.pdf/</a></p>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<p>A: BFRS Inspection Improvement Plan</p> <p>B: HMICFRS Inspections Update letter dated 7 July 2020</p>
<b>TIME REQUIRED</b>	15 minutes
<b>REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT</b>	<p>David Norris – Head of Prevention, Response and Resilience</p> <p>01296 744627</p> <p><a href="mailto:dnorris@bucksfire.gov.uk">dnorris@bucksfire.gov.uk</a></p>



**HMICFRS INSPECTION REPORT – ACTION PLAN  
MARCH-JUNE 2020**

Report Reference	Inspection Pillar	HMICFRS inspection report item	Improvement Activity
Page 11	Prevention – Area for improvement	The service should evaluate its prevention work, so it understands the benefits better.	<p>An evaluation methodology has been developed, and designed to provide broad and robust assessment of prevention activity.</p> <p>The evaluation has commenced, with the results considered as part of on-going improvement work.</p>
Page 11	Prevention - Area for improvement	The service should understand the reasons for its reducing number of prevention visits and consider how it can better target those who are most at risk to fire.	<p>An evaluation exercise is underway which will inform a refresh of our prevention activity targeting.</p> <p>The Service continues to engage with colleagues and partners to understand better vulnerability and risk to the public.</p> <p>The new Corporate plan sets out clear objectives for the development and integration of risk intelligence and activity.</p>
Page 14	Protection - Area for improvement	The service should ensure it allocates enough resources to a prioritised and risk-based inspection programme.	<p>An evaluation methodology has been developed, and designed to provide broad and robust evaluation of the risk-based inspection programme.</p> <p>The protection team has recently secured additional funding to support more personnel, and this expansion linked to an evaluation of the current ways of working to develop an improved approach protection, aligned with better integration across the service.</p> <p>A recent successful growth bid led to the increase in the Protection Team by 4 FTEs, and introducing a Team Leader role and two further FTEs into the Prevention Team.</p> <p>The Service remains in regular contact with colleagues in other FRSs</p>

APPENDIX A: HMICFRS Inspection Findings -Action Plan

			developing a similar approach.
Page 14	Protection - Area for improvement	The service should review its response to false alarms to ensure operational resources are used effectively (termed 'unwanted fire signals').	<p>An evaluation of the Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services Automatic Fire Alarm policies is shortly to commence, led by the BFRS Prevention, Response and Resilience.</p> <p>The initial meeting with colleagues in Oxfordshire and Royal Berkshire will take place shortly. Once the scope is agreed, the evaluation project will commence.</p>
Page 14	Protection - Area for improvement	The service should ensure it works with local businesses and large organisations to share information and expectations on compliance with fire safety regulations.	<p>The Protection team has recently secured additional funding to support an increase in personnel, and this expansion linked to an evaluation of the current ways of working to develop an improved approach protection, aligned with better integration across Service Delivery.</p> <p>The Service remains in regular contact with colleagues in other FRSs developing a similar approach.</p>
Page 16	Response – Area for Improvement	The service should ensure it has a sustainable system to provide its operational response model.	<p>Following a review of the Resourcing Model, the Service has commenced work to improve further availability of appliances and disposition of staff. The introduction of new staff contracts has led to a better employment proposition for staff, which in turn provides resilience and opportunity.</p> <p>Total staffing numbers remain low, and the review has identified a range of areas in which efficiency can be improved. These efficiencies will be supported by the introduction of 20 additional firefighters to the establishment following a recent successful growth bids.</p> <p>The Service has clear plans for the recruitment and introduction of these new staff, which will have a significant and positive impact to appliance availability, and corresponding reduction in the use of Bank Shifts over the next two years.</p>

APPENDIX A: HMICFRS Inspection Findings -Action Plan

<p>Page 16</p>	<p>Response – Area for Improvement</p>	<p>The service should improve the availability of its on-call fire engines to respond to incidents.</p>	<p>Following a review of the Resourcing Model, the Service has commenced work to improve further availability of appliances and disposition of staff. The introduction of new on-call contracts has led to a better employment proposition for staff, which in turn provides resilience and opportunity.</p> <p>Recruitment activity has focussed on identified stations, and this will be sustained over the coming years. The Service is considering alternative ways to use on-call staff including the development of second and third line availability. This provides a further way through which further resilience of the Resource Model can be achieved and through which the impact and demand on the primary employment, and personal circumstances, of On-call staff can be minimised</p>
<p>Page 23</p>	<p>Efficiency – Recommendation</p>	<p>Ensure it has the capacity and capability to support its activity in its public safety plan;</p>	<p>Officers adopted a zero-based budget approach when developing the budget proposal for 2020/21. This approach has been developed alongside the new Public Safety Plan and feedback from our recent inspection report from HMICFRS. Although our report noted that the inspectorate “would like to see improvements in the year ahead, but without increased funding, it is difficult to see where progress can be made” the zero-based budget approach has identified some key opportunities within the current budgetary constraints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing the wholetime establishment by up to 20 firefighters in 2020/21, with the potential to increase by a further 10 in the following year (depending on the outcome of the comprehensive spending review)</li> <li>• Increasing the Protection Team by 4 FTEs and introducing a Team Leader role and two further FTEs into the Prevention Team.</li> <li>• Introducing a Head of Technology, Transformation and Programme Management Office (PMO) to manage the actions required following our inspection report.</li> </ul>
<p>Page 23</p>	<p>Efficiency – Recommendation</p>	<p>Consult with the people of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes on options to have the most effective and efficient response against the</p>	<p>The 2020-2025 Public Safety Plan (PSP) was approved for public consultation at the Authority’s 18 September 2019 meeting. The consultation was open for an eight-week period from 23 September to 18 November 2019. Officers will proceed with the further development of the strategy proposals</p>

APPENDIX A: HMICFRS Inspection Findings -Action Plan

		financial environment in which it operates.	set out in the PSP having regard to the consultation feedback as they are progressed and to undertake further consultations with stakeholders potentially affected by any specific changes arising from their implementation.
Page 25	Efficiency – Area for Improvement	The service should use sound financial management to ensure all additional costs such as pension liability are accounted for and that there is a contingency plan.	<p>The zero-based budgeting approach adopted for 2020/21 reviewed all costs to ensure that the right amount of money is being spent in the right places.</p> <p>The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2020/21 to 2024/25 shows two scenarios, one with the continuation of the pension grant funding and the other showing the impact if it were to cease after 2020/21.</p> <p>Further work will be undertaken to develop a longer-term financial strategy following approval of the PSP. This will include the development of alternative scenarios and contingency plans.</p>
Page 31	People –Area for Improvement	The service should put in place an achievable succession plan, for the whole organisation.	<p>The Service has established Strategic Workforce and Succession Planning processes, incorporating Public Safety Plan and future external and internal challenges. These are being refreshed to ensure they provide the necessary Service resilience.</p> <p>This provides the opportunity to refresh the workforce through the identification of people; internal and where required external to fill identified key positions.</p>
Page 33	People – Area for Improvement	The service should plan to be more ambitious in its efforts to attract a more diverse workforce which better reflects the community it serves.	<p>Recruitment and inclusion strategies are regularly refreshed to ensure our workforce is representative of our communities.</p> <p>There is increasing focus on positive action for female and BAME recruitment. We operate open, fair recruitment and selection processes for staff and new applicants. HR staff provide support during recruitment and selection to minimise the risk of discrimination and we are commencing training on unconscious bias, initially for recruiting managers.</p> <p>Ongoing engagement with the community, including careers fairs, and have-a-go days, are in place to encourage female and BAME groups to apply for</p>

APPENDIX A: HMICFRS Inspection Findings -Action Plan

			<p>roles in the organisation, and understand the diverse range of careers available to them.</p> <p>The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) group are currently working on the objectives for the next 6, 12, 18 months.</p>
Page 34	People – Area for Improvement	<p>The service should put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders.</p>	<p>Established staff development and succession plans exist to improve our ability to identify leadership potential. These are being further enhanced.</p> <p>The introduction of the ‘Aspiring Leaders Pathway (ALP)’ process, available to all staff, is more inclusive and transparent for talent identification.</p> <p>The Authority’s talent management programme, continues to ensure replenished development pools at each level.</p> <p>A pilot scheme to identify and develop future leaders in the Service was successfully employed to recruit an interim replacement for the Head of Service Development, and a programme to support and develop newly recruited or promoted managers is ongoing.</p>



6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Globe House,  
89 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1PN  
Direct Line: 020 3513 0524  
Fax: 020 3513 0650  
Email: [zoe.billingham@hmicfrs.gov.uk](mailto:zoe.billingham@hmicfrs.gov.uk)

**Zoë Billingham BA Hons (Oxon)**  
Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary  
Her Majesty's Inspector of Fire and  
Rescue Services

By email

Chief Fire Officers  
Chairs of Fire and Rescue Authorities  
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners  
Police and Crime Commissioners  
Lead Fire and Rescue Authority Members  
Locally Elected Mayors  
Other FRS interested parties

07 July 2020

Dear colleague,

**FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE INSPECTIONS UPDATE**

I hope everyone is keeping well during these difficult times. I write to keep you updated with our plans.

*Recommencing our activity*

2. On 13 March 2020, Sir Thomas Winsor wrote to inform the police and fire sectors that we were suspending our inspection activity as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. He promised to let you know in good time before inspections recommenced. This letter serves to keep that promise and sets out our plans for the rest of the financial year. A separate letter is being sent to police forces.

*FRS response to Covid-19*

3. At the outset I would like to express my gratitude to your staff who are maintaining fire and rescue services during the Covid-19 outbreak. The current national emergency has necessitated a major shift in fire and rescue practice – ranging from delivering medicine and supplies, driving ambulances, providing staff to work in ambulance control rooms and transporting patients and the deceased. Many of you have told me about how you've changed not only what you do but also how you do it. This includes transforming IT provision, strong multi-agency relationships with partners and other new ways of working. I hope you can preserve the best of what you have created.

4. I know of the very real health threats faced by your staff, through their daily interaction with the public, which at times cannot be subject to any social distancing. The added issue of returning home to family and loved ones must only heighten levels of stress unique to this situation. I am humbled by the contributions you and your colleagues have made to the national response to the pandemic.

### *Supporting the Covid-19 response*

5. I am delighted that we have been able to support the request from services, the National Fire Chiefs Council, the Home Office and others for resources, skills and expertise to support their work in response to Covid-19. A number of our inspection team have been deployed to support these organisations and I am immensely proud of what they have achieved. Some have already returned to us and we look forward to welcoming back the remainder as soon as they can be returned. We have begun getting in touch with these organisations to start planning towards their eventual return in the coming weeks.

### *Round two FRS inspections*

6. We have had initial discussions with our External Reference Group about next steps. Our current working assumption is that round two will recommence in early 2021. We will provide you further information about this shortly.

### *Potential Covid-19 inspection*

7. In the meantime, we have discussed internally and with our External Reference and Technical Advisory groups whether - and how - we could support the sector by carrying out an inspection on the response to Covid-19. Feedback has been positive and so we will approach the Home Secretary for permission to undertake such an inspection under section 28A(3) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. If the Home Secretary commissions us to do this work, we expect to inspect every service and determine:

- (a) how the fire sector is responding to the Covid-19 outbreak;
- (b) what is working well and what is being learned;
- (c) how the sector is dealing with the problems it faces; and
- (d) what changes are likely or appropriate for the fire and rescue sector as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

8. While this is all dependent on agreement from the Home Secretary, if she is supportive, we will undertake this inspection virtually, with pilots beginning in August and service inspections shortly thereafter. Reports – with narrative rather than graded judgments – should be published by the end of the calendar year. We will engage with services individually to arrange convenient times to gather evidence and Sir Thomas Winsor will write to you providing the commission once it has been agreed by the Home Secretary.

9. I recognise you may have questions about this and will want further information. Should we receive a commission from the Home Secretary, I will hold a virtual chiefs and chairs event to give you more information and answer your questions. We will also host a similar event with service liaison officers. We will be in touch to organise the event should we receive the green light. While we will try to give you as much notice as possible, depending on timings this may not be possible. If you are not available, by all means delegate the invitation to a colleague so that your service is represented.

### *Round 1 causes of concern*

10. In addition to Covid-19 inspections, we want to follow-up with each of the fourteen services who were given a cause – or causes – of concern in round 1 to consider what progress is being made. Round 2 will be delayed by approximately twelve months following the suspension for Covid-19 and so we don't want to wait over three years in some services to follow up on this work.

We will inform each of these services shortly what this follow-up work will entail, but we expect to begin this activity later this calendar year in advance of round 2 recommencing early in 2021.

#### *Data*

11. We intend to shortly restart our data collection and request data for the period October 2019 to March 2020 - this is data that we would have originally asked for in April had inspection activity not been paused. We will also request data for the period from April 2020 to June 2020. To assist services, this request will mirror the previous one. Should the Home Secretary commission us to do a Covid-19 inspection, we will ask for additional data to contribute to the inspection. We have already discussed this with our Technical Advisory Group and will keep the request as small as possible. We will provide further information to services on this new collection when we are in a position to do so.

#### *State of Fire & Rescue 2020*

12. As previously mentioned, the chief inspector is under a legal obligation to publish an annual assessment on the effectiveness and efficiency of fire and rescue services in England. We are therefore planning to publish our second State of Fire and Rescue report in January. I wanted to let you know that like he did last year, Sir Thomas Winsor will shortly be writing to the sector for any contributions to this assessment.

#### *HMI Phil Gormley*

13. You may be aware that HMI Gormley has tendered his resignation and will be leaving us shortly. Interim arrangements are needed until his successor is appointed. Responsibility for his fire and rescue services (and police forces) has been shared amongst the other HMIs, and affected services are being informed who their new HMI will be. I am sure the respective HMI will be in contact with the chiefs of their new services shortly.

14. Since my last letter, Laura Gibb has returned following her maternity leave. I am very grateful to Alex Hill for his support and leadership of the fire portfolio team while covering Laura's absence. I know Laura has met many of you since her return. If you require any further information about the FRS inspection programme, please do not hesitate to contact her ([lauraalice.gibb@hmicfrs.gov.uk](mailto:lauraalice.gibb@hmicfrs.gov.uk)).

15. Finally, thank you for the work that you and your teams continue to do to meet this historic challenge. I wish you and your staff all the very best for the weeks and months ahead.

Yours sincerely,



#### **Zoë Billingham**

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary

Her Majesty's Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services