



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Overview and Audit Committee, 10 November 2021

Report title: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) –Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) Improvement Plan Update

Lead Member: Councillor Lesley Clarke OBE

Report sponsor: Deputy Chief Fire Officer Mick Osborne

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Action: Noting

Recommendations:

That the Committee note current progress against the HMICFRS -BFRS improvement plan.

Executive summary:

Following completion of the first inspection round of all 45 fire and rescue services, HMICFRS published the report into Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service on 17 December 2019, as part of the final tranche of reports.

An improvement plan (Appendix 1) is in place to specifically progress 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 be reported to the Overview and Audit committee.

On the 18 March 2020, HMICFRS confirmed suspension of all their inspections of police and fire and rescue services, because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following a commission by the Home Secretary in the Summer of 2020, HMICFRS announced a national review of fire and rescue service COVID-19 preparations. BFRS received the inspection team for a COVID-19 inspection during November 2020.

The results of our COVID-19 inspection were published on 22 January 2021, where HMICFRS concluded that BFRS “responded well during the pandemic and provided additional support to its community.”

The second round of inspections of all 44 (since Hampshire and Isle of Wight merged in 2021) fire and rescue services has now recommenced and BFRS was inspected

again as part of the Tranche one schedule, with our inspection taking place between 24 May 2021 and 9 July 2021.

On 6 August 2021 following the most recent inspection, BFRS received a follow up letter (Appendix 2) from HMI Matt Parr, issuing a cause of concern, accompanied by three recommendations.

Cause of concern:

Prevention activity is not a sufficiently high priority for the Service, and it is not adequately identifying those most at risk from fire.

Recommendations:

By 30 September 2021, the Service should have plans in place for:

1. An effective system to define the levels of risk in the community.
2. A revision of its prevention strategy that clearly prioritises the people most at risk of fire and other emergencies, giving focus and direction to specialist teams.
3. The review of systems and processes for dealing with referrals from individuals and partner agencies. This is to make sure they are managed effectively and those referrals with highest identified risk are prioritised.

A revised improvement plan was sent to HMI Matt Parr in September 2021 to meet the requests of the follow up letter and set out how the Service intends to address the issues identified by the inspection team. The recommendations have also been added to this improvement plan update.

Through the efforts of all our staff we continue make progress against the items in the current improvement plan and look forward to considering all the findings of our latest inspection, which are due to be published in December 2021.

Financial implications:

FRSs are not funded for the preparation for, resource implications of, HMICFRS inspections, nor is the Service charged. The inspections are 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.

Risk management:

There remain reputational corporate risks to the organisation should we be 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, including a recent internal audit of our Prevention activity. Notably, our operations have also 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.

Legal implications:

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:

‘Fire and rescue authorities must give due regard to reports and recommendations made by HMICFRS and – if recommendations are made – prepare, update and regularly publish an action plan detailing how the recommendations are being actioned. 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.’

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’.

Privacy and security implications:

No privacy or security implications have been identified that are directly associated with this report or its appendices. The respective strands of the improvement plan have undergone Data Protection Impact Screening and full impact assessments have been completed and reviewed where appropriate.

The report and its appendices are not protectively marked.

Duty to collaborate:

Each fire and rescue service is inspected individually.

Officers have developed our approach to inspection with other FRS partners, and with ‘peer’ support from Thames Valley and Gloucestershire Police Forces.

Health and safety implications:

There are no Health, Safety or Wellbeing implications arising from this report.

Environmental implications:

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications:

Progress against our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives are included within the updated improvement plan.

Consultation and communication:

Specific areas for Service improvement have been identified through a number of workshops and working groups. These are being captured in relevant plans and will be reported on in the usual way, ultimately to the Overview and Audit Committee.

Background papers:

14 February 2018 Fire Authority meeting (see pages 131 – 162): Our preparation plans together with our response to HMICFRS’ consultation on the inspection methodology

https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/140218_fire_authority_agenda.pdf/

14 November 2018 O & A preparation update (see pages 185-192):

https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/overview_and_audit_committee_agenda_and_reports_141118-min.pdf/

13 February 2019 – Fire Authority preparation update (see pages 155-244):

https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/130219_fire_authority_agenda.pdf/

23 January 2020 - Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) Inspection Findings Report:

https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/230120_item_7_hmicfrs_cover_report_23012020_appendix-min.pdf/

12 February 2020 - HMICFRS Inspection Findings Report – Action Plan:

https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/120220_item12_hmicfrs_inspection_findings.pdf/

22 July 2020- Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) Improvement Plan Update <https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/07/item-18-hmicfrs-bfrs-inspection-improvement-plan.pdf/>

11 November 2020 - Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) –Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) Improvement Plan Update <https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/11/item-11-hmicfrs-improvement-plan.pdf/>

17 March 2021 - Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) –Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) Improvement Plan Update <https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2021/03/oa-item-13.pdf>

21 July 2021 - Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) –Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) Improvement Plan Update <https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2021/07/oa-item-16-210721.pdf/>

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	HMICFRS INSPECTION REPORT – IMPROVEMENT PLAN Updated 23 September 2021	Not protectively marked

2	BUCKINGHAMSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE INSPECTION - FOLLOW UP, 06 August 2021	Not protectively marked
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Report Reference	Inspection Pillar	HMICFRS inspection report item	Improvement Activity	R/A/G
Round 2 Inspection follow up letter 06/08/2021	Prevention - Recommendation	The service should have plans in place for an effective system to define the levels of risk in the community.	In addition to this HMICFRS recommendation and the recently published national Prevention Standards, the Prevention evaluation conducted in 2020-21 highlighted a number of opportunities to improve our systems to help define risk in the community. The action plan to accompany the evaluation contains 15 actions to improve the way we gather, use and share intelligence, and is now progressing through our internal governance processes to ensure those actions with the most benefit are prioritised and implemented.	G
Round 2 Inspection follow up letter 06/08/2021	Prevention - Recommendation	A revision of its prevention strategy that clearly prioritises the people most at risk of fire and other emergencies, giving focus and direction to specialist teams.	The Prevention strategy refresh is prioritised as critical within the Prevention action plan. The strategy will utilise much of the learning from our recent internal review, as well as the Prevention Standards, national operational guidance, and other strategic drivers from our partnerships to introduce a revised strategy which clearly defines our direction, aligned to the current public safety plan.	G
Round 2 Inspection follow up letter 06/08/2021	Prevention - Recommendation	The review of systems and processes for dealing with referrals from individuals and partner agencies. This is to make sure they are managed effectively and those referrals with highest identified risk are prioritised.	The Prevention improvement plan contains 14 actions, including this HMICFRS recommendation, which relate to the management of processes and systems. The evaluation has revealed a need to review the current screening process and introduce a way of prioritising delivery through a risk scoring mechanism which prioritises referrals more effectively. This is likely to involve a further review of the premises risk management system architecture to ensure those referrals which are categorised as the highest risk are prioritised by an automated process.	G



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<p>Page 11</p>	<p>Prevention – Area for improvement</p>	<p>The service should evaluate its prevention work, so it understands the benefits better.</p>	<p>An evaluation of prevention activity commenced in July 2020 and although delayed by Covid workstreams, has now been concluded. The evaluation uses a diagnostic methodology developed from academic research and with colleagues from Manchester University. The approach uses the Viable Systems Methodology, which has been adapted for the Service’s purposes and forms the basis of the evaluative approach.</p> <p>The evaluation is separated by work-stream to enable a more focussed and pragmatic approach. The phase included Fire and Wellness visits, Road Safety, Youth Engagement and Safeguarding.</p> <p>An evaluation of the behaviour change brought about by Fire & Wellness visits has been completed and will be used to inform a targeted program of knowledge acquisition for operational staff. Pending the completion of an agreed approach to evaluation by the Prevention Central Program Office, this is scheduled to be repeated during Q3 21/22</p> <p>Service delivery area profiles have been developed and launched to all nine service delivery areas. These documents provide information on community risk and incident demands/trends.</p> <p>Benchmarking reports have been developed to assist in the comparison between Service areas and the national statistical data and facilitate informed/targeted localised delivery. Objectives are now being developed to address priority Prevention areas bespoke to Service delivery area requirements.</p> <p>The Prevention evaluation contains 45 recommendations which span five areas. These have been used along with the recommendations from HMICFRS and benchmarking against the newly launched Prevention Standard, to compile a combined improvement plan. A gap analysis is required on the 8 position</p>	<p>G</p>
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			statements from National Operational Guidance (NOG) for Prevention launched in July 2021.	
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 increased shift to referral-led Prevention visits was implemented from April 2019 to utilise Service resources more effectively. The Data Intelligence Team are refining data sets to enable identification of those at increased risk of / from fire to support targeted visits.</p> <p>Service delivery area profiles and benchmarking reports are reliant on multiple departments to enable them to reach fruition in targeting activity at a local level.</p> <p>A successful recruitment campaign has been undertaken within the administration team which has seen the three administration teams back to full establishment; the administration teams are responsible for screening and booking Fire and Wellness visits, and were previously under-established, affecting the ability to book visits. Long term sickness affecting 25% of the Admin team has impacted their capacity during the last quarter.</p> <p>Funding agreed by the Authority to establish a number of new Prevention posts focused on increasing the delivery of Fire & Wellness visits in specific buildings, addressing the volume of Prevention visits in identified areas of increased risk, including the delivery of a program of high-rise interventions and engagement with the occupants of specialised housing. These new posts have been filled with a CS Team Leader and two CS Technician roles with an onboarding program of relevant training completed.</p> <p>Due to sickness and a vacancy arising in the CS Coordinator cadre which could not be recruited to, the two CS Technicians have had to be reassigned to cover</p>	A



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			<p>the three CS Coordinator roles, with proactive high-rise intervention being placed on hold.</p> <p>Fortnightly planning meetings linked to the first phase of the Prevention evaluation are integral to driving the Prevention agenda forward, addressing evaluation findings, scrutinising all staff workstreams and the capacity to deliver. The completion of the benefits matrix and the Prevention evaluation has enabled actions necessary to address the recommendations and an assessment of the potential impact of them.</p> <p>Post-incident intervention is being reinvigorated through input on the revised procedure supported by adjustment to processes which enable this activity to be more effectively recorded in our Premises Risk Management System (PRMS).</p>	
Page 14	Protection - Area for improvement	The service should ensure it allocates enough resources to a prioritised and risk-based inspection programme.	<p>Following the Fire Authority’s approval of a significant Protection growth bid at the February 2020 Fire Authority meeting, we have now recruited into all the posts including a newly created apprentice fire safety role. There was one exception, which was recruiting into the High Risk Residential Building Manager (HRRB) role. This is due to the essential criteria for specific technical qualifications.</p> <p>Due to these additional challenges, we undertook a review of the department structure to ensure the required resources are available in the correct locations, based on the risk profile for each area. This resulted in the creation of lead teams and references in specialist areas, such as: enforcement and prosecution; specialised housing; and High-Risk Residential Buildings (HRRB).</p> <p>Three of the new posts have been filled with support staff, and those not currently fully qualified and competent have received significant investment and are nearing completion of their training and probationary periods.</p>	



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			<p>The fourth (manager) post has been redesignated through internal role movements as an operational Station Commander post. Fulfilling this post with a suitably qualified and experienced manager and increasing the out of hours Protection cover for undertaking emergency enforcement action and responding to operational incidents, where a Protection officer can add specialist advice and support.</p> <p>The HRRB team are focussing on the delivery of the Building Risk Review Programme (BRRP) and supporting the review and development of a new Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) methodology.</p> <p>Due to the global pandemic, the development of the new RBIP methodology and its piloting has been delayed and should go ahead from 1 June 2021.</p> <p>A range of approaches will be developed to engage with those premises that aren't deemed as the highest risk. This will include business engagement, workshops/ seminars, and response crew thematic reviews.</p> <p>21.09.2021 The pilot of the RBIP programme had to be delayed further due to the continuing restrictions in place due to Covid but is now underway. Following a procurement process, a training delivery provider has been procured to deliver fire safety training to operational staff. A two-day pilot is being delivered to ten Flexi Duty Officers in October, ready to roll out to the wider staff group. This training will broadly cover relevant legislation, the built environment and fire safety requirements. Business engagement continues to grow, through social media and website activities. A care home seminar has been delivered over MS Teams and Eventbrite. Work is progressing with the communication team to develop the Protection area of the website and a fire safety self-</p>	<p>G</p>
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			assessment form is close to being launched, to support engagement with targeted premises.	
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 policy on Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs) commenced in July 2020, as part of a collaborative project with Oxfordshire and Royal Berkshire fire and rescue services. Due to COVID-19 pressures, the three-service approach has been paused, however work in this Service continues. The evaluation uses a diagnostic methodology developed from academic research and with colleagues from Manchester University. The approach uses a methodology, which has been adapted for the Service's purposes and forms the basis of the evaluative approach.</p> <p>The evaluation is considering two linked areas, response to AFAs and Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFSs).</p> <p>Data analysis continues to identify the cost and value to all stakeholders, from BFRS attending all AFAs. On completion of this evaluation, an options paper will be taken to the Fire Authority for decision.</p> <p>The current UwFS Officer post and processes are undergoing evaluation to inform options going forward, as we recognise some early initial benefits and that the rate of reductions in UwFSs have levelled out over recent years.</p> <p>Response crews are to undergo Protection training, which will improve their knowledge of the built environment and expectations of basic fire safety measures and management. This will also enable them to undertake fire safety engagement and thematic activities at simple and lower risk premises. Although these lower-level activities will not be counted as audits for the purposes of</p>	A



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			<p>reporting to the Home Office, they will assist in identifying non-compliance, improving knowledge and keeping people safe.</p> <p>21.09.2021 Following a procurement process, a training delivery provider has been procured to deliver fire safety training to operational staff. A two-day pilot is being delivered to ten Flexi Duty Officers in October, ready to roll out to the wider staff group.</p> <p>The role of monitoring UwFS activity is now undertaken by an Inspecting Officer, with any identified as repeat offenders being engaged with by the relevant area fire safety team.</p> <p>A review is underway of the current UwFS form, in line with the training due to be delivered.</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>Capacity to deliver proactive engagement activity has been limited due to vacancies in an already small Protection department. These posts have now been filled and training up to Level 4 Diploma accreditation is currently underway.</p> <p>The creation of additional posts enables the increased capacity to focus work on targeted engagement of lower risk premises that may not be included within a refreshed Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP).</p> <p>Utilising Home Office Grant funding has enabled us to engage a number of individuals on fixed term contracts to focus on business engagement.</p> <p>Activity has significantly increased in this area, in a time where physical engagement has been severely restricted. Website and Social Media activity,</p>	A



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			<p>press releases, radio interviews, Milton Keynes Open University induction programme, Care Home virtual seminar (planned for 23 June 2021), including OFRS and RBFRS.</p> <p>Web site development is underway, to consider a number of planned activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Assessment form to target lower risk premises. • An app/ web-based alert system, or other means of sharing alerts with people and businesses who have signed up to receive alerts from us, relevant to their interest or work sector. • A range of forms that the public could use to make referrals for community or business fire safety advice and support. This could include a tool for people in high-rise flats who wish to raise concerns about the way the flats are being run by the management company from a fire safety point of view but are not sure how to do so. • A means of receiving information from Responsible Persons for High Rise residential premises, as detailed in the Grenfell Tower Phase 1 recommendations. <p>The above work continues to expand, with the self-assessment form being launched October 2021.</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 further improve availability of appliances and disposition of staff. The introduction of new on-call contracts has led to a new employment proposition for staff, which in turn provides greater 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 are supported by the</p>	



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			<p>introduction of 20 additional firefighters to the establishment following successful growth bids in 2020.</p> <p>The Resource Management Team is currently being re-structured to provide more capacity within the team. This re-structure will result in future efficiencies in how the department resources fire appliances. The focus will be on Fire Service Rota (FSR) development and predicting and planning effectively for shortages.</p> <p>Integration between FSR and Vision is nearing completion. From October 2021 this project will enable on-call fire fighters to make themselves available for not only their closest appliance providing immediate cover, but also other appliances on a second and third-line availability basis.</p> <p>BFRS have recently approved the recruitment of 18 new fire fighters which will replenish the established posts and increase the operational staff available. this is in addition to attracting more flexi-firefighters from a transfer campaign to replenish this bespoke rota system.</p>	G
Page 16	Response – Area for Improvement	The service should improve the availability of its on-call fire engines to respond to incidents.	<p>A revised approach to On-Call awareness sessions has been created and delivered online (virtual) on three occasions now. This has seen an increase in new applications.</p> <p>A new On-Call Contract was introduced in 2018 which created four availability options. This ranged from immediate response through 20mins, 60mins and 3-hour response to mobilising.</p> <p>A new resource management system (FSR - Fire Service Rota) was introduced and the resilience availability options are being developed into the system. The</p>	A



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			strategic resourcing model identifies three On-Call appliances with up-to 10 minute mobilisation availability.	
Page 23	Efficiency – Recommendation	Ensure it has the capacity and capability to support its activity in its public safety plan;	<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.</p> <p>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"> 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) Increasing the Protection team by 4 FTEs and introducing a Team Leader role and two further FTEs into the Prevention team. Introducing a Head of Technology, Transformation and Portfolio Management Office (PMO) to manage the actions required following our inspection report. 	A
Page 23	Efficiency – Recommendation	Consult with the people of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes on options to have the most effective and efficient response	<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.</p> <p>The plan has since been approved and came into effect from April 1st 2020</p>	G



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		against the financial environment in which it operates.	Officers will proceed with the further development of the strategy proposals 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>Following approval of the PSP a Financial Strategy has been developed, this was considered by the Executive Committee in November 2020 and approved by the Fire Authority in December 2020. The strategy included the development of alternative scenarios and contingency plans and further addressed the two efficiency recommendations shown above.</p>	A
Page 31	People –Area for Improvement	The service should put in place an achievable succession plan, for the whole organisation.	<p>Regular systematic and rigorous strategic workforce and succession planning processes are in place, which incorporate current Public Safety Plan requirements and horizon scanning of likely future external and internal challenges.</p> <p>Outcomes from these processes are subsequently translated into timely interventions to ensure the Authority continues to meet workforce capacity requirements and build capability.</p>	G



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			<p>In addition, it provides opportunity to refresh the workforce through the identification of people; internally and where required externally to fill identified key positions.</p> <p>An update on Workforce Development was presented to Members of the Executive Committee on 15 September. The report provided an update on the Authority’s progress in relation to workforce development and set out the outcomes of the 2021 Workforce and Succession Planning review. It offered reassurance to the Executive Committee that the necessary safeguards and contingency plans are in place to future proof the Authority, mitigate risk and optimise opportunities during a period of significant change and increasing demands; all to continually provide the best service possible to our communities. The report allowed us to show case the excellent work being undertaken by the Authority to mitigate the risks identified and investing in developing its existing workforce to meet the anticipated challenges</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>The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion EDI objectives 2020 -2025 were presented to the Fire Authority on 16 June 2021.. The objectives provide an update on progress to date, EDI headlines of workstreams and EDI workforce data.</p> <p>The tangible objectives had been reviewed and extended to 24 months from 18 months, to reflect the amount of work being carried out in regard to EDI. The EDI objectives are reflective of HMICFRS recommendations and the refreshed corporate plan.</p> <p>The EDI group is well established, with employees from across the service working on the 6-, 12-, 18- and 24-month objectives. EDI actions plans are being aligned to ensure prioritisation.</p>	G



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			<p>The Recruitment Oversight Board meets on a regular basis, where stakeholders from across the service discuss resourcing and recruitment to ensure a joined-up approach. The end to end process has been mapped out and work is ongoing between departments on efficiencies.</p> <p>Recruitment is underway for eighteen Wholetime Firefighters, they are due to start in March 2022. A recruitment toolkit is being developed, with learns from previous and the current campaign.</p> <p>The People Strategy annual update is due to be presented to the October Fire Authority. The Employee Engagement Group are progressing the project plan to for the January 2022 Culture Survey. EDI, Employee engagement and Resourcing are three of the workstreams.</p>	
Page 34	People – Area for Improvement	The service should put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders.	<p>Our talent management programme, continues to ensure replenished development pools at each level, resulting in staff with the required skills to fulfil the roles when needed.</p> <p>All elements/modules of our promotional process have been reviewed, consulted on, and brought together in one Operational Promotional procedure to provide clarity and consistency to staff on the requirements and route for promotion.</p> <p>Following the successful pilot of a scheme used to identify and develop future leaders in the Service, we have embedded this into our recently refreshed appointment and promotion procedures and are progressing a new Leadership and Management Development Framework to support and assist with the development of newly recruited or promoted managers.</p>	G



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			<p>All employees have an annual appraisal, where their commitment to their behaviours linked to the Authority’s values is an essential element. Quality assurance of appraisal returns is undertaken to identify themes, and to assist with training requirements.</p> <p>Excellent work is being undertaken by the Authority to mitigate future workforce risks by investing in developing its existing workforce to meet the anticipated challenges. An example of this investment is during the 2021/22 Medium Term Finance Planning process, Members approved a £50k growth bid to fund a pilot leadership development programme, with an invite to bid for further funding to roll this programme out across the Authority, subject to evaluating the upcoming pilot programme. This will help to accelerate our development of staff to ensure the Authority has the right people, with the right skills, ready to perform the roles required.</p> <p>This approach continues to futureproof the Service and minimise the potential impact on its workforce, ensuring the operational commitment can be maintained.</p>	
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Promoting improvements
in policing and fire & rescue
services to make everyone safer

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Email: matt.parr@hmicfrs.gov.uk

Matt Parr CB

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary
Her Majesty's Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

By email:

Jason Thelwell
Chief Fire Officer
Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service

06 August 2021

Dear Jason,

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE INSPECTION - FOLLOW UP

Thank you for hosting the HMICFRS inspection team during our recent inspection. I know you were provided with initial feedback on 14 July 2021.

2. During the debrief, we shared our initial findings from the inspection fieldwork. The team described how the service has effective procedures in place for dealing with major and multi - agency incidents.
3. The inspection team also outlined areas where we felt improvement was needed. Following consideration of the evidence we collected I am writing to outline a cause of concern in relation to how Buckinghamshire FRS keeps the public safe through prevention activity.
4. We found that the service does not have a revised prevention strategy that identifies and prioritises those most at risk from fire. The service is making very limited use of risk modelling information to ensure prevention activity is targeted at the most vulnerable. We were concerned that prevention activity is not a sufficiently high priority for the service, and it has limited productivity when compared to other similar Fire & Rescue Services. There is currently a lack of direction for the prevention team to complete work of highest priority and at the time of the inspection operational crews were doing very limited prevention activity. As was found in the round one inspection in 2019, there is now a draft evaluation report for prevention activity, but this has not yet resulted in changes or improvements to prevention activity.

Cause of concern

Prevention activity is not a sufficiently high priority for the service, and it is not adequately identifying those most at risk from fire.

Recommendation(s):

By 30 September 2021, the service should have plans in place for:

- An effective system to define the levels of risk in the community.
- A revision of its prevention strategy that clearly prioritises the people most at risk of fire and other emergencies, giving focus and direction to specialist teams.

- The review of systems and processes for dealing with referrals from individuals and partner agencies. This is to make sure they are managed effectively and those referrals with highest identified risk are prioritised.

5. As a result of these concerns, I should be grateful if you would provide an action plan that sets out how you intend to address the issues we identified, by 30 September 2021. I have asked the inspection team to revisit your service in the winter this year to review the progress being made against your plan in relation to the above areas. Your service liaison lead, Kathryn Richardson, will be in touch to discuss arrangements for the revisit.

6. I understand this will be a challenging time for you and the service and I would be happy for you to meet with the team if you require further clarification. I am copying this letter to the Chair of Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Authority, Cllr Lesley Clarke.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Parr', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Matt Parr CB
Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary
Her Majesty's Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services