



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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