



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Overview and Audit Committee, 16 March 2022

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 the revised HMICFRS - BFRS improvement plan.

Executive summary:

The second round of inspections of all 44 fire and rescue services is currently in progress with BFRS having been inspected as part of the tranche one schedule between 24 May 2021 and 9 July 2021.

The latest report for this Service, which identifies 22 areas for improvement, and two causes of concern, accompanied by eight recommendations was published on 15 December 2021. The report was noted at the Fire Authority meeting on 16 February 2022.

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 HMICFRS improvement plans will be reported to the Overview and Audit committee.

The latest improvement plan has been revised and is being integrated into the Portfolio Management Office which was introduced after the first inspection to coordinate and manage any actions required.

The Service is making good progress against the recommendations, aligning them to ongoing project work and improvement plans. Specifically, The Prevention recommendations are being progressed through a project initiated after the Prevention evaluation, which was presented to this committee on 10 November 2021, and the People recommendations are being progressed through the Authority's equality, diversity, and inclusion objectives 2020-2025, which are presented annually to the Fire Authority; the last update being 16 June 2021.

The latest inspection report has helped the Service to consider a broad range of areas, to improve both our business-as-usual activities and through current and future projects. The report has also identified many areas of good practice, which although there is no specific requirement to include these within the latest action plan, are also summarised to ensure the Service does not lose sight of previous and ongoing activities which have provided strong evidence of good practice during the latest inspection.

Financial implications:

The prioritisation of improvements to address the specific recommendations raised within the causes of concern may introduce additional financial implications, either through reprioritisation of other projects, or through new workstreams.

Consideration will be given to ensure associated costs, both direct and indirect, are fully understood and managed effectively.

FRSs are not funded for the preparation for, 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, in addition to the HMICFRS inspections.

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. However, the latest report includes findings relating to the Service's ability to collaborate effectively with partners.

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.

The Service has been judged as 'requires improvement' in the people pillar, along with a cause of concern and five recommendations relating to equality, diversity and inclusion. All the findings from the HMICFRS round two inspection report will be fully considered and prioritised to ensure continual improvement is established and maintained.

Consultation and communication:

Specific areas identified for Service improvement 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/>

10 November 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/2021/10/oa-item-18-10-11-21.pdf/>

10 November 2021 - Prevention Evaluation - Phase one report 2021

<https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2021/10/oa-item-17-17-10-21.pdf/>

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	HMICFRS INSPECTION REPORT – IMPROVEMENT PLAN Updated February 2022	Not protectively marked