



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Executive Committee, 8 February 2023

Report title: His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) 2023 Update

Lead Member: Councillor Simon Rouse, Chairman

Report sponsor: Chief Fire Officer, Louise Harrison

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Action: Noting

Recommendations: That the report be recommended for submission to the Authority:

That the Authority note the BFRS HMICFRS 2023 update.

Executive summary:

In July 2017, HMICFRS extended its remit to include inspections of England's fire and rescue service. They assess and report on the efficiency, effectiveness and people of the 44 fire and rescue services in England.

HMICFRS published the BFRS Round 3/2023-2025 report on 19 October 2023. The report can be found here: [BFRS 2023-2025 - HMICFRS](#)

This report sets out HMICFRS inspection findings for Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service following the inspection during May and June 2023.

The latest report for this Service identifies three causes of concern, accompanied by 10 recommendations, and 26 areas for improvement. The report was noted at the Extraordinary Fire Authority meeting on 24 October 2023.

As per requirements set out in the report covering letter to the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer on 17 October 2023, a copy of the action plan detailing how the Service will address the recommendations must be submitted to HMICFRS within 28 days of the report. A copy of the action plan was sent to HMICFRS within 28 days of the report publication; on the 15 November 2023.

On 21 November 2023, HMICFRS informed the Service that it will now be entering the supportive Engage process. The Engage process provides additional scrutiny and support from the Inspectorate.

Key Progress to highlight is:

Fire Performance Oversight Group (FPOG)

An internal HMICFRS Improvement Board has been set up and meeting on a regular basis. The Board is chaired by the Chief Fire Officer, attended by the relevant strategic leads and other subject matter experts when needed. The terms of reference for the HMICFRS Improvement board can be found in Appendix 1.

Officers have also engaged with and held a number of separate meetings with key partners and peers to assist in both developing and monitoring the action plan including.

- National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Chair
- Chief Fire Officer of Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service, the current NFCC Protection Committee Chair
- Buckinghamshire Council – EDI Policy Support
- London Fire Commissioner
- Home Office Officials
- Local Government Association

Preparations are well underway for the Chief Fire Officer and Chairman to present to the Fire Performance Oversight Group on 7 February 2024

Revisit

The Service's revisit has been confirmed to take place week commencing 20th May 2024. The revisit will include desktop reviews, interviews and reality testing. It will focus on the Round 3 causes of concern.

Action Plan

As at the end of December 2023 the Service has made the following progress against the HMICFRS action plan:

	Prevention	Protection	EDI
Complete	1	3	
In Progress/On Track	4	4	8
Risk to progress		3	1
Not started	2	2	12

The action plan will be managed as part of the Portfolio Management Office (PMO), with regular reporting through internal governance structures. As stated in the recommendation at the Extraordinary Fire Authority meeting on 24 October 2023, the Authority will be kept informed of progress in delivering against the HMICFRS

Action Plan via regular reporting to both the Overview and Audit Committee and full Authority.

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.

Risk management:

There remains reputational corporate risks to the organisation. The Service continues to take 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. The internal audit plan for 23/24 can be found here: [Internal Audit Report – Internal Audit Strategy and Annual Internal](#)

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 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. The report states: “We were pleased to see the service meets its statutory duty to collaborate. It continues to consider opportunities to collaborate with other emergency responders.”

Health and safety implications:

The HMICFRS report states:

- The service provides good well-being provisions to its workforce, but work-related stress is not being fully addressed
- The service has a positive health and safety culture

The areas for improvement relating to working hours and secondary contracts will feed into the health, safety and wellbeing group.

Environmental implications:

The HMICFRS report states:

“The service didn’t identify all the potential climate impacts and mitigation measures required in its 2020–2025 public safety plan. This is what it calls its integrated risk management plan. It has now recognised that it needs a different range of equipment to be ready to respond to this risk both now and in the future.”

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications:

The Service has been judged as ‘requires improvement’ in the area relating to ensuring fairness and promoting diversity, along with a cause of concern and four recommendations relating to equality, diversity and inclusion. All the findings from the HMICFRS round three inspection report have been fully considered and prioritised to ensure continual improvement is established and maintained.

The Authority’s equality, diversity, and inclusion objectives 2020-2025 – year 3 progress was presented to the Fire Authority on 14 June 2023.

Consultation and communication:

Specific areas identified for Service improvement are being captured in relevant plans and will be reported on in line with the recommendations.

Background papers:

HMICFRS BFRS Home Page: [Buckinghamshire - His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/buckinghamshire-his-majesty-s-inspectorate-of-constabulary-and-fire-rescue-services/)

16 February 2022 – Fire Authority: Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) Inspection Report 2021

<https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2022/02/fa-item-10-16022022.pdf/>

20 January 2023 - State of Fire and Rescue: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2022

[State of Fire and Rescue: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2022 - HMICFRS](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/state-of-fire-and-rescue-the-annual-assessment-of-fire-and-rescue-services-in-england-2022-hmicfrs/)

24 October 2023 – Extraordinary Fire Authority: His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) Inspection Report 2023

bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2023/10/extraordinary-fire-authority-meeting-24-october-2023-item-9-hmicfrs-inspection-report.pdf/

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	BFRS HMICFRS Improvement Board Terms of Reference	N/A
2	HMICFRS Timeline	N/A