



# Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

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**Meeting and date:** Extraordinary Fire Authority, 11 September 2024

**Report title:** His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) 2023-2025 Update

**Lead Member:** Councillor Simon Rouse, Chairman

**Report sponsor:** Chief Fire Officer, Louise Harrison

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**Action:** Noting

**Recommendations:**

That the HMICFRS 2023-2025 update be noted

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**Executive summary:**

In July 2017, HMICFRS extended its remit to include inspections of England's fire and rescue services. 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 the 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.

## Action Plan

The HMICFRS action plan focuses on the 3 Causes of Concern. As at July 2024 the Service has made the following progress against the HMICFRS action plan:

	Prevention	Protection	EDI
Complete	7	10	11
In Progress/On Track	-	1	8
Risk to progress	-	1	2
Not due to be started	-	-	-

The detailed HMICFRS action plan update can be seen in Appendix 1

Key Progress to highlight is:

### Prevention

- KPI's in place and being monitored regularly
- Further system and process enhancements completed
- Preparedness and Improvement audits in progress across stations.

### Protection

- Team development includes:
  - New Policy and Enforcement Officer started on 01 July
  - Third Business Fire Safety Apprentice started
  - Business Fire Safety Advisors training will be complete by end of Q2
- Progress against the Risk Based inspection programme is on track, with 80% of very high risk completed.

### EDI

- People and Culture Officer now in place with a key focus on EDI training, staff networks, EDI on station
- Bystander training being finalised and dates agreed
- Culture Board set up, initial meeting took place 12 July, proposal presented to support set up of staff networks

## Revisit

HMICFRS revisited the Service, week commencing 20 May 2024, after identifying causes of concern relating to prevention, protection, and equality, diversity and inclusion to review the progress made against their recommendations.

On the 30 July 2024 HMICFRS published its Revisit findings (Appendix 2). The findings include:

- **Governance:** Appropriate and robust governance arrangements are in place to monitor progress of our action plan
- **Prevention:** The service has made good progress against the remaining recommendations associated with the cause of concern. It has improved the way it identifies and prioritises those most at risk of fire and other emergencies.
- **Protection:** The service has made progress in improving how its teams prioritise risk. It has used support from the National Fire Chiefs Council and other fire and rescue services to help it review its ways of working
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion:** The service has made good progress to improve the way it promotes equality, diversity and inclusion. Working closely with Buckinghamshire Council, it has reviewed its action plan and used this external expertise to scrutinise its activity.
- **Overall:** Despite good progress being made, there is still more work to do. While the action plan is comprehensive, we can't yet determine how effective the plan will be in making sure it provides a better service to the public.

A further revisit is scheduled for 23 September 2024

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#### **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 remain 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 24/25 can be found here: [Internal Audit plan](#)

#### **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://justiceinspectorates.gov.uk)

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/>

28 April 2023 - Extraordinary Fire Authority Meeting: Values and Culture in fire and rescue services

[2bmkfa-extraordinary-meeting-28-april-2023-item-8-values-and-culture-in-fire-and-rescue-services.pdf \(bucksfire.gov.uk\)](https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2023/04/28/bmkfa-extraordinary-meeting-28-april-2023-item-8-values-and-culture-in-fire-and-rescue-services.pdf)

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

6 December 2023 – Fire Authority: His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) 2023 Action Plan

<https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2023/11/fire-authority-meeting-6-december-2023-item-15-hmicfrs-action-plan.pdf/>

8 February 2024 – Executive Committee: His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) 2023 Update

[bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2024/01/executive-committee-meeting-8-february-2024-item-12-his-majestys-inspectorate-of-constabulary-and-fire-and-rescue-services-hmicfrs-buckinghamshire-fire-and-rescue-service-bfrs-2023-update.pdf/](https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2024/01/executive-committee-meeting-8-february-2024-item-12-his-majestys-inspectorate-of-constabulary-and-fire-and-rescue-services-hmicfrs-buckinghamshire-fire-and-rescue-service-bfrs-2023-update.pdf/)

13 March 2024 – Overview and Audit Committee: His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) 2023 Update

<https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2024/02/overview-and-audit-committee-13-march-2024-item-9-hmicfrs-bfrs-2023-2025-update.pdf/>

09 May 2024 - State of Fire and Rescue: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2023

[State of Fire and Rescue: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2023 - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(justiceinspectrates.gov.uk\)](#)

12 June 2024 - Fire Authority: His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) 2023-2025 Update

[\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority, 12/06/2024 11:00 \(bucksfire.gov.uk\)](#)

30 July 2024 – HMICFRS Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service: Causes of concern revisit letter

[Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service: Causes of concern revisit letter - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(justiceinspectrates.gov.uk\)](#)

01 August 2024 - HMICFRS Standards of behaviour: The handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services

[Standards of behaviour: The handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(justiceinspectrates.gov.uk\)](#)

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	HMICFRS Round 3 Action plan July 2024	N/A
2	Revisit Letter	N/A