Service Update - October 2024

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1   Executive Summary

This report is provided to members of the Fire Authority to update on key areas of progression within Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service. This report covers the Grenfell Phase 2 Recommendations report, HMICFRS Hot Debrief summary outcomes and the Service's response to the HMICFRS consultation for inspections 20204-2027.

2   Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to note the report and its contents

3   Background

This new Service Update has been prepared to ensure wider Fire Authority awareness of emerging work areas for the Service. These are usually shared on a frequent basis at the Chair's Briefing and then once formed, where relevant, are reported to Fire Authority for information and or decision.

The Service Update will be used to inform Fire Authority of Service progress and emerging areas of work.

Since the Fire Authority meeting in June, the Service has received the Grenfell Tower Phase 2 recommendations as well as the summary outcomes from the recent HMICFRS inspection process. The Service has also responded to a HMICFRS consultation in preparation for the inspection process in 2025-2027.

4   Grenfell Tower Fire 2 Recommendations

On 4 September 2024, the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 report was published. This overview is a non-exhaustive summary of areas of note and recommendations for the Service to consider.

As a reminder to Members, Phase 1 focused on the factual narrative of the events on the night of 14 June 2017. The Grenfell Tower Inquiry's final hearings took place in November 2022. Phase 2 examines the causes of the fire, including how Grenfell Tower came to be in a condition which allowed the fire to spread in the way identified by Phase 1. The 72 people who lost their lives are at the forefront as we read and digest the report, and the Service will take time to consider the findings and give them thorough thought and consideration.

The report covers a number of key areas across all key stakeholders:
- Government
- Building Research Establishment (BRE)
- Product Manufacturers
- Regulatory Bodies and Compliance
- Local Council and Tenant Management
- Each of these areas come with a total of 58 recommendations. The impact on this Service will cover a number of areas.   London Fire Brigade (LFB) came under criticism for not learning from previous incidents, training for control forms and incident commanders. These are areas for this Service to review and take appropriate action / learning on.
- A college of Fire and Rescue should be established as expressed in the white paper Reforming our Fire and Rescue Service – this will be an area of considerable focus for Government and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC).

Specifically, recommendations for the fire sector include:

- lift fire control switches NFCC and Building Control Reg
- college of fire linked to NFCC
- fire safety functions under single function
- fire control integrated into the service
- incident command training – all levels
- 7.2ds
- change management – leadership
- digital radios – 3 recommendations
- water supplies 3 wrapped in this
- deployment of fire fighters – diverting actions
- back over phase one and review them

In light of these recommendations a review of Phase 1 recommendations will be carried out.

There is a focus from the Minister and across a number of stakeholder groups (NFCC, Government and Home Office) on buildings over 11 metres. As a Service we will provide assurance to Members that we are effectively managing and reviewing all our medium and tall building stock and where appropriate, taking the right course of action.

The recommendations are currently being reviewed in detail which will provide an assessment of any gaps that exist in current practice to meet the phase 2 recommendations.

5   His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Consultation 2025-2027

A consultation was launched on 19 August 2024, for a four-week period, seeking views on how the fourth round of inspections for the fire sector can adapt and change.

The consultation covered the following areas:

- Governance, oversight and scrutiny
- Leadership at all levels
- Combining efficiency and effectiveness
- How doe FRS make more resilient Communities
- Areas to include/exclude
- Ways to improve
- Areas to examine more

The response to the consultation is included at the Appendix to the report.

6   HMICFRS Action Plan

The HMICFRS Inspection hot debrief took place on 16 August 2024 providing a broad overview of the inspection outcomes. An initial implementation plan has been developed to ensure effective progression of the areas for improvement identified. This will be finalised once the Inspection report has been published for the Service which is expected to be in November 2024, however further work will progress as the report is finalised and through regular engagement with the lead inspector.

Positive feedback was received citing good approaches to:

1. The delivery of community services across prevention, protection and response, citing that the Service engages well with its communities and activities such as Safe and Wells are targeted effectively.
2. Sharing of and access to risk information across prevention protection and response is good.
3. The achievement of targets across service delivery and availability of both whole time and on call fire appliances.
4. The inspection team found that the Service is well regarded across staff with positive feedback around wellbeing provision, values and culture
5. Partnership working (i.e. Local Resilience Forum).
6. Absence levels, which were positive correlating well with point 4.
7. Short - and medium-term financial planning which appropriate.

The overall themes for areas for improvement within the implementation plan mentioned above are set out below, please note the plan contains more detailed actions:

1. **Current CRMP and Strategy**, ensuring the Service's direction of travel is based on up-to-date data and evidence, clear and understood.

2. **Internal governance framework** which promotes transparency of and scrutiny in decision making. This is governance at all levels to include Fire Authority reporting.

3. **Performance, risk and assurance** as part of the governance framework through a structured Portfolio Management approach, reflective across all priorities and aligned to CRMP expectations. Also, assurance of the impact of services delivered.

4. **Service Delivery – Policy and Assurance,** areas across PPR where policy/strategy and assurance processes need to be addressed. Some areas are AFIs from the previous inspection process.

5. **People - Employee Lifecycle,** ensuring from recruitment through to development and career progression staff are supported to progress throughout the service.

6. **People – Culture and Values,** promoting and enabling a supportive environment where staff feel safe and can thrive

7. **D&D capacity and capability**: providing systems and data to build capacity and enable effective decision making.

8. **Statutory Officer triangle** – this was not a specific outcome of the inspection itself but is aligned to the 'governance framework'. Regular dialogue within this statutory officer triangle will enable collaboration around decisions to be made ensuring the authority are provided relevant information and advice.

Once the full inspection report is received the Service will review the implementation plan and this will be reported into the relevant Fire Authority committee for assurance.

One key area of feedback from the HMICFRS hot debrief was the Service's capability and capacity to implement change. This is important in enabling the Service and its staff to implement the areas for improvement and adapt to potential new ways of working. The Service operates a lean operating model across its support functions and the Service Management Team (SMT) will be considering the best approach to addressing this over the coming months.

7 Conclusions

In conclusion Members should note the summary updates provided.

8 Capacity

As cited in section 3 the Service operates a lean operating model and investment will be required to ensure that the right skills and capacity can support the change needed to address areas for improvement from the HMICFRS outcomes as well as Grenfell recommendations.

Lessons learned are being captured from previous approaches to help inform our planning approach.

9 Fire Alliance / Collaboration / Partnership Working

There are no requirements for collaborative or partnerships aligned to this Service Update. However, as recommendations progress these will be individually assessed to ensure the best approach to implementation.

10   Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

11   Legal Comment

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

12   Communications

There are no communications impacts arising from this update report, each area of work (where required) will have an individual communications and engagement plan.

13   Community Safety

There are no community safety impacts arising from this report.

14   Environmental

There are no environmental impacts arising from this report or relevant UN Sustainability Goals.

15   Equality Impact Assessment

There are no equality or diversity implications arising from this report.
An e-EQIA is not, therefore, required.

16   Health and Safety

There are no health and safety impacts arising from this report.

17   Fire Standard Core Code of Ethics and Human Rights (including Data Protection)

There are no impacts on compliance with the Fire Standards Core Code of Ethics or human rights arising from this report.

18   ICT

There are no ICT impacts arising from this report.

19   Insurance

There are no insurance impacts arising from this report.

20   The On-call Service

There are no impacts on the On-call service arising from this report.

21   Public Value / Service Delivery

There are no public value or service delivery impacts arising from this report.

22 Reputation

There are no reputational impacts arising from this report.

23 Security

There are no security impacts arising from this report.

24 Training

There are no training impacts arising from this report.

25 Appendix

HMICFRS Consultation response

26 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.

CFA 9.10.24

Appendix to report on
Service Update – October 2024
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
9 October 2024

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS)
Consultation response to proposed changes to the HMICFRS Inspection
programme

The HMICFRS launched a consultation on the 19th of August 2024 which focused on proposed changes to the inspection process as well as more openly consulting with the sector regarding what changes could be made to the areas inspected and the approach to reporting inspection outcomes. The consultation is set out in the link below. The deadline for responses is 15th September 2024.

[Proposed fire and rescue services inspection programme and framework 2025–27](#)

Consultation questions and SFRS proposed response:
In our previous inspection programmes, we did not routinely include an assessment of governance. For our next inspection programme, we propose to focus more on the robustness of these arrangements in making sure the service is effective and efficient at keeping the public safe from fire and other risks. We will also assess whether these arrangements create a positive culture, and whether standards of conduct exist to support the health and well-being of its workforce.

Question 1:

1. We propose to evaluate how each FRS is affected by its fire and rescue authority's governance, oversight and scrutiny arrangements. We also propose to examine how the fire and rescue authority supports the FRS to keep the public safe, establish a positive culture and standards of conduct, and look after the health and well-being of its staff. Do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

Proposed SFRS response:
Whilst this is more appropriate to receive a response from the Fire Authority, the following response can be provided:

We would agree.
SFRS would support this proposal in enabling a continued focus on the ongoing oversight and assurance that the authority provides of performance and improvement of the Service aligned to its statutory role, its commitments to the communities it serves, as well as how staff are supported and developed to achieve this.

Fire Authority Scrutiny should exist as part of the role the fire authority provides in assuring a how a fire services delivers it services to the public and holding officers to account, in the delivery of priorities aligned to sound financial planning.

Section 7.12 of the national framework requires fire and rescue authorities to have in place scrutiny arrangements to reflect the high standard communities expect of a public safety service. It may be that this requirement can be strengthened in the pending review of the framework itself to provide a clearer expectation and how this scrutiny links from Service to Authority with clear roles and responsibilities.

The ongoing training and development of councillors who sit on the fire authority will be a critical component, enabling the right skills to be attained and built to ensure the effective application of scrutiny across different committee roles as well as within a defined scrutiny role or committee. This again aligns to clearly defined roles and

responsibilities. A particular area to cite would be development and training where members have a role in recruitment and or hearing disciplinary appeals.

SFRS would ask how the HMI intend to continue to review governance arrangements in the future and how this may extend across other areas of a governing model. How will an approach to reviewing the proposals or any future ones be achieved with the right skills?

It would also be beneficial to gain an understanding of and possibly contribute to the measures of this new area for inspection as some measures which when viewed singularly could be a negative indicator may provide the contra. For example, increased management of conduct may not correlate to reduced standards or poor culture

Question 2:
We propose to focus more on how well services lead their people. This will cover leaders at all levels of the organisation. We will consider leadership in all areas of our 'characteristics of good'. We will also add a leadership section to our inspection reports after the overall summary. In this section, the HMI will set out the most important findings relating to the service's leadership

2. Do you agree or disagree that we should assess leadership at all levels of FRSs?
(note the leadership fire standard will be considered as part of the inspection process)

SFRS Proposed response:
We would agree.
SFRS would be supportive of leadership assessment forming part of the overall assessment process. Would expect that the assessment criteria align effectively to the Leading the Service and Leading and Developing People, Fire Standards. Many of the areas in the above standards align to the recommendations that have been provided to the sector through spotlight and themed review reports (i.e. leadership diversity, succession planning, etc), as well as the NFCC Leadership framework.
There would need to be effective alignment to other areas of the inspection process to ensure against duplication and effective reflection of a fire services approach aligned to its CRMP (Community Risk Management Plan) and Strategy.

We should also consider how leadership will be assessed from a governance perspective aligned to the legislative role of a Fire Authority as well as a constitution. Note: this assessment criteria if introduced will enable the HMI to assess how well sector recommendations have been taken on board and implemented. Currently there is little assurance of this nationally. This will not only reflect on internal planning, review, and implementation processes for SFRS but will also draw attention to how well the authority is assuring recommendations from improvement reports are considered and implemented.

In our Round 3 inspections, efficiency is covered by two questions: making best use of resources (2.1) and making the FRS affordable now and in the future (2.2). To reduce duplication and concentrate more on outcomes for communities and the workforce, we intend to combine these questions.

2. *We intend to combine the current efficiency questions 2.1 and 2.2 into a single question. This would concentrate on how resources are allocated and used in support of the outcomes required for the community risk management plan. Do you agree or disagree with this proposal?*

SFRS Proposed response:
We would agree.
SFRS considers that these two questions can be combined as they both seek to understand how effectively the authority plans and delivers against its CRMP, considering risk and then how through planning layers of people, resource, and finance both short, medium term and long term. There is also consideration in both questions currently regarding how effectively plans are managed, reviewed, and evaluated. So, the two questions are connected in what they review and the outcomes they arrive at.

If they are combined there should not be a lesser focus on the areas set out above, nor the challenges both within and outside of a fire services control. The CRMP is the evidence base (specific to the area a fire service covers) upon which decisions are made considering financial, resource, people, and political considerations. With combining questions and considering how productivity and efficiency in the delivery of prevention, protection and response services will exist in this combined criterion we should not lose focus on the CRMP and the need to continue to ensure services are targeted to risk as part of the P&E.

There appears also to be alignment in these question areas to the proposals in consultation question 1 where the authority can scrutinise policy decisions before they are made, the implementation of strategy and policy to understand how efficient and effective our activities are.

As part of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, the FRS should assess its local risks and prepare a Community Risk Register. It should actively participate in the local resilience forum, which brings together local authorities, emergency services and other organisations such as the Environment Agency and Health Protection Agency. And the FRS should use risk assessments to develop its plans and support local communities to help make them more resilient.

4. *We propose to examine how FRSs work with local communities to make them more resilient. Do you agree or disagree with this proposal?*

SFRS Proposed response:
This addition would be welcomed as the inspection process will expand its consideration of the critical partnerships that exist across the LRF to ensure that risks and therefore incidents are planned for and responded to effectively with all partners.

The inspection process should seek to ensure that the contribution of other partners is considered carefully against any new criteria, as whilst fire will have a specific role to provide during an emergency incident, the role of the LRF relies on all partners working together effectively in both the planning and multiagency incident environment.

SFRS would assume that this additional area would also reflect across the inspection of police forces who are also a category 1 partner in the LRF and often lead in both the planning and response environment.

With this in mind it would need to be clear regarding what 'good' looks like for Fire for community resilience given each services statutory role under the CCA and as part of the LRF.

It would be useful for fire services to understand and contribute to how performance here will be assessed and measured given the multi-agency partner environment.

We will continue to structure our 'characteristics of good' to focus on three primary areas:
• How effective is the FRS at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
• How efficient is the FRS at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
• How well does the FRS look after its people? These characteristics describe the levels of performance needed for an FRS to achieve a grade of 'good'.

5.   *Does the draft 'characteristics of good' (Annex A) include the right questions to gather evidence for a comprehensive assessment of FRSs? How could this be improved?*

SFRS Proposed response:
There could be greater focus on the delegations to the Chief Fire Officer (2.1 in current assessment criteria), considering whether and how these enable the effective day to day running of the Service and operational independence in decision making. This would also support potential future changes aligned to the Fire Reform consultation outcomes the direction of travel from which are still to be finalised. Also linking to the development of any new criteria as proposed through question 1.

The effectiveness of statutory officer relationships – S151, Head of Service and MO. This would be aligned to the new Code of Practice and will support areas this consultation covers.

Additional areas could focus on the current and emerging challenges and opportunities for fire services such as those presented through recommendations to the sectors particularly aligned to the handling of complaints, a greater focus on risks aligned to digital and data such as cyber security and decontamination.

To avoid increasing the demand our inspections put on services, and to make sure our resources are deployed appropriately and adequately, we must focus on the most important areas. We will need to reduce activity in some areas to maintain this approach

6.   *To expand some areas that we currently inspect and/or include new areas for inspection, we would need to reduce or remove some of those currently considered. What do you think we should spend less time on?*

SFRS Proposed response:
All areas set out on the inspection criteria are aligned to the effective and efficient operation of a fire and rescue service. It's important to have a balance across the areas to promote improvement. The removal or additional should be evidence based, with clear rationale.

SFRS would suggest that any reduction or removal of inspection areas is informed by the current trends across all three inspection rounds – areas where performance can be deemed as consistently positive, improving across the sector. This may need to be tailored to some degree.

*7.	Is there anything we can do to improve the way we report our findings?*

Sharing the hot debrief in some format would help Services start building their approach.

Potentially reconsidering the approach to rating inspection outcomes in a way that will recognise gaps but importantly drive improvement. Currently the approach taken which aligns to the OFSTEAD style can be divisive.

HMI staff survey should offer options for free text so that the context of responses can be provided to avoid misinterpretation. Some have viewed the survey to be (negatively) leading in the question design.

*8	Are there any areas that you think we should examine more?*

SFRS Proposed response:
governance stretching wider than scrutiny and focusing on how the governing body of a fire service enables effective decision making in providing services to local communities across a range of areas. This is aligned to the response provided for question 1.

Greater focus on the delivery of fire standards, this may need to be a phased approach given the number of standards now published.

Environmental sustainability and decontamination which would support a greater focus for the sector on how progressively it is or is not developing in this area. The new areas proposed already identified would add to the current breadth of the inspection creating a deeper dive in areas we know the sector requires focus.

A closer alignment of the inspection process to the Service's CRMP. What is considered a risk for one Fire Service may be less in another and particularly when comparing large urban fire services with smaller rural ones. For example, where high rise risk is well managed and less prevalent in rural services, the greater focus could be on the areas of high risk cited in CRMP's such as wildfires, flooding, etc.

The NFCC's family groups allows comparison against similar Service's a mirrored approach for comparison of FRS may provide further operating context and value for Service's and communities looking to review highlighted good practice.

EDI progressions and developments within FRSs is typically minimal. Continued focus on this area and further expansion on the characteristics of good in this area would be welcomed.