

Service Update - December 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 His Majesties Inspector of Constabularies Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Inspection Report.

The final HMICFRS report is anticipated to be received by the Service on the 29 November 2024, due to the report been embargoed until midnight of the 28 November the report and associated documents will be attached as an addendum to this report after the 29 November in preparation for Fire Authority on the 5 December 2024.

2 Recommendations

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

3 Background

This 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 October, the Service has received the HMICFRS Inspection report following the services inspection during the period of June to August 2024.

4 HMICFRS Assessment Process and Criteria 2023 - 2025

In January 2023, HMICFRS began its third full programme of inspections of Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) in England. These inspections use findings, analysis, and professional judgment to evaluate how effective and efficient FRSs are at fire safety, firefighting, and responding to road traffic collisions and other emergencies.

A key part of these inspections is assessing how well services look after their people.

Graded Judgments

All FRSs are graded against the following categories, this is the first round of inspections with this grading system in place.

- **Outstanding** - The service has substantially exceeded the characteristics of good performance.
- **Good** - The service has demonstrated substantially all the characteristics of good performance.
- **Adequate** - The service has demonstrated some characteristics of good performance, but there are areas requiring improvement.
- **Requires improvement** - The service has shown few, if any, characteristics of good performance, with substantial areas needing improvement.
- **Inadequate** - There are causes for concern, and recommendations have been made to address them.

Areas for Improvement, Causes of Concern, and Recommendations

The inspection can identify the following:

- Areas for improvement where aspects of practice, policy, or performance fall short of expected standards. These are reported but not accompanied by recommendations.
- Causes of concern where serious, critical, or systemic shortcomings in practice, policy, or performance are identified. These are always accompanied by recommendations.
- Accelerated Causes of Concern in cases of significant service failures or risks to public safety, these concerns and recommendations are reported early.

Monitoring

Monitoring is integral part of the inspection process. The HMICFRS focus monitoring primarily on services with identified causes of concern but can apply to all FRSs in England.

5 HMICFRS Action Plan

Following the broad overview of inspection outcomes in August a high-level implementation plan has been developed. At the time of writing the report the final report had not been published, once the final report is received on or around the 29 November 2024 the implementation plan will be launched detailing how the Service will respond to the recommendations.

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 and is 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, decision making and the management of corporate risk.
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 Prevention, Protection and Response 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. **Digital & Data 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.

6 Lesson Learnt

A review of lessons learned has been undertaken following the round two inspection process to shape the service's response to these inspection report findings.

The focus areas include:

- integrating and aligning action plans
- enhancing governance and scrutiny
- fostering a culture of continuous learning
- preparation for future inspections
- clarifying responsibilities and planning
- improving understanding and engagement

These lessons will play a pivotal role in ensuring the services success following this inspection process.

7 Conclusions

In conclusion Members should note the summary updates provided.

8 Capacity

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.

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

The financial implications following the review of resources will be allocated. The requirements will be determined on receipt of the final report.

11 Legal Comment

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

12 Communications

A comprehensive HMICFRS communications plan has been developed to ensure all stakeholders are kept appropriately and promptly informed. Quarterly updates will be provided to the Fire Authority, allowing them the opportunity to scrutinise progress effectively. Monthly updates will be shared in the Chairs' Briefing to enhance broader authority awareness. Additionally, quarterly reporting will continue to the Standards, Audit, and Performance Committee, while monthly reporting to the Service Management Team (SMT) will maintain strategic focus on the recommendations.

13 Public Value / Service Delivery

Addressing the areas for improvement identified in the HMICFRS inspection report is crucial for delivering public value. These improvements ensure that fire and rescue services operate effectively, efficiently, and equitably, meeting the needs and expectations of the communities they serve. By addressing these areas, services can enhance public trust, improve safety outcomes, and demonstrate accountability. Additionally, continuous improvement fosters resilience, ensures compliance with national standards like the Fire Standard for Effective Governance, and builds confidence among both the public and stakeholders, reinforcing the service's commitment to excellence and public safety.

14 Reputation

Addressing the areas for improvement highlighted in the HMICFRS inspection report is vital for maintaining and enhancing the reputation of a fire and rescue service. A strong reputation builds public trust and confidence, demonstrating that the service is committed to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement. Proactively responding to identified shortcomings showcases a willingness to learn and adapt, reinforcing the service's image as a professional, reliable, and community-focused organisation. Furthermore, by

achieving tangible improvements, the service not only meets but often exceeds public expectations, strengthening relationships with stakeholders and fostering goodwill. A positive reputation also supports broader organisational goals, such as attracting skilled personnel, securing funding, and ensuring long-term community support.

15 Appendix

Appendix Shropshire Fire and Rescue Inspection Report (to follow due to embargo till midnight 28 November 2024)

16 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.