

# His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services Inspection 2024: Cause of Concern and Areas for Improvement Update

## Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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## 1 Executive Summary

This report provides an update on Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service's (SFRS) response to the 2024 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection, addressing a Cause of Concern (CoC) and 30 Areas for Improvement (AFIs). It outlines progress in governance, risk management, performance, digital strategy, and financial oversight.

## 2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to note the report.

## 3 Background

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service was inspected by HMICFRS in the summer of 2024 as part of Tranche 3 of the inspection programme. The subsequent [Inspection Report](#), published in November 2024, identified:

- One Cause of Concern (CoC), comprising five key elements.
- 30 Areas for Improvement (AFIs) requiring service-wide enhancements.

In response, SFRS has developed a comprehensive action plan to address these issues and drive sustained improvements. This report provides an overview of progress made in implementing these measures.

## **4 Progress to date – Cause of Concern (CoC)**

Following the 2024 HMICFRS inspection, the Cause of Concern identified weaknesses in strategic risk management, performance oversight, and governance. In response, an action plan was established, addressing five key areas.

### **Cause of Concern 1 – Governance and Risk Management**

The CoC has been broken down into three constituent areas and 22 objectives (completion scheduled for 01/03/2026).

13 of the 22 objectives are now complete.

#### **Progress to date:**

- Interim adjustments to corporate meetings have enhanced decision-making processes, with documented evidence supporting governance improvements.
- The Portfolio Manager recruitment is complete, and the new starter will support the strengthening of strategic governance.
- The Programme Board's Terms of Reference have been finalised, ensuring structured oversight of key projects.
- A Service Management Team (SMT) Development Session is planned for 19 June 2025, this will share the proposal for the Service's Organisational Assurance Strategy and digital approach.
- The review of Corporate Performance Indicators (CPIs) and Corporate Health Indicators are in the early stages of development, they will align to the Community Risk Management Plan, Strategic Goals and Service Priorities.
- The completion date has been amended to reflect the Standards, Audit and Performance (SAP) meeting to facilitate process and review and approval.

### **Cause of Concern 2 – Corporate Risk Management**

The CoC has been divided into one constituent area and five objectives (completion scheduled for 21/07/2026).

3 of the 5 objectives are now complete.

#### **Progress to date:**

- Training for senior managers and Fire Authority members has commenced to reinforce risk awareness.
- The corporate risk register is under review, removing outdated risks and refining existing entries.
- A leadership workshop has been completed to define strategic risks and ensure alignment with organisational priorities.
- External facilitation is being considered to enhance expertise in risk governance.
- A SMT report submitted to agree new corporate risks and approach prior to SAP in July.

### **Cause of Concern 3 – Service Planning, Performance, and Leadership Development**

The CoC has been divided into three constituent areas and 15 objectives (completion scheduled for 01/03/2026).

5 of the 15 objectives are now complete.

#### **Progress to date:**

- The approval of the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), strategy, and budget has strengthened alignment between planning and strategic objectives.
- A review of Brigade Orders related to performance management is nearing completion.
- Leadership development is being prioritised through a revised appraisal process and mandatory training for managers.
- Newly developed Individual Performance and Development Reviews (IPDRs) and Action Plans have been programmed for completion by staff.

### **Cause of Concern 4 – Digital and Data Strategy**

The CoC has been divided into four constituent areas and 14 objectives (completion scheduled for 30/11/2028).

4 of the 14 objectives are now complete.

#### **Progress to date:**

- A draft Digital and Data Strategy is in development with resource and capacity requirements assessed.
- A skills gap analysis has informed workforce planning and ICT resourcing.
- Work continues to enhance staff awareness of data quality, security, and governance, with completion scheduled by December 2028.

### **Cause of Concern 5 – Financial Governance and Statutory Oversight**

The CoC has been divided into two constituent areas and five objectives (completion scheduled for 01/04/2025).

4 of the 8 objectives are now complete.

#### **Progress to date:**

- A Project Management Officer (PMO) has been included as part of the Service Structure review and a portfolio manager position employed to enhance financial governance and reporting.
- The role of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer has been approved, strengthening leadership capacity.
- A review is underway to enhance statutory officer engagement in strategic management and fire authority arrangements to support scrutiny and oversight.
- SMT members feedback has been used to scope the financial monitoring reports moving forward.

- A report is being brought to the Fire Authority informed by the Review of Code of Practice on Good Governance for Local Authority Statutory Officers.

## 5 Progress to date – Areas for Improvement

The 2024 HMICFRS inspection of the Service identified 30 Areas for Improvement (AFIs), highlighting the requirement for enhanced resource management, strengthened financial oversight, and more effective governance processes.

The report also emphasised the importance of improving workplace culture, promoting diversity and inclusion, and ensuring more robust performance management systems.

In response, the Service has developed a comprehensive action plan to address the AFIs and implement a new strategic approach. AFIs with significant progress include:

- **AFI 04: Service should make sure it effectively addresses the burden of false alarm.** Following a trial of a call challenging policy early indications are that there is a significant reduction of mobilisation and attendance at false alarm incidents.
- **AFI 18: Service should make sure staff have access to services to support both their mental and physical health.** This has resulted in a new Occupational Health provider, as well as the development of additional fitness equipment for staff. Finally, the introduction of a Health, Safety and Wellbeing post is being progressed.
- **AFI 28: Service should improve all-staff understanding and application of the performance development review process.** Newly developed IPDRs and Action Plans have been programmed for completion by staff. This is to be supported by a communications strategy and training delivery model.
- **AFI 27: Service should improve the way it collects equality data so it can better understand its workforce's demographics and needs.** Significant progress has been made on this initiative, with the process nearing completion. This reflects substantial progress in updating and verifying employee data, with clear plans for ongoing improvement and review through the IPDR process and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group oversight.

Through this structured approach, the Service is committed to delivering sustained improvements in response to the HMICFRS findings.

## **6 Risks**

Within the AFI Improvement Scrutiny Meeting and AFI owners' assessments, key risks have been identified in delivering the HMICFRS action plan.

### **Capacity to Deliver AFIs**

The scale of activities required to complete the AFIs presents a significant challenge in terms of capacity, with existing workloads already stretched. To mitigate this, AFIs have been prioritised within the Service Programme Board, ensuring resources are allocated efficiently. SMT oversight is in place to monitor workload balance, and adjustments will be made where needed to maintain momentum.

### **Interdependencies Across AFIs**

Many AFIs are interconnected, meaning delays in one area could hinder progress in others. To address this, clear ownership has been established for each AFI, with structured risk tracking through Microsoft Planner to flag dependencies early. A cross-team coordination approach ensures that linked activities progress in alignment, reducing the risk of bottlenecks.

### **Skills and Resources Gaps in Key Areas (e.g., ICT)**

Some AFIs require specialist expertise, particularly in ICT, where data management and digital solutions play a crucial role. Limited availability of these skills or where there are current vacancies could restrict progress, so workforce planning as part of the structure review has been undertaken to identify gaps. Where necessary, current vacancies are being advertised, and external support options are also being considered to ensure the Service has the capacity to meet digital transformation requirements.

## **7 Capacity**

Implementing the action plan may require additional resourcing in particular areas, potentially impacting existing workloads and necessitating additional capacity within teams. Where achieving an element of the CoC or AFI requires additional staffing or financial investment, this will be assessed and scrutinised through SMT and will form part of the Service Programme Board and project methodology to ensure effective resource planning.

## **8 Fire Alliance / Collaboration / Partnership Working**

Collaboration with the NFCC, other Fire and Rescue Services, and external partners will be essential to drive improvements, share best practices, and access additional expertise, ensuring a coordinated approach to service enhancement.

## **9 Financial Implications**

Addressing AFIs may require investment in governance, data systems, training, and workforce planning.

Any financial implications will be subject to SMT scrutiny and considered within the Service Programme Board, ensuring cost-effective implementation.

## **10 Legal Comment**

Strengthened governance, risk management, and financial oversight will support compliance with statutory responsibilities and ensure adherence to regulatory frameworks, mitigating legal risks.

## **11 Communications**

Clear internal and external communication, will promote staff engagement, increase stakeholder confidence, and transparency in service improvements.

## **12 Community Safety**

Enhanced risk management, performance oversight, and resource planning will contribute to more effective community safety activities, ensuring the Service meets evolving public safety demands.

## **13 Environmental**

There are no environmental impacts arising from this report.

## **14 Equality Impact Assessment**

Strengthening workplace culture, diversity, and inclusion initiatives will help ensure fair treatment, equal opportunities, and alignment with national equality standards.

## **15 Health and Safety**

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

## **16 Fire Standard Core Code of Ethics and Human Rights (including Data Protection)**

Improved governance, data accuracy, and reporting processes will support adherence to ethical standards, national fire standards, and data protection regulations.

## **17 ICT**

The ICT team, while currently operating with vacancies, may be impacted by the increased demands and workload associated with delivering the Cause of Concern (CoC) and Areas for Improvement (AFIs). As part of the action plan development, it was identified that ICT involvement is required in over 90% of the AFIs, highlighting the critical role of digital solutions, data management, and system improvements.

Resource planning within ICT will be subject to SMT scrutiny to ensure the team can effectively support service-wide improvements while managing existing operational pressures.

## **18 Insurance**

No significant impact anticipated; however, improved risk management and governance may contribute to reduced liability exposure and improved organisational resilience.

## **19 The On-call Service**

Workforce planning improvements and clearer risk management processes will help ensure more effective integration, training, and support for on-call staff, contributing to improved service delivery.

## **20 Public Value / Service Delivery**

Enhancing performance management, risk oversight, and governance will drive improved service delivery, increased efficiency, and greater public confidence in the service.

## **21 Reputation**

There are no reputational impacts arising from this report.

## **22 Security**

There are no security impacts arising from this report.

## **23 Training**

Staff training and development will be integral to the implementation of the action plan, particularly in performance management tools, governance processes, and cultural improvements. Training requirements will be assessed through SMT and the Service Programme Board to ensure alignment with organisational priorities.

## **24 Appendices**

There are no appendices attached to this report.

## **25 Background Papers**

[Link to HMICFRS Inspection Report 2024](#)