

To: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority

From: Area Commander Community Safety and Combined Fire Control - Simon Newton

Presenting officer(s): Area Commander Community Safety and Combined Fire Control – Simon Newton

Telephone: 07766 954139

[simon.newton@cambsfire.gov.uk](mailto:simon.newton@cambsfire.gov.uk)

Date: 20 December 2023

---

## His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Round Three Update

### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Fire Authority with an overview of the changes made to the HMICFRS inspection process for 2023 to 2025 and the outcomes of the round three inspection for Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS).

### 2. Recommendation

- 2.1 The Authority is asked to note CFRS's strategic approach to respond to and address the findings identified in the latest HMICFRS report.

### 3. Risk Assessment

- 3.1 **Economic** – while there is limited economic impact identified in the report it should be noted that our ability to respond positively to some recommendations could be limited due to budget restraints.
- 3.2 **Political** – there is significant political interest in the outcome of inspection activity which can be heightened depending on media reporting or sector events occurring at the time of publication. Negative attention is likely for those services receiving poor inspection reports or who are not addressing issues raised in previous reports.

3.3 **Social** – as a highly regarded public service, an inspection report can assure or raise concerns among communities depending on findings. A good report reflects well on the fire and rescue service and those who are part of it.

3.4 **Equality Impact Assessment** – these will be completed when new policies or procedures are introduced to address HMICFRS recommendations (our report highlights that we do this well).

#### 4. Summary of Changes to the HMICFRS Inspection Criteria

4.1 In this round of inspections the focus areas of effectiveness, efficiency and how the Service looks after its people remained the same however the way in which HMICFRS presented the graded judgements changed. The three pillar judgements have been removed and the graded judgements are given only across the 11 sub sections.

4.2 Adequate is now an addition to the graded judgement available which means a Service can be graded; outstanding, good, adequate, requiring improvement or inadequate. The adequate judgement is now applied to any sub section that might have previously been good but has an area for improvement (AFI). If the adequate judgement had been available during the round two inspection (2020/2021), CFRS could have received five goods and five adequate grades instead of the 10 goods we received.

4.3 The introduction of the adequate grade makes it difficult to compare the report scoring from our last two inspections.

4.4 We are monitoring with interest the remaining round three inspection results which culminate with County Durham and Darlington and Kent in Spring 2025; this will offer us an opportunity to benchmark. Of course, it is likely that fire and rescue services who are inspected later in the round, will benefit from the sector learning being shared by services such as ourselves. Some consideration of this may be necessary when reflecting over round three outcomes.

#### 5. Summary of CFRS Round Three Inspection Report and Points of Note

5.1 In February 2023 HMICFRS inspected CFRS to assess how effective and efficient we are in our activities to prevent, protect the public against and respond to fires and other emergencies. They also assessed us on how well we look after the people who work for us.

5.2 The three areas that were inspected can be summarised as:

- how **effective** are we at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks,
- how **efficient** are we at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks,
- how well do we look after our **people**.

5.3 As stated in Paragraph 4.2 above there are five possible outcomes in the judgement criteria; outstanding, good (this is where HMICFRS expect every service to be), adequate, requires improvement or inadequate (serious or critical failings in policy, practice or performance).

5.4 We have been judged with one outstanding, six goods, three adequate and one requires improvement.

5.5 The following items were highlighted as areas for improvement for the Service;

- the Service should review its On-Call suitability meeting to ensure there is no bias in recruitment (refers to inconsistency in application of that part of the process and compared to the recruitment policy).
- the Service should make sure On-Call staff are familiar with the risks in their local areas and have an understanding of fires in tall buildings, so they are better prepared to fight fires and carry out rescues safely.
- the Service should make sure it has an effective electronic method for sharing multiple fire survival guidance information and a dedicated communication link in place.
- the Service should assure itself that all staff are appropriately trained for their role.
- the Service should make sure managers have an effective system to monitor the training and skills of its staff and the service they provide to the public.
- the Service should put in place effective systems, with the aim of diversifying the pool of future and current leaders; it currently does not have any and the recording of recruitment diversity data was found to be inconsistent meaning opportunities to diversify could be missed. The Service told HMICFRS had considered direct entry recruitment but would not be introducing it now due to funding and capacity issues.
- the Service should make sure its mechanisms to manage and develop talent within the organisation are applied consistently.
- the Service should do more to make sure staff see promotion processes as transparent and fair.

5.6 All the areas in Paragraph 5.5 above have already been considered and prioritised. Some were already underway but had not been completed before our inspection; we will continue to implement these. Most will be completed before our next inspection. Any not completed before April 2024 will be

included within our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2024 to 2029 planning.

- 5.7 The HMICFRS report also recognised several areas where CFRS was delivering promising (two) or innovative (three) practice. These were;
- Promising practice - CFRS provides facilities to support staff's physical fitness and health and has improved its maternity and menopause provisions.
  - Innovative practice – CFRS's financial and resource planning is agile and flexible, it has an effective ecological strategy and uses assessors from its local community to monitor recruitment.

## 6. HMICFRS National Overview

- 6.1 At the time of writing, the 'Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England' is still to be published; it is expected in Spring 2024. CFRS has responded to the national request from HMICFRS for feedback to support the content of the report. The document makes comment on the outcomes of the inspections undertaken so far in round three. It will also focus on progress made across the national inspection recommendations. The report is published and issued to Parliament by His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services in pursuant to Section 28B of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.
- 6.2 We are confident that we are well sighted on the national recommendations and closely monitor trends coming out of round three inspections. This allows us to include areas of inspection interest into our CRMP planning and blending them into our service priorities.
- 6.3 There continues to be scrutiny of the culture in fire and rescue services because of several concerning reports from organisations such as London Fire Brigade and Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service. HMICFRS inspection findings continue to identify worrying practises leading them to publish their 'Values and Culture in Fire and Rescue Services Spotlight Review' in March 2023. This highlighted widespread issues with poor behaviour, values and cultures in many services. The report made 35 recommendations to the sector and Government. CFRS has created an action plan against these recommendations and has embedded the ones for fire and rescue services into our existing Integrated Risk Management Plan and future CRMP. In our latest report, CFRS was graded as being good at both promoting its values and culture and fairness and diversity.
- 6.4 HMICFRS has also been commissioned by the Home Secretary to undertake a thematic inspection into how misconduct is handled in fire and rescue services. This involves 10 fire and rescue services that were selected by

HMICFRS and are being inspected in service. All fire and rescue services have been asked to support and share a survey with existing staff and staff who have left within the last five years who might have experience of misconduct to share their views. We will consider the outcomes of this report when it becomes available in 2024.

## Source Documents

[Effectiveness, efficiency and people 2023-25: An inspection of Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)

[State of Fire and Rescue: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2022 \(justiceinspectrates.gov.uk\)](#)

<https://assets-hmicfrs.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/uploads/values-and-culture-in-fire-and-rescue-services.pdf>

## Location

Hinchingbrooke Cottage

Brampton Road

Huntingdon

## Contact Officers

Simon Newton

Area Commander Community Safety and Combined Fire Control

[Simon.newton@cambsfire.gov.uk](mailto:Simon.newton@cambsfire.gov.uk)

Tamsin Mirfin

Service Transformation Manager

[tamsin.mirfin@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:tamsin.mirfin@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)