



COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

27 SEPTEMBER 2017

INSPECTION OF FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITIES IN ENGLAND – UPDATE ON EMERGING DEVELOPMENTS

Report of Area Manager, Assurance & Assets

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. This report updates members on the emerging developments following the announcement by the Home Office that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary is to be expanded to take on the role of inspectorate of fire and rescue authorities in England.

BACKGROUND

2. As reported to the July meeting of the Combined Fire Authority (CFA), the Home Office announced on 19 July 2017 that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) would be expanded to take on the role of inspectorate of fire and rescue authorities in England. HMIC has since been renamed Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).
3. The inspectorate will consider how efficient and effective fire and rescue services (FRS) are; will highlight good practice and identify areas where they need to improve, so that action can be taken to overcome them. This will include how FRS prevent and respond to incidents; whether the FRS provides value for money as well as reviewing the FRS's leadership, training, diversity, values and culture.
4. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Sir Thomas Winsor, has been appointed as Chief Fire and Rescue Inspector, and that HMICFRS's existing inspectors are to be appointed as regional fire and rescue inspectors. This will be in addition to their existing police inspection responsibilities.

EMERGING DEVELOPMENTS – Scope, Methodology & Timelines

5. At the autumn conference of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), held on 11 & 12 September, delegates received a presentation from Zoe Billingham. In addition to being Her Majesty's Inspector for the Eastern Region, she is the senior responsible officer for HMICFRS's inspections of fire and rescue services.
6. HMI Billingham began her presentation by setting out that HMICFRS's 'promise' to the sector would be: *"The inspection will be developed with the fire and rescue service. It will be designed to promote improvement and to identify all aspects of the excellent work undertaken by fire and rescue services. We will approach the inspection on a no surprises basis and experts from across the service will be fundamental to the delivery of our inspections."*

7. As expected, the Police Efficiency; Effectiveness and Legitimacy (PEEL) inspection framework is being used as the basis for fire inspections but with leadership replacing the legitimacy strand. Therefore, HMICFRS will assess and report on the efficiency, effectiveness and leadership of the 45 FRS's in England.
8. Although work is underway to develop the methodology with the sector over the coming months, the inspections will examine:
 - Operational Service Delivery – prevention, protection, resilience & response;
 - Organisational effectiveness – leadership, training, diversity, values & culture;
 - Efficiency – value for money, matching resources to meet demand, collaboration.
9. Notably, HMI Billingham made it clear that HMICFRS will focus on the inspection of fire and rescue *services* only and not their governance (i.e. fire authorities). It was acknowledged that the governance of police and fire and rescue services do differ significantly but that if HMICFRS find any issues with governance then they will look at how best to report on this.
10. We also now know that FRSs will receive the same graded judgements as applied to police forces. Those gradings being: outstanding; good; requires improvement; and inadequate.
11. The inspection will focus on a single inspection with onsite fieldwork of around a week's duration by a team of around 10 people. This will be supported by data returns and a self-assessment produced by the service in advance.
12. The fieldwork will be underpinned by a background monitoring framework, as already utilised with the police, and would involve a Service Liaison Lead allocated to up to 3 services, whose role will be to establish a close relationship with the FRS throughout the year, acting as the 'eyes and ears' of the HMICFRS.
13. HMICFRS is currently recruiting around 53 new posts to support its new responsibilities, with a significant number drawn from fire and rescue services on secondment.
14. Over the coming months, HMICFRS are developing the methodology and criteria for judgements. They intend to pilot the methodology in two services between January and April 2018. All 45 fire and rescue services will then be inspected, in tranches of 15, over an 18-month period commencing from April 2018.
15. Periodic national reports will be published between each tranche of inspections.

CDDFRS ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

16. The Service has been proactive in its engagement with key stakeholders as we continue our inspection preparations.
17. Following the announcement by HMICFRS of their regional responsibilities of HMIs, the Service extended an invitation to the HMI for the Northern group of 13 FRS, Mike Cunningham to attend the regional principal officers meeting held on the 8 September. The aim of this successful meeting was to provide an informal opportunity for HMI Cunningham to meet the senior teams of the 4 services in the north east and to offer an inspectors insight into the challenges and opportunities that the new inspection regime will bring.

18. As part of its engagement with the sector, HMICFRS are hosting an introductory event in London on the 10 October, which this Authority will be represented at. The event will include presentations from HMICFRS and others, as well as extensive time for delegates to discuss operational and governance issues, share practice and experiences, and offer views on HMICFRS's early proposals for an inspection regime of the fire and rescue service. There will also be opportunity to meet with HM Inspectors.
19. In addition, our close working with Durham Constabulary has revealed that several FRS have contacted Durham Constabulary seeking to visit them to gain from their experience as the only police force currently rated as 'outstanding'. Considering the resource impact of supporting visits from potentially another 44 FRS within England, we have agreed to jointly host two 'Inspection Insight' workshops in November. These events will focus on the experience of Durham Constabulary rather than seek to answer the details surrounding future fire inspections, as we anticipate more of this information emerging in the coming weeks and months.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AUTHORITY

20. As previously reported, whilst the introduction of an inspectorate should be broadly welcomed there is a concern in relation to the resources required to support a more rigorous inspection regime, particularly given Sir Tom Winsor's statement about applying the same degree of thoroughness as it does to the police inspections.
21. We know from our engagement with Durham Constabulary that supporting HMIC's PEEL inspection regime is resource intensive. The Authority will need to consider this further once there is greater clarity regarding the arrangements.

CONCLUSIONS

22. There were no great surprises in HMI Billingham's presentation at the NFCC Conference as the Service has been fully engaged with both Durham Constabulary and representatives from the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Inspectorate Working Group and lately HMI Cunningham. The Service has hosted a regional workshop in May this year attended by principal officers from the North East FRS and the NFCC lead for the inspectorate preparations. It has subsequently established a regional working group to share intelligence and identify opportunities to collaborate and share resources, where appropriate to do. We will, of course, continue to follow developments and active engage in the consultation, reporting back to members as further information emerges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

23. Members are requested to:
 - a. **Note** the content of the report and receive further reports once further details emerge in relation to the new inspection regime.

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