



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 since the September meeting of the Authority on the preparations by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to inspect fire and rescue services in England.

BACKGROUND

2. Members will recall that the Home Office announced on 19 July 2017 that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), now rebranded as HMICFRS, would be expanded to take on the role of inspectorate of fire and rescue services in England.

EMERGING DEVELOPMENTS – Methodology & Timelines

3. Since the last update report presented to members in September, HMICFRS have held an introductory event in London on 10 October 2017. During this event, senior representatives from fire and rescue authorities across England were able to meet key stakeholders from HMICFRS and engage in workshops to help better understand and shape the future methodology and approach.
4. Broadly speaking the timeline for inspections remains as previously advised, namely that they intend to pilot the methodology in two services between January and April 2018. This Authority has formally expressed an interest in participating in one of those pilots.
5. All 45 fire and rescue services will then be inspected, in tranches of 15, over an 18-month period commencing from April 2018.
6. A draft methodology was circulated at the introductory event, which uses a similar structure to the Police Efficiency; Effectiveness and Legitimacy (PEEL) inspection framework.
7. The draft methodology current poses 3 core questions:
 - i. How effective is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
 - ii. How efficient is the FRS at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
 - iii. How well does the FRS look after its people?

8. The core questions are underpinned by 11 diagnostic questions, which themselves are further underpinned by 67 sub-diagnostic questions.
9. The full methodology question set is presented at Appendix A.
10. We understand that FRSs will receive the same graded judgements as applied to police forces. Those gradings being: outstanding; good; requires improvement; and inadequate.
11. Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) Zoe Billingham also reiterated 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."*
12. There appears to be growing acknowledgement by HMICFRS of the argument being presented by the sector that fire and rescue service resource allocation and ways of working are necessarily based upon both demand *and* risk rather than demand alone.
13. There is a view that the successful reduction in emergency incidents over the past ten years or so, achieved through our effective prevention and protection activities, has subsequently led to an increase in what some call 'excess' or 'latent' capacity amongst our firefighting crews, thereby justifying reductions in funding.
14. However, our view is that by effectively resourcing to both demand *and* risk, we necessarily will have some *discretionary* capacity, that is we have discretion to deploy our resources where we feel best when not responding to emergencies. This can include undertaking prevention activities such as safe and wellbeing visits and youth work, working with partners to identify and reduce the risk of arson, carrying out fire safety audits of business premises, gathering risk information from high risk premises and staff undertaking training. All of these contribute to improving public safety but can be quickly set aside whenever an emergency call is received.
15. We recognise that in order to justify this approach to resourcing to both demand *and* risk, HMICFRS will likely require us to demonstrate that we understand and can measure the productivity of our staff. Consequently, this is an area we are now discussing with staff and exploring how we can best measure such productivity.

CDDFRS ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

16. Members will be aware that the Service has been proactive in its engagement with key stakeholders as we continue our inspection preparations.
17. On 8 September, we facilitated a successful introductory meeting between the principal officer teams from the north east FRS with the HMI for the Northern group of 13 FRS, Mike Cunningham.
18. However, HMI Cunningham has since been appointed as CEO of the College of Policing and we are awaiting notification of who his successor will be.
19. Members will also be aware of the forthcoming 'Inspection Insight' events being hosted at our Service Training Centre on 24 & 28 November in partnership with Durham Constabulary.

20. These events, open to both officers and members, will focus on the experience of Durham Constabulary as the only 'outstanding' police force in England 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.
21. At the time of writing, 107 delegates representing approximately 30 fire authorities, had booked places on the events.

CONCLUSIONS

22. The draft methodology released on the 10 October is broadly in line with expectations but will provide the Service with a clearer structure upon which to base our preparations in advance of our own inspection. The Inspection Insight events will provide both officers and members with more information on the experiences of Durham Constabulary albeit HMICFRS have expressed that we should not draw too many parallels from their approach to inspecting police forces. 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:
 - i. **Note** the content of the report and **agree** to receive further reports once further details emerge in relation to the new inspection regime.

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