

## Resources and Fire and Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee

13 September 2017

### Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and wider Fire Reform Programme

#### Recommendation

That the Resources and Fire and Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive and note the latest position on Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and the wider Fire Reform Programme report.

#### 1.0 Background

- 1.1 The last 20 years have seen significant change in the history of inspection of fire and rescue services. Prior to the introduction of 'Best Value' in 2000, inspection was the responsibility of the Home Office. In 2003 the Audit Commission was appointed as the inspecting body, and introduced a national performance framework with the 'Comprehensive Performance Assessment', and later the 'Comprehensive Area Assessment' from 2009. In 2010, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced plans to abolish the Audit Commission, and inspection moved more towards a peer review based approach.
- 1.2 Shortly after the Home Office assumed responsibility for fire and rescue services in 2016, the then Home Secretary, Theresa May, outlined her intention to deliver a programme of reform in the fire and rescue service that would be as radical and ambitious as that delivered in policing since 2010. The Home Secretary's objective was to make fire and rescue more accountable, more effective and more professional.
- 1.3 In February 2017, the then minister for Policing and Fire Services, Brandon Lewis, continued the fire reform rhetoric, suggesting that reform must go further and faster. He outlined the Home Office's expectations around three key pillars of fire reform:
  - **Accountability and Transparency**
  - **Efficiency and Collaboration**
  - **Workforce Reform**
- 1.4 Supporting the pillar of '**Accountability and Transparency**', the Home Office has set out its intention to introduce a new inspectorate, empowered to determine how effective each fire and rescue service is in preventing and responding to incidents; whether the service provides value for money; whether the service understands its current demands and where the future risks lie; and its leadership, training, diversity, values and culture.

- 1.5 The Home Office has stated that it intends to commission thematic inspections on individual issues if needed. In his speech in February, Brandon Lewis announced that the first issues he wanted the inspectorate to focus on are diversity, collaboration and flexible deployment of resources.
- 1.6 On 19th July 2017, the Home Office confirmed that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) would take on responsibility for the inspection of fire and rescue services, and would with immediate effect change its name to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS). Further information on what is currently known about the new inspection arrangements and the implications for Warwickshire are discussed later in this report.
- 1.7 To support greater transparency and to encourage greater accountability Brandon Lewis stated that the Home Office will create a new website, operational in 2017, to mirror what can be seen on [www.police.uk](http://www.police.uk). This website will hold a range of information, all in one place, about the fire and rescue service. This will include data which helps the public to assess the performance of their local service as well as information about chief officer pay, expenditure, accounts, efficiency plans and workforce composition.
- 1.8 The Policing and Crime Act has been amended to enable Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to take on responsibility for the governance of local fire and rescue services where a local case is made. Fire and rescue authorities are being asked to work with PCCs and provide the information they need should the PCC wish to develop a business case.
- 1.9 In support of '**Efficiency and Collaboration**' the Policing and Crime Act has introduced a new statutory duty on the emergency services to collaborate, where it would be in the interests of their efficiency or effectiveness to do so. This duty is recognised in the recently launched Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Integrated Risk Management Plan 2017-2020 and the associated Action Plan for 2017/18.
- 1.10 Fire and rescue services have been challenged to take a more strategic approach to procurement in order to seek better value. A procurement analysis, or 'basket of goods' exercise, has been undertaken to determine how much fire and rescue authorities spend on 25 common areas such as uniforms, fire engines and frontline equipment. The basket of goods exercise will be repeated this autumn, with the Home Office expectation that the gap between what different services have paid for items has narrowed – preferably considerably.
- 1.11 To support the '**Workforce Reform**' pillar a new professional standards body is being developed for fire and rescue, which will build a comprehensive professional framework of standards for the service. This body will set standards on a range of issues including leadership, workforce development, equality and diversity and codifying effective practice.

- 1.12 The new inspectorate will inspect against the standards this body sets and in turn, the standards body will carefully consider the inspectorate's findings when setting and reviewing their standards. The professional standards board project team are due to present their proposals for how the standards body will be organised and governed to the Home Office this autumn.
- 1.13 The Home Office has stated the opinion that there is considerable scope to improve recruitment, training, development and leadership at every level of the fire and rescue service and the new professional standards body will help do just that. It is also expected that the new inspectorate will identify barriers to diversity across services and that each service will respond to the issues that it faces.
- 1.14 The Home Office has stated the intention to review the Fire and Rescue National Framework later this year, which will clarify the expectations and responsibilities for fire and rescue authorities.

## **2.0 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)**

- 2.1 Sir Thomas Winsor, previously Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, has been confirmed as Chief Fire and Rescue Inspector for England, and HMIC's existing inspectors have been appointed Inspectors of Fire and Rescue Authorities. These appointments will be in addition to their existing police inspection responsibilities. Her Majesty's Inspector for Fire & Rescue Services for the Western Region (which includes Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service) is Wendy Williams.
- 2.2 The Inspectors for Fire and Rescue Services are to be supported by a team of seconded fire and rescue officers. Recruitment and secondment arrangements are still to be confirmed.
- 2.3 Sir Thomas Winsor has stated that the first inspection is expected to take place next spring with every authority in England inspected by the end of 2019. HMICFRS will shortly begin work developing an inspection framework and programme to be published for consultation in the autumn.
- 2.4 It is likely that the new inspection process for fire and rescue will be similar to that undertaken for the Police. The HMIC (now HMICFRS) inspection covers four key areas: **legitimacy, leadership, effectiveness and efficiency**. Following the inspection the host service is graded either outstanding, good, requires improvement or inadequate for each area.
- 2.5 Although feedback is requested from the host service around the inspection process and accuracy of the report, there is limited scope for a Constabulary to 'negotiate' or argue the grades given by the inspection team. The annual inspection is usually broken down into 2 or 3 visits. The inspection team usually consists of 8 -10 people.
- 2.6 Additional thematic inspections can be announced with little notice.

2.7 The inspection begins with a requirement for the host service (led by the Chief Constable) to deliver a strategic presentation to the inspection team, providing an overview of the self-assessment report. Following the inspection the inspection team deliver a hot debrief. They will then provide a final report and Action Plan to the host service. The host service may request a 24 hour embargo before the inspection report is made public.

### **3.0 Inspection ready: Early implications for Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service (WFRS)**

3.1 WFRS have met with Warwickshire Police to understand more clearly the time and resource demands of the HMIC inspection process in relation to the Police, and what likely impact any similar arrangements will have on fire and rescue services.

3.2 Warwickshire Police currently has a full-time dedicated role to meet the demands of the inspection process. In the build up to and during the inspection visits, three additional members of staff are dedicated to meeting the demands of the process. Requirements include:

- Staff briefings
- Check quality of all organisational data
- Check currency of all policies
- Undertake gap analysis (against inspection standards)
- Prepare self-assessment report
- Prepare presentations
- Organise timetable for inspection, book rooms and welfare arrangements for inspection team
- Debrief staff
- Check draft HMIC inspection report for accuracy and feedback to inspection team
- Prepare media messages prior to public publication of report
- Oversee and manage the Action Plan

3.3 WFRS will need to consider how to build capacity into all teams to meet the demands of the inspection process (i.e. provision of data/information, delivery of change required by both internal pre-inspection audit and post HMICFRS inspection action plans), whilst maintaining business as usual.

3.4 WFRS have been working with the WCC Performance business unit to anticipate and consider options for providing the resource needed to meet the demands of the new inspection process. It is likely that a new full-time WFRS uniformed officer role will be required to meet the needs of the HMICFRS process. Officers from across the Resources Group (with support from WFRS) are also exploring the options for providing additional corporate capacity to help deliver the national fire and rescue reform agenda and to support WFRS to become “inspection ready”.

- 3.5 Whilst comparing the inspection approach taken in respect of Police services is very useful, there are, however, some fundamental differences in the formal leadership structures of a Fire Authority and Service that will also need to be considered carefully. Whereas a Chief Constable has specific legal operational independence and operates as a "corporation sole" and separate from the governance of the Police and Crime Commissioner, a Fire Service, especially one operating within a County Council, does not operate in this way. In particular all of the fire and rescue legislative responsibilities apply to the Authority as a whole and the County Council structure also means that the organisational approach to many of the potential inspection areas are County Council wide rather than specific to Fire and Rescue individually.

### **Timescales and next steps**

- 4.1 Confirmation of the arrangements for a professional standards board, and confirmation of the standards against which the HMICFRS Inspectors will base their inspections are expected this autumn.
- 4.2 HMICFRS has stated that the first inspection of fire and rescue services is expected to take place next spring with every fire authority in England inspected by the end of 2019. It is not yet known when Warwickshire will receive confirmation of the date for its inspection.
- 4.3 In order to become inspection ready, WFRS are working with officers from the Resources Group to explore options for delivering a pre-inspection audit. The aim is to have this completed by March 2018. This process will inform the self-assessment report that WFRS will need to complete prior to a HMICFRS on-site visit.

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

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Councillor Heather Timms –	Chair for Resources and Fire & Rescue OSC
Councillor Parminder Singh Birdi –	Vice Chair for Resources and Fire & Rescue OSC
Councillor Sarah Boad -	Party Spokesperson for Resources and Fire & Rescue OSC
Councillor Maggie O'Rourke -	Party Spokesperson for Resources and Fire & Rescue OSC