

Police, Fire and Crime Panel – 10 February 2020

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) report- Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service

Report of the Staffordshire Commissioner

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report highlights the outcomes following the first inspection of Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service (SFRS) by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) "The Inspectorate".
- 1.2 This is the first time that HMICFRS has inspected fire and rescue services (FRS) across England. Their focus is on the service that FRS's provide to the public, and the way they use the resources available.
- 1.3 The inspection assessed how effectively and efficiently SFRS prevents, protects the public against and responds to fires and other emergencies. The Inspectorate also assessed how well it looks after the people who work for SFRS.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the members of the Police Fire & Crime Panel note the following:
 - The Service was judged to be "Good" in all 3 core questions of Effectiveness, Efficiency and People by the Inspectorate
 - The Service was judged to be "Good" in ten out of the eleven sub-diagnostic levels that underpinned the 3 core questions
 - The Service was judged to be "Outstanding" at promoting the right values and culture which was the final of the sub-diagnostic criteria
 - There are areas of best practice in Staffordshire that have been reported nationally
 - The Inspectorate made no recommendations in relation to the performance of the Service
 - There were areas for improvement (AFI's) identified and progress has already made by the Service in addressing these areas

3. Background

3.1 HMICFRS Judgements

3.1.2 The categories of graded judgment are:

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Inadequate

Good is the 'expected' graded judgment for all fire and rescue services. It is based on policy, practice or performance that meet pre-defined grading criteria, which are informed by any relevant national operational guidance or standards. If the service exceeds what is expected for good, it will be judged it as outstanding. If any shortcomings are found in the service, it will be judged as requires improvement. If any serious critical failings of policy, practice or performance of the fire and rescue service are found, it will be judged as inadequate.

3.1.3 Where recommendations are made by the Inspectorate, the Service is expected to publish an action plan within 56 working days in response.

3.1.4 The Inspectorate may identify areas for improvement (AFI) which the Service may consider. A published action plan is not required for these.

3.2 Tranche 3 inspection findings

3.2.1 In July 2019, SFRS were inspected as part of the third tranche of Service to be inspected under the Inspectorates 2018/19 programme. With a formal debrief taking place on the 30th July 2019. The final report was published on the 17th December 2019 some four and a half months later after internal quality assurance and sign off by Her Majesty's Inspector Wendy Williams.

3.2.2 The Inspectorate were very pleased with the performance of SFRS in keeping people safe and secure, and, in particular, in how it looks after its people.

3.2.3 Staffordshire FRS is good at providing an effective service to the public. It is good at:

- Understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies
- Preventing fires and other risks
- Protecting the public through fire regulation
- Responding to fires and other emergencies
- Responding to national risks

3.2.4 SFRS is good in the efficiency of its services. It was found to be good at making the best use of resources and also at making its services affordable.

3.2.5 SFRS is good at looking after its people. The Service was judged to be outstanding at promoting the right values and culture. It is good at:

- Getting the right people with the right skills
- Managing performance and developing leaders
- Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity

3.3 National findings

- 3.3.1 In January 2019 Her Majesty's Chief Inspector Sir Tom Windsor published his first "State of Fire & Rescue" report, an annual assessment and statutory requirement for the HMCFRS. The report made the following recommendations:
- 3.3.2 By June 2020, the Home Office, in consultation with the fire and rescue sector, should determine the role of (a) a fire and rescue service and (b) a firefighter.
- 3.3.3 By June 2020, the Home Office, the Local Government Association, the National Fire Chiefs Council and trade unions should consider whether the current pay negotiation machinery needs fundamental reform. If so, a plan for reform should be established and an independent pay review body considered. This should also include consideration of the future of the 'grey book' and whether it should be replaced with local contracts.
- 3.3.4 By August 2020, the Home Office should consider the case for legislating to give chief fire officers operational independence. In the meantime, it should issue clear guidance, possibly through an amendment to the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, on the demarcation between governance by the fire and rescue authority and operational decision-making by the chief fire officer.
- 3.3.5 By June 2020, The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), with the Local Government Association, should produce a code of ethics for the fire sector. The code should be adopted by every fire and rescue service in England and considered as part of each employee's progression and annual performance appraisal.
- 3.3.6 Prior to the State of Fire Report, two recommendations were made following the first two sets of inspections:
- 3.3.7 The sector to achieve greater consistency across four areas, including identifying and determining risk, defining what constitute high-risk premises for the purposes of protection, and how to consistently identify and measure response standards. The NFCC has an established national Community Risk Programme which supports the recommendation to identify risk and vulnerability. This is one of NFCC's strategic priorities.
- 3.3.8 The Home Office to address the deficit in the fire sector's national capacity and capability to support change.

3.3.9 In Staffordshire the Inspectorate recognised the following areas of practice

“Staffordshire FRS removed rank markings from day-to-day uniform, which staff welcomed. This was done to remove perceived barriers and foster a more inclusive environment that values all staff equally”.

“Staffordshire FRS makes effective use of their respective performance review systems. They see them as a way for managers and staff to discuss performance, career aspirations and wellbeing. These systems give staff personal objectives that have a clear link to departmental and organisational objectives. Staffordshire services assess staff behaviours against each service’s behavioural framework”.

3.4 Progress against AFI

3.4.1 In December 2017, SFRS was chosen as one of three Services in England to support the development and testing of the Inspectorates methodology. The Service underwent a full inspection based on the draft methodology giving feedback to the Inspectorate throughout the process and allowing them to put forward the first programme of FRS Inspections for 10 years to the Secretary of State for approval.

3.4.2 As a result of this, SFRS received feedback on areas which the Inspectorate felt it could improve on, without a public report or grades being issued at the time due to it being a trial. These areas were monitored through the Service Delivery Board (SDB) and continued through into the third tranche of Inspections under the program.

3.4.3 The following AFI’s were identified at both stages and progress made against each is reported below:

A. We could not find evidence of a successful, structured approach to improving diversity, within the wholetime or on call workforce, through recruitment.

Progress: Accountable Lead-Director of Response

Research in other services has resulted in a new, more targeted approach to attract under-represented groups to apply for roles within SFRS by using social media direct marketing and positive action to support the interested parties.

The Individuals are actively coached up to the beginning of the selection process in order to ensure that they hone the skills they will need to demonstrate in order to be successfully recruited.

Limited advertising of the recruitment process after recruitment go live will see a smaller number of applicants progressing to the selection tests. (NB - this approach is currently for wholetime staff only).

Confirmation that phase 3 of the approach (limited recruitment window with no advertising to the wider population) is justifiable. A paper was delivered to SDB in relation to Section 158 and 159 of the Equality Act 2010 in order to clarify the Positive Action provision within the legislation.

Wholetime recruitment was focussed on transferees in 2019 and positive action will be used to contribute to a more representative workforce where opportunities arise.

On call recruitment is now using a newly designed recruitment and development programme which requires up to 20 weeks of direct mentoring of candidates prior to commencement of training at Learning & Development (L&D). This should reduce the attrition rates of those from under represented groups and result in a workforce more representative of the local population.

Since the launch of the national campaign the number of overall RDS/On call applications has more than doubled from an average of 52 per campaign in previous years to 118+ per campaign in 2018/19.

The number of female applicants has increased from single figures per campaign to double figures and ethnic minorities have increased from 4 to 8 per campaign.

With the combination of the campaign and Retained (on call) Support Officers (RSO) assistance, for the first time ever, June & September 2019 courses were fully subscribed. With 2 females starting on the June Course and 1 ethnic minority community member and the same for the September course.

B. Our inspection teams have found that many Safe and Well visits are still carried out in the style of Home Fire Risk Checks, which does not align to Command Team ambition.

Progress: Accountable Lead-Director of Prevention & Protection

A new process and system was under development with two other FRS's and SEED (Software provider). Through the monitoring of progress it was established that this provider was not delivering on agreed expectations and the Service withdrew from the arrangement to minimise any future risk to service delivery. An alternative is currently being sought to support future development whilst current arrangements continue.

Local training has taken place between prevent teams and operational staff since the completion of the prevent review in 2018. This included visit to every wholetime operational watch, progressing with the prioritisation on Safe and Well visits.

Safe & Well training forms an integral part of the recruits' course (Prevention training) and forms part of an accredited course.

Checks and processes are in place regarding referral process and measurement of positive outcomes.

An assessment of SFRS's Safe & Well process against the NFCC's standard evaluation framework has been completed to ensure a level of national consistency which has been endorsed by the Minister for Policing and Fire.

C. The Service needs to ensure it has sufficient staff in place to meet its plans for completion of its new risk based inspection programme (RBIP)

Progress: Accountable Lead-Director of Prevention & Protection

A new process and system has been introduced through Experian which will improve the use of data and the understanding of local risk.

Local training is taking place between protect teams and operational staff to improve PORIS and other RBI processes.

A review of the Risk Management Database and reporting will allow a more targeted approach to managing known risk.

A revised policy is now in place to provide greater clarity on the RBIP - this is being supported with localised training and awareness.

Following a review of the Protect structure, the Service has secured funding to increase its establishment of Fire Safety Officers by three as a result of savings made through its collaborative work. These will be based in each Service Delivery group and successful applicants will be expected to complete an Apprenticeship. This investment will deliver more risk based audits and allow the capacity to manage more complex fire safety enforcement issues.

SFRS Protect staff are linked into the NFCC protect work streams and working through all of the recommendations associated with the Grenfell Tower inquiry (Phase 1).

D. The service should ensure it puts a plan in place to improve availability of on call appliances to meet target response times

Progress- Accountable Lead Director of Response

RSO's are dedicated roles within each service delivery area to support all aspects of the on-call systems.

Intelligence systems and heat maps are used to gauge the suitability of declarations and the targeting of recruitment.

A dashboard of availability has been developed to allow managers to identify skills and competency requirement to maximise crew availability and to identify any problems that arise in real time.

Ongoing Investment in the Fire Watch System –an automated system allowing smooth mobilisation of on-call crews by Fire Control and aiding recruitment through a better oversight of fire cover provided by on call staff.

Supporting recruitment processes in being flexible and supported by our L& D department. The service continues to work with local businesses and employers to recognise the value of their support in allowing staff to become on-call firefighters.

A new more streamlined training programme for new on-call staff has been introduced. This staggers the assessments and training whilst allowing on-call staff to build up their experience by forming part of a crew once they have been declared competent as a including safe to ride, (20 week on-station development supported by (L&D) core training.

A review of response standards is under way that will include a refresh of the Community Safety options in terms of crewing option and resource disposition.

Delayed responses and failed attendances are managed by local supervisory managers and elevated through performance management as necessary if issues cannot be resolved.

The Service 2025 project includes a range of financial scenario plans modelling to provide a suite of options for consideration against budget. It is anticipated that there will be a high level set of initial scoping options by the first week in April 2020. Scenario planning and discussions with the Commissioner have taken place. These scenarios will form the basis of consultation for the next Safety Plan and Commissioners Fire Plan relating to the challenges ahead and levels of uncertainty faced.

Asset based-mobilisation is being continually developed and is part of the service 2025 project that aims to increase the effectiveness of on-call firefighters. This is a standing item at the Response Directorate, SDB and the 2005 Project Board.

The service is also trialling a new approach to resource management which should improve the efficiency of both wholetime and on-call crews/appliances and assist with training course delivery.

It is expected that the recommendations will be presented for discussion from May-June 2020 onwards for inclusion in the next safety plan/Integrated risk management plan (IRMP) with implementation from August 2020 as determined.

A direction agreed by Service Management Board (SMB) and supported by the Performance and Assurance Board (PAB) regarding options for improved monitoring to drive improvement (for areas within our control) and removal of strict unrealistic standards (which are out of the Services control).

E. Leaders recognise that there is a need for a performance management system at many levels of the organisation.

Progress: Accountable Lead-Deputy Chief Fire Officer

A number of new business planning tools have been introduced including a data request classification policy, a planning & project framework a planning schedule and planning templates and the planned development of a new evaluation toolkit. In addition a review of the project handbook initiated.

These have been underpinned by the Knowledge Hub (Business Intelligence) functional pillars and the ongoing development of Service Delivery group (SDG) performance dashboards.

The planning and performance process was relaunched at SDB (March 2019) with a program of staff workshops taking place throughout 2019 and integration into organisational management/governance at SDB, Directorate and local (SDG) level.

Service measures and measures aligned to the HMICFRS Judgement Criteria, with the Business Intelligence Team (BIT) now being responsible for data coordination for HMICFRS.

The planning process will align to the development of the Safety Plan (IRMP) 2020-24 and the Commissioners Fire & Rescue Plan.

A new data warehouse is also being developed to support this work and alignment to Networking Staffordshire will enable accurate data sharing with partners.

Performance Management is being proposed as a core deliverable in the next safety plan to underpin the need for effective planning and evaluation however the development of SDG level dashboards is progressing well. Station level dashboards aligned to station plans to support this are currently being developed.

Measures to support evaluation being developed through May, June, July sessions to inform the next CSP.

Requests for external training made for BIT staff due to the highly technical nature of work activity as opposed to the use of consultants in order to provide capacity and resilience at reduced costs.

F. **The Service must ensure scenario plans for future budget arrangements are fully evaluated, including measuring likely impacts.**

Progress: Accountable Lead- Director of Assets Finance and Resources

Plans are in place to deliver the remainder of the £1.3m saving required by the end of 2020 under the current efficiency plan.

Assumptions that will underpin the budget for next year and the next Comprehensive Spending Review have been included within the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

The updated MTFS is due for review by the Police Fire and Crime Panel and has been approved by the Strategic Governance Board.

Some funding and cost pressures identified including uncertainty around Fire Formula, pensions, pay and settlement funding resulting in a gap in excess of £3m.

The Service 2025 project has developed a number of robust, prudent scenario plans that could be utilised within the Service based upon varying levels of savings required.

The development of work streams supporting the financial scenarios has been established and this work will be complete for review by the current Staffordshire Commissioner and the new Commissioner in due course.

G. The Service must ensure it monitors, evaluates and reviews collaborative arrangements

Progress: Accountable Lead-Deputy Chief Fire officer

Collaboration with Staffordshire Police has seen a number of departments from SFRS move to a shared service under the employment of Staffordshire police during 2019. Departments include HR, Finance, Property and Estates teams, Procurement/Commercial services and Corporate Communications are now delivering service to both organisations. In addition the development of a shared estates strategy has seen Tamworth Fire station become a joint operating base for Police and Fire and work is progressing to share Hanley fire station in 2020.

This work is creating significant financial savings which will create the opportunity for re-investment into service delivery.

The governance and evaluation of these areas of work is being carried out jointly by SFRS, Staffordshire Police and the Staffordshire Commissioner Fire Authority.

The Service will be working with the OSC in order to develop a full understanding of benefits realisation related to all areas of collaboration which go far beyond financial savings.

H. The Service should put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop and support high potential staff and aspiring leaders

Progress: Accountable Lead-Chief Fire Officer

The Service is involved in the NFCC Leadership Board which is developing a number of work-packages for implementation at a local level which includes a direct entry programme and a high potential programme. At a local level work is being undertaken to determine the needs locally and this approach will be underpinned by recent work following a middle manager selection process.

3.5 Look forward

- 3.5.1 The areas for improvement continue to be led by the Executive Team and progress will be monitored through the Services' governance arrangements at Directorate, SDB and SMB levels. Updates will be provided through the Commissioners governance arrangements as requested.
- 3.5.2 In March 2021 the Service will undergo its second full inspection by the Inspectorate in order to benchmark individual service progress. The Service will be expected to brief the Inspectorate on progress made since the last Inspection.

3.5.3 It should be noted that this process is not designed to measure services against each other but to use a common methodology to assure improvements are made within each service individually to ensure that the service continues to deliver what is in the public interest.

4. Conclusions

4.1 Overall, SFRS were commended for its performance. The Inspectorate were confident that the Service is well equipped for this to continue.

4.2 The service has made continuous improvements since 2017 and has already built on the improvements identified as a result of the trial inspection and those identified in the formal inspection in July 2019.

Matthew Ellis
Staffordshire Commissioner

Background Documents:

Fire & Rescue Service: Effectiveness, efficiency and people 2018/19- An inspection of Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service

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