

Report of the Assistant Chief Officer: Director of Prevention

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Inspection 2026

Purpose of report

1. To provide Members with an update on the 2026 HMICFRS Inspection activity, and to inform on the next steps in the lead up to the publication of the inspection report.
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Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- i. Members note that the 2026 HMICFRS inspection fieldwork stage has concluded;*
- ii. The report-writing stage is under way; and*
- iii. The inspection report and workforce survey is estimated to be published in Q2 2026-27.*

Introduction and Background

2. Between January and April 2026, HMICFRS carried out their fourth inspection of Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS). HWFRS is the twelfth Service to be inspected in this round of inspections.
3. The purpose of these inspections is to ascertain and report to the public on the Service's effectiveness, efficiency and how well it leads and looks after its people. The Service has been measured across ten assessment areas which fall under the umbrella of these categories.
4. The HMICFRS Service Liaison Lead was involved in ongoing engagement activities throughout 2025 and met with Service staff to discuss progress, ongoing work and inspection preparations.

HMICFRS Inspection – Process

5. The inspection commenced with a formal document request issued on Monday 5 January 2026. A workforce survey was also provided and distributed by HWFRS Corporate Communications.

6. A total of 103 documents were submitted in response to the document request including policies, reports and other core Service documents. By the close of the inspection fieldwork stage, the Service Improvement Manager had submitted over 300 documents to the inspection team.
7. The workforce survey was completed by 298 staff members and the final response rate was 40% of the workforce. This is above the average return rate for HMICFRS and an increase on the previous inspection.
8. As of April 2026, the inspection fieldwork stage has now concluded.
9. The fieldwork stage of the inspection opened with the Strategic Briefing which took place on 10 February 2026. During the meeting we hosted HMI Kathryn Stone OBE and several members of the inspection team for a presentation and discussion with Strategic Leadership Board (SLB) members and the Chair of the Fire Authority, after which she praised the professionalism and dedication of the officers present and the relationship with the Fire Authority.
10. During the fieldwork process the Service hosted a significant amount of inspection activities which included staff interviews, desktop exercises, reality testing sessions and staff focus groups. During this time the inspectors visited various locations around the Service to conduct these activities.
11. Several inspection activities were arranged outside of the formal inspection schedule to provide further context, evidence and showcase what we believe to be good practice.
12. In total, the Service hosted 35 interviews, 16 desktop exercises, 9 reality testing sessions and 8 focus groups. Over 145 staff took part in these activities over the course of the inspection.
13. The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) Interview took place on Friday 27 March 2026 and marked the end of the fieldwork stage of the inspection.

Post-Inspection Activity

14. The Service will hold a debrief session with the HMICFRS inspection team on 21 April 2026 during which the CFO will discuss findings and outcomes from the inspection fieldwork.
15. Following this, the inspection will move to the report writing phase. We will not be contacted by HMICFRS during this period which includes internal moderation and factual accuracy checking.
16. Prior to the report being published, HWFRS will be given the opportunity to undertake pre-publication accuracy checking only.
17. We have been provided with an estimated publication date of Q2 2026-27 for the HMICFRS Inspection 2026 report - potentially falling in July 2026. However, this is subject to change.

18. Following consideration of the inspection report, a new HMICFRS Improvement Plan will be produced which will address the findings and outcomes in the report – including any Areas for Improvement (AFIs) identified. Progress against this Plan will then be reported to the Fire Authority on an ongoing quarterly basis.

Conclusion/Summary

19. The fieldwork stage of the 2026 HMICFRS inspection of HWFRS will conclude following the CFO interview on 27 March 2026.
20. The publication stage will then commence, and we expect the inspection report to be released in Q2 2026-27, specifically in July 2026. However, this is subject to change.
21. The outcomes and findings from the inspection will be considered and a new Improvement Plan will be developed. The progress of which will be reported to SLB and the Fire Authority.

Corporate Considerations

<p>Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)</p>	<p>The preparations, facilitation and taking part in the HMICFRS Inspection had resource implications, which were considered during preparations and throughout the inspection.</p>
<p>Strategic Policy Links & Core Code of Ethics (Identify how proposals link with current priorities & policy framework and align to the Core Code of Ethics)</p>	<p>Actions proposed and developed prior to and during the inspection are directly linked to the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), and the Core Code of Ethics (CCoE). How we conduct ourselves in relation to our Strategic Policies and the Core Code of Ethics will be under direct scrutiny by the HMICFRS inspection team.</p>
<p>Productivity & Efficiency (Identify how proposal improves productivity or efficiency)</p>	<p>The inspection activity precedes the publication of a publicly available report. Actions arising from this report may have implications on productivity and efficiency and will continue to be considered in the subsequent improvement Plan.</p>
<p>Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).</p>	<p>Any risks associated with the inspection outcome will be assessed during preparation.</p>

<p>Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)</p>	<p>The HMICFRS inspection has the full participation of Senior Managers in relevant Service departments. The Improvement Plan, when published, will be publicly available on the Service website.</p>
<p>Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)</p>	<p>An EIA is not required for this report.</p>
<p>Data Protection Impact Assessment (where personnel data is processed a DPIA must be completed to ensure compliant handling)</p>	<p>Impact assessments will be completed as required for specific actions related to the inspection.</p>