

31 January 2018

## **Proposed Fire and Rescue Services Inspection Programme and Framework 2018/19**

### **Purpose of report**

1. This report provides details of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) consultation on their proposed inspection programme and framework. It includes a proposed response to the consultation.

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### **Recommendations**

***It is recommended that the proposed response to the consultation (Appendix 3) be approved.***

### **Introduction and Background**

2. In July 2017, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary's (HMIC) remit was extended to include inspections of Fire and Rescue Services in England. It is now called Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).
3. The first inspections of all 45 Fire and Rescue Services will take place over eighteen months starting in the summer of 2018. The inspections will assess and report of the efficiency and effectiveness of each Service. This will include how well Fire and Rescue Service prevent, protect against and respond to fires and other emergencies and how well they look after the people who work for the Service.
4. The consultation document seeks responses to seven questions about how the inspection should be carried out. The consultation document is attached as Appendix 1, and the accompanying inspection methodology is attached as Appendix 2.
5. The consultation runs from 19 December 2017 to 19 February 2018.

### **Principal themes in the inspection framework**

6. The inspections give prominence to four principal themes:
  - a. how effective each Fire and Rescue Service is at preventing and responding to incidents;
  - b. whether the Service provides value for money;

- c. whether the Service understands where future risks lie; and
  - d. the ability of the Service to train staff, embrace diversity and develop a positive working culture
7. Each of these themes will be examined through a series of questions as set out in the attached inspection methodology (Appendix 2). In preparing their inspection reports, HMICFRS will provide graded judgements, which are designed to help the public to see how well their Fire and Rescue Service is performing.

## Response to the consultation

8. Seven specific questions were asked in the consultation, and a letter of response has been prepared (attached as Appendix 3). A summary of the questions and response is set out below for your information.

Consultation Question	Summary Response
1. What do you think of the proposed approach to FRS inspection that HMICFRS proposes to conduct in 2018/19? How could this be improved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the approach should enable the inspection to consider the wider context of Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs)</li> <li>• timescale is relatively short, so little time for any in-depth understanding of FRS activities</li> <li>• could utilise previous inspections to gain more context</li> </ul>
2. Do you agree that an integrated inspection of fire and rescue services' effectiveness and efficiency, and how they look after their people, is better than separate thematic inspections?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• integrated inspections should provide a more comprehensive picture of each FRS</li> <li>• a broader range of information should help the public in understanding their FRSs better</li> </ul>
3. Are there any other areas of fire and rescue services' activity that should be included in the integrated inspections?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• noted that governance and accountability is not included in the inspection, but we would expect the impact of any changes to governance would be recognised and reflected in the inspection</li> <li>• noted that there are no specific questions relating to the growing health agenda and little mention of collaboration and partnership working – this may miss key areas of joint work that FRSs are involved in for the benefit of their communities</li> </ul>
4. Does the draft inspection methodology (annex A) include the right questions to gather evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the questions appear well framed to gather good evidence</li> <li>• we would expect all 45 FRSs to be asked the</li> </ul>

for a rounded assessment of fire and rescue services? How could this be improved?	same questions to ensure consistency
5. How else could HMICFRS adapt the way in which it acquires information to take full account of the circumstances of fire and rescue services and of risks to public safety?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a one-off inspection can only provide a snapshot of each FRS, which may not be enough for the public to judge their FRSs</li> <li>• public surveys tend to yield poor responses – other ways of evaluating public views should be considered</li> </ul>
6. What, if any, new or emerging problems for fire and rescue services should HMICFRS take into account in its inspections?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the impact of ongoing austerity should not be underestimated – this is equally applicable to FRSs and their public sector partners – and the potential consequences this has on our ability to tackle risks associated with vulnerable people</li> <li>• HMICFRS will need to appreciate that austerity does not affect all FRSs in equal measure; some are better placed to ease the effects of austerity than others</li> <li>• uncertainties about future governance and other areas such as shared services, pay caps and collaboration issues should not be discounted in the inspections</li> </ul>
7. What else should HMICFRS consider doing to make its fire and rescue service assessments as fair as they can be?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there is still no judgement criteria for comparing FRS performance – this needs to be carefully designed to ensure variations between FRSs is reflected fairly</li> <li>• it is not clear if there will be a ‘league table’ approach, and how the public will be able to interpret and understand the findings.</li> </ul>

## Conclusion/Summary

9. HMICFRS are consulting on their approach to inspection, which are due to commence in summer 2018. A response to the consultation questions has been drafted which Members are asked to note and consider if there are any further comments to add.
10. Members should note that HMICFRS are still finalising the inspection process, and a briefing will be prepared for the Fire Authority when details are known.

## Corporate Considerations

<b>Resource Implications</b> (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources)	The HMICFRS inspection is a key feature of the Government’s Fire Reform programme. There will be resource implications throughout the inspection and
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issues)	potentially further implications once the inspection reports are published. More detail will be known once the inspection programme is announced and a further report to Members will consider this further.
<b>Strategic Policy Links</b> (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	The inspection will look at all aspects of efficiency and effectiveness in how the Fire and Rescue Service is performing. It will examine how well the Service is meeting the aims and objectives set out in key documents such as the Community Risk Management Plan, the Medium Term Financial Plan, the Efficiency Plan and the People Strategy.
<b>Risk Management / Health &amp; Safety</b> (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	N/A, the report sets out a proposed response to the HMICFRS consultation document.
<b>Consultation</b> (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	Members of the Strategic Management Board have provided input to the proposed consultation response.
<b>Equalities</b> (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	N/A, the report sets out a proposed response to the HMICFRS consultation document.

### Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – Proposed fire and rescue services inspection programme and framework 2018/19 – HMICFRS consultation, December 2017

Appendix 2 - HMICFRS fire and rescue service inspection methodology

Appendix 3 – Proposed HWFRS response to the HMICFRS consultation

**Background papers:** None

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