

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

18 NOVEMBER 2019

1. **HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY
AND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES (HMICFRS)
INSPECTION AND CULTURAL REVIEW OUTCOMES**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

RECOMMENDED

THAT the content of the report is noted.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report provides members with an overview of the outcomes of both the HMICFRS Inspection and Cultural Review key findings.

3. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 **HMICFRS Inspection**

In July 2017, HMICFRS extended its remit to include inspections of England's Fire and Rescue Services. HMICFRS assess and report on the efficiency, effectiveness and people of the 45 fire and rescue services in England.

Inspections focus on the service provided to the public. They assess how well Fire and Rescue Services prevent, protect against and respond to fires and other emergencies and how well they look after the people who work for the service and includes an assessment of:

- the operational service provided to the public (including prevention, protection, resilience, and response);
- the efficiency of the service (how well it provides value for money, allocates resources to match risk, and collaborates with the police and ambulance services); and

Ref. AU22810191

(Official – WMFS – Public)

- the organisational effectiveness of the service (how well it promotes its values and culture, trains its staff and ensures they have the necessary skills, ensures fairness and diversity for the workforce and develops leadership and service capability).

Fire and Rescue Services are given graded judgments as outcomes of each inspection. These are:

- outstanding;
- good;
- requires improvement; and
- inadequate.

Good is the 'expected' graded judgement, based on policy, practice or performance that meets pre-defined grading criteria that are informed by any relevant national operational guidance or standards. If the policy, practice or performance exceeds what is expected for good, then consideration will be given to a graded judgment of outstanding.

If there are shortcomings in the policy, practice or performance of the fire and rescue service, then consideration will be given to a graded judgment of requires improvement. If there are serious critical failings of policy, practice or performance of the fire and rescue service, then consideration will be given to a graded judgment of inadequate.

The HMICFRS Inspection process for the Service began in December 2018 with an on-site 'discovery' week where the inspection team reviewed information prior to the actual on-site inspection process which commenced on 28 January 2019 and spanned 2 weeks concluding on 8 February 2019.

3.2 Independent Cultural Review

In May 2019 RealWorldHR (RWHR) were asked to complete an independent cultural review of West Midlands Fire Service and for this to be completed by the end of September 2019.

The purpose of this review was:

- To undertake an independent root and branch review of the organisation including the Fire Authority, the Service, personnel and Trade Unions to assess the culture and relationships and the impact they have on the successful operation of the Service, along with the health and wellbeing of employees within the existing culture.
- To identify areas of good practice and further considerations that can be made to support effective and functional relations between all parties in the future.
- To identify future cultural challenges within West Midlands Fire Service to ensure the best possible position to deliver for the communities of the West Midlands.

The review commenced on 10 June 2019 and spanned over a three-month period ending on 30 September 2019 with the issue of the review report from RWHR to the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) as the Commissioner of the review.

The report was then communicated to all key stakeholders prior to the presentation of the report and its process to stakeholders by RWHR.

3.3 **Inspection and Review Outcomes**

HMICFRS judged that West Midlands Fire Service:

- is 'good' at effectively keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks;
- is 'good' at efficiently keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks; and
- is 'good' at looking after its people.

Within the effectiveness pillar, the Service was rated as 'outstanding' for its response to fires and other emergencies. The Service is the only one from 44 other Fire and Rescue Services to achieve this level of recognition for its response services in this first year of inspection.

Within the 'people' pillar there were 2 x 'requires improvement' aligned to the question areas of:

- How well does the FRS promote its values and culture?
- How well does the FRS develop leadership and capability?

There were a number of 'areas' for improvement identified throughout the report findings, which are detailed in Appendix 1.

These areas for improvement have been reviewed by the Strategic Enabling Team. A number of areas have already been addressed and are planned into the Service's portfolio of work. SET determined that the 'people' areas for improvement and particularly the question areas which were rated as 'requires improvement', would be further considered once the outcomes of the cultural review had been delivered. This provided an opportunity to understand in more detail the areas of focus required in improvement planning.

The Cultural Review outcomes do not provide specific recommendations aligned to each theme of the review. Areas of consideration are referenced throughout the report and there are 'further recommendations' provided by RWHR in part 5 in the report.

The conclusions to the 'Executive Summary' to the review report sets out the following:

'As an organisation, it therefore appears not a question of **'what** you have to do to address the concerns and dissatisfaction in the Service that have led up to the dispute but more a question of **'how**' you are going to do it. At the minute there are different views and opinions of how things should be led, managed and delivered and it is materialising as a perceived resistance to change.

Vision: is clear and the staff recognise and appear to subscribe to it.

Values: the core values describe what everyone feels is important to them.

Employee Relations Framework: emphasises joint working.

Constitution: of the CFA is clear about the role of members.

Governance: SET have described levels of responsibility and accountability.

Development: Managers are provided input through the managing and leading excellence programme.

Ironically, we feel that it is this clarity that is causing frustration, irritation and dissatisfaction and it has manifested in a lack of trust amongst each other because these commitments are not being met.'

3.4 Enabling understanding and improving planning

Both the inspection and review outcomes have been communicated to staff using a several methods. The release of the full reports from both processes has formed part of this. Both formal and informal communication with and from staff has indicated the outcomes from both processes have not been widely reviewed and understood.

Following the receipt of the Independent Cultural Review outcomes, in agreement with all key stakeholders, RWHR are re engaging with key stakeholders including staff to enable consistency in the interpretation and understanding of the report.

This is taking place over a 4-week period commencing on 4 November 2019 and will be delivered through a number of group sessions with stakeholders and staff and ongoing communication throughout.

It is intended that this will support a consistent base of understanding for all stakeholders to move forward jointly in ensuring the most effective delivery of the Authority's Strategy, developing actions in response to areas for improvement for both the HMICFRS Inspection process (people) and the Cultural Review.

A joint stakeholder communication issued to all staff has highlighted the above approach as well as initial next steps to enabling the development of a joint stakeholder implementation plan and stakeholder oversight.

It is intended that areas for improvement will be managed through the Service's Portfolio Management process and, as such, will be embedded into 3PT projects.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report, an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out because the matters contained in this report do not relate to a policy change.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The course of action recommended in this report does not raise issues which should be drawn to the attention of the Authority's Monitoring Officer.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

This report does not contain any financial information

7. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

This report does not contain any environmental information.

8. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

HMICFRS Inspection Report, West Midlands Fire Service

<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/>

Independent Cultural Review of West Midlands Fire Service (2019)

The contact name for this report is Karen Gowreesunker, Strategic Enabler Strategy, telephone number 0121 380 6677.

Phil Loach
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

Appendix 1**Fire and Rescue Service: Effectiveness, Efficiency and People
2018/19****Areas for Improvement**

- a-c are confirmed and are being addressed through projects.
- d,g,h,i & j are seeking affirmation from the cultural review before understanding how improvement planning can address the AFI.
- e is being affirmed through a review of SPA outcomes.
- f has already been addressed.

| EFFECTIVENESS | |
|---|--|
| 1. Protecting the public through fire regulation | (a) The Service should ensure that it has sufficient resources to delivery its risk-based inspection programme. |
| 2. Responding to national risks | (b) The Service should ensure operational staff have good access to cross border risk information. |
| | (c) The Service should arrange a programme of over the border exercises sharing the learning from these exercises. |
| PEOPLE | |
| 3. Promoting the right values and culture | (d) The Service should ensure its values and behaviours are demonstrated at all levels of the organisation. It should also ensure that managers actively promote these standards to improve the perception among some staff of an overbearing management style. |
| 4. Getting the right people with the right skills | (e) The Service needs to ensure that records for risk critical competencies, such as breathing apparatus, emergency fire appliance driving and incident command are accurate and up to date. |
| | (f) The Service should ensure that its workforce plan includes how it intends to reduce the number of operational staff on temporary promotion. |
| 5. Ensuring fairness and diversity | (g) The Service should improve the way it communicates with its staff, specifically those in operational roles. |

| | |
|--|--|
| | (h) The Service needs to understand and address the impact positive action is having on staff, including those with protected characteristics. |
| 6. Managing performance and developing leaders | (i) The Service should put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop and support high potential staff and aspiring leaders. |
| | (j) The Service should ensure processes for development and promotion of staff are open, transparent and fair. |