



<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Performance &amp; Resources Board</b>	Agenda Item	9
<b>Meeting Date</b>	31 January 2020		
<b>Report Author:</b>	AM J. Palmer		
<b>Presented By</b>	Rick Hylton, Deputy Chief Fire Officer		
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Protection Improvement Action Plan Update</b>		
<b>Type of Report:</b>	Update		

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

This paper is to highlight the progress made to date against the action plan developed in response to the HMICFRS inspection. The Performance & Resources Board is asked to note both the progress made and the future direction of travel.

## **BACKGROUND**

Following the inspection from Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in July 2019, four areas of concern were identified in relation to the Effectiveness pillar, these were:

- Essex County FRS (ECFRS) doesn't have a clear strategy for ensuring compliance with fire safety regulations
- The service isn't carrying out the number of audits of high risk premises that it commits to as part of its Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP)
- The service doesn't quality assure audits to ensure they are effective
- The service doesn't have a clear programme to ensure operational staff are competent to carry out inspections.

The action plan that was developed following these areas of concern covered how ECFRS would address the areas identified with associated high level time frames. This paper provides an update of progress against the action plan and the next steps.

## OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS

ECFRS recognises the areas of concern identified by HMICFRS and agrees that these are areas that need to be enhanced.

Progress against the action points is outlined below.

**Action Point 1:** *ECFRS doesn't have a clear strategy for ensuring compliance with fire safety regulations.*

### **Progress to date:**

The draft strategy has been amended based on feedback from the SLT. It is currently being developed further with the Director of Operations and Head of Prevention & Protection. The strategy is being aligned to the live response strategy and the draft prevention strategy. The strategy will look to clearly set out the key areas for the department to help target resources, identify partnership working and future proof the function against potential national developments. Current timelines are looking to resubmit a paper to the SLT in early February.

Definition of a high risk premises: will be included in the draft strategy and clearly defined prior to sign off. ECFRS is engaging nationally and through the NFCC Community Risk Programme to ensure that it is delivering this definition in line with national best practice.

Work has started on the development of the Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) and the first draft is currently with the Head of Prevention & Protection. The Head of Prevention & Protection is attending a National meeting at the end of January and the draft will be benchmarked against national best practice following this. The RBIP sets out clear parameters for identifying risk and will look to determine the risk score on all regulated premises. This is an intelligence and data led approach using the Addressbase Premium. It will be reviewed annually and activity will be assigned based on the identified risk. Full sign off expected 31 March 2020

**Action Point 2:** *The service isn't carrying out the number of audits of high-risk premises that it commits to as part of its risk based inspection programme.*

### **Progress to date:**

The structure of Technical Fire Safety (TFS) is to be formally reviewed following the completion of the RBIP as this will give a clearer idea of the resource requirements. New staff have been recruited to fill current vacancies and there will initially be an over establishment against the budgeted head count. This has resulted in 10.4 new inspecting officers starting throughout January. There has been a further expression of interest from a London Watch Manager who is fully qualified and the team are exploring the feasibility of recruiting him to the service. This post would be a direct replacement and not an additional post. Some of the new staff are already qualified to Level 4 and able to fully carry out the role. Additional training for the remainder of the new staff is due to start in March with initial training being Level 3. This will enable the staff, by the summer, to carry out audits of high risk premises significantly increasing the capacity within the team.

ECFRS will be reviewing the protection and enforcement policies in light of the new strategy and will be looking to provide clear guidance on the criteria for enforcement activity and the escalation route for non-compliance. This will ensure inspecting officers

have clarity over expectations with enforcement. The expected completion date for this piece of work is 30 September 2020.

TFS have also changed their reporting methods to more accurately reflect the enforcement work the team are doing. Notices of deficiencies are now reported on through our usual performance reporting and Managers will note an increase in numbers of enforcement activity due to this. This change more accurately reflects the activities where any enforcement is used and recorded to ensure compliance with the RRO.

Activities for staff have been concluded. Inspecting officers qualified to level 4 will be the staff who carry out orders and enforcement. Inspectors who are qualified to level 3 will do audits only. Operational crews will carry out fire safety checks. The form operational crews complete has been developed to remove the judgements they were previously asked to make as this is something that trained officers should do. This gives clarity around activity and the ability for Operational staff to highlight and identify fire safety compliance in lower risk premises. Expected date: COMPLETE.

The HR team and **Protection Manager** have commenced work on a succession plan. This highlights when we can expect current staff to retire and will be linked to the future restructure to ensure that the new structure is sustainable. There are a significant number of staff that could leave the organisation within the next 12 – 18 months. Due to the time frames required to train new staff this area of work needs to be actioned and sufficient controls put in place to ensure that Business as Usual is not impacted. Expected date: 30 September 2020

The process by which data is captured, stored and reported on is being reviewed. A change resource has been allocated to look at a tactical fix for the current solution. Expected date: 31 March 2020.

A fuller piece of change work is being scoped to deliver a long term fix. All three Area Managers are engaged and working together to ensure the work is targeted in the right areas.

***Action point 3.***

*The service doesn't quality assure audits to ensure they are effective.*

**Progress to date:**

A Quality Assurance (QA) process is being scoped out. Business owners are now receiving a form to measure performance of the audit from the business perspective. Expected date for full completion 30 September 2020

There is a link on the ECFRS internet page that takes users to the NFCC page where prohibitions are published. Further work is being done to explore publishing all our enforcements and notice of deficiencies on the ECFRS site. Expected date: 31 May 2020

As an organisation the importance of the QA process cannot be understated. As part of the RBIP annual review an initial part of measuring the success of the activities will be to monitor the risk score of each premises to see how it has changed following our interventions.

**Action point 4.**

*The service also doesn't have a clear programme to ensure operational staff are competent to carry out inspections.*

**Progress to date:**

Operational crews will now carry out a fire safety check and not an audit. Reporting form has been revised to reflect this. Expected date: COMPLETE

Training package for operational crews has been developed. Training began this month and the training of all Whole time crews to be complete by 31 Jan 2020.

As part of the training package a system of measuring and maintaining competency needs to be developed and will be achieved with engagement and involvement of the Learning and Development Department.

One further observation from HMICFRS following the re-visit was that the action plan required more detail. This is being completed in the form of a Microsoft project plan and a Gant chart which we expect to complete by 31 January 2020. This deadline was moved from 10 January 2020 due to higher priority workstreams being delivered first.

**BENEFITS AND RISK IMPLICATION**

The plan provides transparent reporting against a set of criteria with a pathway to improvement in the TFS function. The risk is that subsequent changes, as yet unknown post Grenfell, are not factored in and work may have to be re-prioritised to manage this.

A Grenfell action plan has been produced and the three Area Managers are meeting week commencing 20 January 2020 to agree areas of responsibility and prioritise work.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Increase in headcount over establishment. This has been approved by the SLT and PFCC and is accounted for in the budget. Due to two people not taking up the offered posts this additional budget is at the moment reduced.

**EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

None in this paper.

**WORKFORCE ENGAGEMENT**

All staff that are impacted have been consulted. Further engagement to take place with the wider workforce as the work is progressed.

An internal comms lead has been engaged to develop a communications plan with a view to keeping all key stakeholders and the wider staff groups apprised of the progress against this plan.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Specialist legal advice being bought in to ensure legal compliance.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

Failure to meet the areas identified as part of the areas of concern raised by HMICFRS could leave the organisation subject to further improvement measures and increased corporate risk. It could also mean that we are not suitably able to identify and mitigate risk in regulated premises as effectively as required.