

ESSEX POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER
FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY
Essex County Fire & Rescue Service



Meeting	Performance & Resources Board	Agenda Item	8
Meeting Date	30 July 2020	Report Number	
Report Author:	Tracy King, Assistant Director		
Presented By	Rick Hylton, Deputy Chief Fire Officer		
Subject	HMICFRS update		
Type of Report:	Information		

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the Performance & Resources Board are asked to note the content of the report.

BACKGROUND

On the 13 March 2020, Sir Thomas Winsor wrote to inform the police and fire sectors that they were suspending inspection activity as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. This report provides an updated position on all HMICFRS activity and HMICFRS plans to recommence activity.

Round two HMICFRS Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) inspections

Round two of HMICFRS Fire and Rescue Service inspections had been due to commence in April 2020. Essex County Fire and Rescue Service had been scheduled to have it's second HMICFRS Inspection in April 2021. HMICFRS have had initial discussions with their External Reference Group regarding round two inspections and their current working assumption is that round two will recommence in early 2021. The Service will be provided with further information on arrangements for round two inspection shortly.

Protection Re-visit

HMICFRS had planned to conduct a re-visit to the Service week commencing 10 August 2020 to evaluate progress the Service has made against delivery of its Protection Improvement Plan. As Round 2 of inspections will be delayed by approximately twelve months HMICFRS are keen not to wait over three years in some services to follow up on this work. The Service will shortly be notified on what the follow-up work will entail, but it is expected that HMICFRS will begin this activity later this calendar year in advance of round 2 recommencing early in 2021.

The Service have continued to work towards delivery of the action detailed in the Protection Improvement Plan and are making preparations to fulfil the requirements of a re-inspection during w/c 10 August. Should this date be moved the Service will be well prepared to accommodate the re-inspection work.

Potential Covid-19 inspection

In addition to reinspection work and Round 2 of inspections HMICFRS have requested permission from the Home Secretary to undertake inspections on each Fire and Rescue Service response to Covid-19. If the Home Secretary commissions HMICFRS to do this work, it is planning to inspect every service and determine:

- (a) how the fire sector is responding to the Covid-19 outbreak;
- (b) what is working well and what is being learned;
- (c) how the sector is dealing with the problems it faces; and
- (d) what changes are likely or appropriate for the fire and rescue sector as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Whilst these plans are dependent on agreement from the Home Secretary, if she is supportive, HMICFRS plan to undertake this inspection virtually, with pilots beginning in August and service inspections shortly thereafter. Reports – with narrative rather than graded judgments – should be published by the end of the calendar year. HMICFRS will engage with services individually to arrange convenient times to gather evidence.

Spring Data Collection

The HMICFRS Spring data collection would have usually been processed by the Service in April. Again, this activity was paused due the COVID 19 Pandemic. HMICFRS intend to shortly restart data collection and request data for the period October 2019 to March 2020 - this is data that they would have originally asked for in the Spring Data collection. At the same time HMICFRS will also request data for the period from April 2020 to June 2020.

This request will be received by ECFRS w/c 20 July and to assist services, this request will mirror the previous one completed in Autumn 2019. Services will be granted 6 weeks to respond to the request for data extended from the usual 4-week time frame.

Should the Home Secretary commission HMICFRS to do a Covid-19 inspection, they will ask for additional data to contribute to the inspection.

Progress updates against Protection and Culture Improvement Plans

Progress updates against the Protection and Culture Improvement plans were provided to Performance and Resource Board at the June meeting which included progress made in June. The next update on progress against both improvement plans will be provided to Performance and Resource Board in August which will detail progress made during July.

BENEFITS AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

HMICFRS Inspections and reports assist the Service in formulating its continuous improvement approach.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

HMICFRS activity and preparation for the inspection is being dealt with as business as usual and has not been allocated a specific budget.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no additional Equality and Diversity implications created by this report.

WORKFORCE ENGAGEMENT

A dedicated HMICFRS communications plan and employee engagement plan is live and is aligned to the HMICFRS dates for inspection.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The inspection of ECFRS by the HMICFRS forms part of a mandatory Home Office programme inspecting all 45 Fire and Rescue Services in England.