

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



Meeting	Service Leadership Team	Agenda no.	6b
	Strategic Board		5
Date of Meeting	9 August 2022		
	7 September 2022		
Report Authors:	Tracy King, Assistant Director Performance and Improvement		
Presented By	Moira Bruin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer		
Subject	Cycle 2 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Final report and action plan		
Type of Report:	Information		
Action Point No.	N/A	For Publication	Yes

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) acknowledges the Cycle 2 HMICFRS report and notes the proposed approach to the areas for improvement identified.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper outlines the findings in the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (ECFRS) Cycle 2 HMICFRS report and details how the cause for concern and areas for improvement will be addressed.

BACKGROUND

In September and October 2021, ECFRS had its second HMICFRS Inspection. HMICFRS took a hybrid approach to inspection and a mixture of virtual and on-site activity such as interviews, desktop reviews and focus groups took place across a 6-week period. Following inspection, the Service received a hot debrief on 20 October 2021, the report for pre-publication checks on 18 May 2022, and the final report was published on 27 July 2022. The full report is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

The narrative of the report writes positively about the progress that has been made by the Service since the first inspection in 2019, which has been achieved against the backdrop of a global pandemic. A summary of the positive narrative is provided below:

Effectiveness

- developing an effective planning framework and aligning its strategic plans
- has clear prevention and protection strategies based on its IRMP
- assessing and modelling risk
- the Service receives data and intelligence from organisations it works with. This allows it to base Home Fire Safety Checks on risk and vulnerability
- the Service targets and educates people who show signs of fire-setting behaviour, using a range of suitable and effective interventions.
- well trained officers in the central prevention team have the right skills and confidence to make safe and well visits
- the service works well with a wide range of organisations to prevent fire and other emergencies
- the service is an active member of the Essex Resilience Forum
- staff from all parts of the service are involved in protection activities, and when needed, they feedback information effectively
- fire safety audits sampled were completed to a high standard
- the service has effective out of hours support for technical fire safety advice
- learning from operational activity
- ECFRS has responded positively and proactively to learning from the Grenfell Tower tragedy
- The service has a good system in place to tell the public about ongoing incidents and to help them keep safe during and after incidents

Efficiency

- the service is overseeing its financial plans better, with greater engagement from senior leaders
- there is increased rigour in the scrutiny processes for deciding how the service will allocate resources in the future
- the service has good continuity arrangements in place for areas where threats and risks are high
- the services estate and fleet strategies have clear links to the IRMP

People

- improving its culture and adopting service values
- the service has effective wellbeing policies available to staff, who understand the policies well. A significant range of wellbeing support is available to support both physical and mental health
- the service has networking forums for under-represented groups. These are actively used to contribute to issues such as recruitment, retention and development
- there is a good performance management system in place, which allows the service to effectively develop and assess the individual performance of all staff

The service has always embraced HMICFRS inspections as an opportunity to learn and assist us on our journey of continued improvement but recognises that there is still work to do to improve.

The cause of concern issued to the service following the first inspection in 2019 in relation to values and culture has been closed, however the one issued for Fire Protection remains open.

The service has improved in areas that were subject to the original cause of concern such as protection strategy, risk-based inspection programme, increased protection activity by operational crews, restructure of the Protection team to ensure the future structure can meet known and foreseeable risks, reviewed protection enforcement policy, published enforcement activity data and improved and delivered a protection training programme for operational crews.

The areas that remain and require further attention ahead of reinspection against the cause of concern in November 2022, are new staff recruited (11) to complete their Level 4 diploma training to ensure they are appropriately trained, ensure enforcement powers are consistently used by all competent staff and further improvement to the services quality assurance of inspections. This should all lead to an increase in the number of audits against high and very high-risk premises to align with the services targets.

A report with detailed plans relating to how the Protection function intend to improve in the outstanding cause of concern areas was presented to the Service Leadership Team in June 2022 and is appended to this report. The plan focused on directing all competent resource to focus on auditing high risk premises between June and September 2022. It is also expected that seven Inspecting Officers will complete their Level 4 Diplomas in December 2022 which will further increase the volume of audits being delivered.

Regular assurance meetings have been scheduled to monitor progress towards achieving the required improvement against the cause of concern and to gather evidence ahead of the reinspection that will take place in November 2022.

Alongside the cause of concern HMICFRS identified 26 areas of improvement that the Service should plan improvement activity against ahead of the next inspection cycle. The breakdown of areas of improvement across each pillar is shown below:

Pillar	Number of areas of improvement
Effectiveness	9
Efficiency	7
People	10

The service takes each of the areas of improvement and embeds them into the Annual Planning process to ensure focus on the required improvement is not lost, and progress can be monitored through both Continuous Improvement Board and the Police Fire and Crime Commissioners Performance and Resource Board.

Appendix 2 to this report sets out these areas of improvement, progress that has already been achieved against each, and what future deliverables are planned along with an indication of when those deliverables will be achieved.

OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS

None in relation to this report as the Service has an obligation to respond to the areas identified within the HMICFRS report.

RISKS AND MITIGATIONS

The annual plan, incorporating feedback from this inspection, is a mitigation for the risks highlighted within the inspection report. All risks are recorded in the Strategic and Directorate risk registers.

LINKS TO FIRE AND RESCUE PLAN

Annual Plan activity and the portfolio of change are aligned to Fire and Rescue Plan priorities and the Integrated Risk Management Plan themes. By incorporating HMICFRS areas of improvement into the Annual Planning process there are then clear links to how the planned improvement will contribute to our strategic goals and objectives.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

In relation to protection, additional posts were included as part of the 2022/23 budget. Any financial impacts that may arise will be considered as part of any specific action plan.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None in relation to this report

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct staffing implications. In relation to Protection, the necessary headcount, recruitment and development are approved and in action. Indirectly, there are positive people implications for continuously improving and these actions are incorporated into our People Strategy and People Programme.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

We have considered whether individuals with protected characteristics will be disadvantaged as a consequence of the actions being taken. Due regard has also been given to whether there is impact on people who may identify as being within each of the following protected groups as defined within the Equality Act 2010:

Race	N	Religion or belief	N
Sex	N	Gender reassignment	N
Age	N	Pregnancy & maternity	N
Disability	N	Marriage and Civil Partnership	N
Sexual orientation	N		

The Core Code of Ethics Fire Standard has been fully considered and incorporated into the proposals outlined in this paper.

This approach is an enabler for the ongoing development of our culture towards a Service that has high performing teams with a focus on service delivery and accountability.

HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None in relation to this report.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Our Cycle 2 report has been widely shared across the service with both managers and staff.

FUTURE PLANS

The service will be reinspected against the Protection Cause of concern in November 2022. Our third full HMICFRS inspection will be scheduled in financial year 23/24.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS AND APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Cycle 2 HMICFRS Report <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/essex-fire-and-rescue-service-report-2021-22.pdf>

Appendix 2: Area for improvement progress to date and activity planned

Background Paper 1: SLT report- Risk Based Inspection Programme

Background Paper 2: HMICFRS COVID Inspection outcome letter [COVID-19 inspection: Essex County Fire and Rescue Service \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/essex-county-fire-and-rescue-service-covid-19-inspection-letter-2020-21.pdf)

Background Paper 3: Cause for Concern Reinspection (November 2019) Letter <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/essex-frs-revisit-letter-2018-19.pdf>

Background Paper 4: Cycle 1 HMICRS Report <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/essex-county-fire-and-rescue-service-report-2018-19.pdf>