

Environment Communities and Fire Select Committee

20th September 2019

West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service HMICFRS & IRMP Improvement Plan progress report

Report by Chief Fire Officer

Summary

The Committee is aware of the purpose and background of the Fire Service's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and Home Office Inspectorate of Constabularies Fire and Rescue Service's (HMICFRS) report. This report provides an update on progress for the action plans arising from both.

In July 2018 the Chief Fire Officer published the IRMP action plan to deliver the five priorities within the IRMP. The service worked on the action plan during year one (2018-19). The report summarises the achievements of year one.

In November 2018 the HMICFRS inspected West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (WSFRS). Their report was published on 20th June 2019. WSFRS has developed actions to respond to the recommendations of the HMICFRS report. The Committee scrutinised the plan and the investment proposals to deliver it at its July meeting and these were subsequently implemented by the cabinet member. This Improvement Plan will ensure we can provide our residents and communities with the confidence in ongoing improvement in our service.

The Committee will have the opportunity to receive further explanation and analysis of the improvement work and to seek assurance from the Cabinet Member and the Chief Fire Officer on the effectiveness of the activity since the Committee last met.

The Committee is asked to:

- Identify areas of focus for assurance of progress on the IRMP
- Identify areas of focus for assurance on the HMICFRS Improvement Plan
- Comment on the integrated approach to actions against the two plans
- Identify whether there are particular areas of service improvement planning which the Committee wishes to consider for future scrutiny.

Proposal

1. Background and Context

- 1.1 Each Fire and Rescue Service is required to publish an IRMP, which assesses all foreseeable risk within the county and sets out how it plans to meet that risk. Our IRMP was published in July 2018 and covers the period to 2018-22 and is a four-year action plan.

- 1.2 The new Fire and Rescue Service Inspection Regime (<https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/fire-and-rescue-services/how-we-inspect-fire-and-rescue-services/>) was launched in 2018, during the first year of our IRMP. The inspectorate assesses services on their effectiveness, their efficiency and how well they look after their people. These are then judged as outstanding, good, requires improvement or inadequate. Each pillar comprises specific questions that focus on core areas of FRS work.
- 1.3 West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service was inspected in November 2018, in a tranche that included 15 other Fire & Rescue Services. The full Inspection Report for West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service was published on 20th June 2019 and is available on the HMICFRS website here (<https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/frs-assessment/frs-2018/west-sussex/>)
- 1.4 The report found that **effectiveness** of West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service "requires improvement", **efficiency** "requires improvement" and the way it looks after its **people** is "inadequate". There is no overall rating.
- 1.5 The inspectorate identified a number of immediate improvements required of the service. We presented our improvement plan to the select committee on the 10th July, which will address these immediate improvements.
- 1.6 Some of the improvements identified during the inspection process mirror areas of work identified in the IRMP action plans. We have reviewed our plans to ensure there is no duplication of work and associated activity has been prioritised accordingly.
- 1.7 For example, plans to deliver the next generation mobilising system were outlined in the IRMP. The inspection also identified the need to improve our IT systems as they were adversely impacting on the way we manage our fire safety audit activity through our risk-based inspection program and how we manage safe and well visit data. As a result, we developed our IT strategy and mobilising arrangements for approval through a cabinet member decision in January 2019. The project continues to deliver a wider IT strategy and mobilising arrangement by the end of 2019.

2. IRMP Action plan Highlights Update approach

- 2.1 The IRMP required several service level strategies to be developed and published within year 1, which was achieved. Two senior officer boards now monitor and scrutinise the delivery of grouped areas of activity covering each strategy and their associated plans and these report to an Executive Programme Board chaired by the Chief Fire Officer. Following the inspection report, these strategies are being reviewed and refreshed to reflect the improvement plans identified. The boards have demonstrated success in the delivery of year one. Their purpose has been to facilitate the coordination of workloads and prioritisation of actions. The service has an additional improvement plan to address the areas identified in the HMICFRS report (seen by the committee at its last meeting). The IRMP action plan is now being assessed to determine and prioritise the resources required to deliver

year three and four of the IRMP. These will be considered alongside the investment plan presented to the Committee at its last meeting and subsequently approved by the cabinet member.

Equipment and technical resources

- 2.2 It is important that operational staff are well equipped and well trained to deal with the wide range of incidents that they have to deal with. We made a commitment to consider new firefighting tactics to enhance our response to fires in buildings. As a result, we have now introduced new equipment to support operational tactics, which include smoke curtains and fog nails which increases the range of options available to firefighters to help them resolve incidents. We have introduced new road traffic collision rescue and lighting equipment. this has been rolled out to fire engines to keep pace with new stronger vehicle design. We are also delivering new personal protective equipment for all our firefighters as part of a national collaboration, which is on track to complete during 2020.
- 2.3 We have developed a specification for new 12 tonne fire engines to enhance resilience, deliver flexible options and support new firefighting technologies. This is progressing well and we are currently out to tender. We anticipate delivering these new fire engines to be operational in 2020. In year one we reviewed the fleet of special appliances to rationalise the capability where appropriate. Options will be presented in year two. This is a key piece of work specifically due to the impact on the Technical Rescue Unit through the future removal of national funding in April 2020 onwards. This team provides a core element of the WSFRS. Current specialist capabilities work will continue in this area in year two and we will seek to identify options and potential sources of funding.

Staff resources - recruitment and wellbeing

- 2.4 On-call (retained) firefighters form a core part of our operational response model. Recruitment and retention pose a challenge for the service, which is a trend experienced nationally by other fire and rescue services. This impacts on the number of fire appliances available and is an important priority for the service. To explore solutions to these issues, a Member-led task force was established which was supported by fire officers. The group identified core actions that have informed the services approach. Work continues to be undertaken in this area to improve the availability and retention of our on-call appliances. The up to date position will be provided to members at the meeting.
- 2.5 A workforce plan to assure there is succession planning for all staff to inform recruitment and promotion requirements is being developed. Further work is required, this has been extended into year two with new resource integrated by the HMICFRS improvement plan resource. A target date of Oct 2019 is expected for full delivery.
- 2.6 We are working on improving our staff wellbeing plans, which we intend to benchmark against the College of Policing Blue Light Wellbeing Framework. We recognise this area needs further activity and the timeframe for delivery

has been extended to March 2020 to incorporate the areas of concern highlighted by the HMICFRS report. Similarly, we have extended the timeframes to deliver activity related to Diversity and Inclusion in order to include the areas included in the inspection report. A dedicated Equality, Diversity and Inclusion officer has been recruited in order to create the capacity to support the service in delivering real and lasting improvements in this area.

- 2.7 We committed to commence the design and development of a coaching and mentoring scheme to support individual leadership development within the service. It is important this ties in with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) new leadership framework. We recognise there is much to do in this area, and we are appointing a new L&D manager. This activity, along with the delivery of a wider talent management framework, will be core activity for the new post holder. To allow for their recruitment, we have extended the delivery date for this area to year 2. The Committee will receive the most up to date position at the meeting.

Service standards

- 2.8 We committed to reviewing our emergency response standards to include an outcome-based measure. In the HMICFRS national report (<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/fire-and-rescue-service-inspections-2018-19-tranche-2/>), the inspectorate recommended the sector develops a consistent approach to be adopted by all fire and rescue services across England to identify and measure emergency response standards and approaches. There is currently a National Fire Chiefs Council work stream that is considering this which, once completed, will inform future direction.
- 2.9 The priority has been raised on the National Operational Guidance (NOG) gap analysis. We are assessing the gap between the NOG and our current procedures with a report due back to the Chief Fire Officer by December 2019. This will create an extensive work load to implement for both Policy and Training. On completion of the NOG gap analysis a resourcing plan will be developed and presented to the FRS senior leadership team early in 2020.

Collaboration

- 2.10 Collaborative work is ongoing within the 3Fire programme with Surrey and East Sussex Fire and Rescue Services, which has now expanded to include Kent Fire and Rescue Service. Activity is ongoing in the areas of training, learning and development, policy and guidance and health and safety. We assessed the potential to collaborate with Occupational Health provision as not currently viable due to existing contracts for provision, although it may be revisited at the time of contract renewal. Good progress has been made in the assessment of noise in the fire Service environment to keep our fire fighters safe.

- 2.11 Work is ongoing in relation to our involvement in the One Public Estate programme, prioritising the following:
- Horsham Fire Station - to include new FRS training provision
 - Littlehampton – Blue light centre
 - Burgess Hill – Blue Light Centre
 - Drayton Depot- As part of the 3Fire Integrated Transport Function.

The committee will receive further detail on these initiatives at a future meeting

- 2.12 Initial scoping and opportunity development has taken place, with a particular focus on the Horsham site. This has now been prioritised for in-depth development and moved into year 2. We have extended the timed frame for the 3Fire Integrated Transport Function in order to support wider 3F partner engagement with this programme.

3. HMICFRS Improvement Plan Priority Update

- 3.1 Progress against the areas that the inspectorate recognises as Causes for Concern has progressed at pace. We recognise the need for our staff to understand the improvement journey and what it means for them, as well opening up an opportunity for dialogue. We have developed and introduced a communications plan to maximise the effectiveness of our internal communications and ensure that staff are informed.

3.2 Resourcing

The County Council committed an additional £5.1m to resource improvement over the next three years in July 2019. Given the focus on specified areas of recruitment as priorities. The £5.1m has been allocated to teams through the resource plan with advertisements now out to press both nationally and locally to secure the additional staff in those areas. The funding is to deliver the HMICFRS Improvement plan, an impact assessment is being prepared on the delivery of the IRMP action plan year three and four. The Committee will be provided with a more detailed explanation of the allocation of resources against the improvement plan and IRMP priorities at the meeting.

Service values and staff engagement

- 3.3 The Inspectorate expressed concern that our Values are not sufficiently well embedded. It is important that we all live and breathe our values, which drives behaviours. We are prioritising this area and we have already undertaken a number of values workshops with FRS staff to explore how our values are currently perceived and how we can embed them further.

An independent consultant has been sourced to undertake staff listening groups and these are scheduled to take place from September until November. Two pilot listening groups have been held to assist in designing the content of these groups.

Arrangements are now in place to hold a FRS staff conference with all staff invited to broaden engagement. This will take place in November and will be chaired by the WSCC CEO and the Cabinet Member.

IT strategy and actions

- 3.4 The wider fire service IT strategy continues to deliver to the mobilising project plan mile stones with the FC20 project procurement nearing completion. This includes a number of systems to improve our incident reporting, emergency resource management and methods of communications with emergency responders.
- 3.5 Over the last month the assessment of the new IT solution for the Safe and Well Visit and Risk Based Inspection Program has taken place in partnership with the County Council's IT team. A go live is planned for 1st April 2020. An interim procedure is in place to manage the current system including internal county council auditing.

Risk and safeguarding activity

- 3.6 The risk-based inspection program backlog continues to drop with the entire backlog cleared by the end of the year. Current IT system expert has been brought in to manage the current system until it is replaced. Administration practices have been adjusted to allow trained officers to be out conducting inspections.
- 3.7 The methodology for our risk-based inspection programme (RBIP) is now based on nationally recognised guidance and has been bedded in during August 2019.
- 3.8 A safeguarding refresher package has been developed to roll out to all front-line Fire and Rescue Service Staff and will continue in September with completion in October.
- 3.9 High risk areas are being targeted for Safe and Well Visits in line with annual risk mapping and geographical response times.
- 3.10 The Safe and Well Visit Backlog is cleared and remains cleared, Standard operating procedures have been amended to strengthen the management of this process. Monitoring systems have been built and implemented to provide continual visualised monitoring.

4. Visit by the National Fire Chief Council (NFCC) on behalf on the Minister for Police and Fire

- 4.1 The Minister asked the National Fire Chiefs Council to assist in providing assurance that West Sussex is taking steps and has the capacity to improve its performance. The Home Office has asked Roy Wilshire the Chair of NFCC to engage with West Sussex in two particular areas for assurance that:
 - West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service supported by the Fire Authority is taking steps to improve its performance
 - That there is concerted effort to improve performance and the Fire and Rescue Service, supported by the Fire Authority, is responding positively to the HMICFRS inspection report

- 4.2 Mr. Wilshire visited West Sussex on 10th September 2019. He was accompanied by NFCC Chief of Staff, Steven Adams, Cllr Nick Chard who sits on the Local Government Association's Fire Service Management Committee (and chairs the Kent Fire Authority), to provide a political perspective, and Chief Fire Officer Mick Crennell from Avon Fire and Rescue. He met the Chief Fire Officer, the Cabinet Member for Fire and Rescue and Communities, the County Council Chief Executive and other members of the senior management team. Mr. Wilshire will be providing a report to the Minister on 30th September 2019 covering the areas of assurance referred to above.

Factors taken into account

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Initiatives for staff engagement and communication as part of the Improvement Plan and IRMP activity have been covered above in this report. Staff representative bodies are able to make representations direct to the Improvement Board (described to the Committee at its last meeting as a forum for monitoring the delivery of the improvement plan) and staff will be fully engaged in the improvement plan work in line with the priorities set out in 2.4 to 2.7 above.

6. Risk Management Implications

- 6.1 Risk Management implications are fully covered through the IRMP work planning and are addressed in the combined plan. The approach to risk management will be explained in more detail to the Committee.

7. Other Options Considered

- 7.1 The IRMP and HMICFRS have identified service priorities within a statutory framework and it has not been considered viable to consider other options than one which delivers these priorities by focusing the available improvement resources accordingly.

8. Equality Duty

- 8.1 The public sector equality duty applies to the work of the plan and has particular relevance to the work on the improvement plan within the 'people' pillar. Equality impact assessment work will form part of the work planning to address areas identified for Improvement.

9. Social Value

- 9.1 There are no procurements currently planned which would be subject to social value requirements.

9.2 In terms of environmental sustainability, the IRMP makes clear the authority's commitment to reducing the environmental impact of its operations and provides an indication of work done to date and in the future.

10. Crime and Disorder Implications

10.1 No impacts in this area.

11. Human Rights Implications

11.1 No Impacts in this area.

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Background Papers (none)