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## **Report to Fire and Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee**

**26 March 2021**

### **Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services COVID Inspection Letter**

**Report by Chief Fire Officer**

**Electoral division(s): All**

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#### **Summary**

In August 2020, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) was commissioned by the Home Secretary to inspect how fire and rescue services in England were responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. This letter (detailed at Appendix A) to West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service sets out the assessment of the effectiveness of the service's response to the pandemic.

#### **Focus for Scrutiny**

The Committee is asked to examine the letter (attached at Appendix A) received from the HMICFRS and consider whether there is any learning from the context that should be considered for inclusion as part of work programme planning for the Committee.

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#### **Proposal**

##### **1. Background and context**

- 1.1 In August 2020, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) was commissioned by the Home Secretary to inspect how fire and rescue services in England were responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. This letter (detailed at Appendix A) to West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service sets out the assessment of the effectiveness of the service's response to the pandemic.
- 1.2 The pandemic is a global event, which has affected everyone and every organisation. Fire and rescue services have had to continue to provide a service to the public and, like every other public service, have had to do within the restrictions imposed.
- 1.3 For this inspection, the HMICFRS was asked by the Home Secretary to consider what is working well and what is being learned; how the fire sector is responding to the COVID-19 crisis; how fire services are dealing with the problems they face; and what changes are likely as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.4 West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service was inspected between 5 October and 16 October 2020. The letter at Appendix A summarises the findings of that inspection.

- 1.5 The letter commented on the positive and constructive way the service engaged with the inspection and the positive contribution the service made to the community during the pandemic.
- 1.6 The HMICFRS proposes to restart the second round of effectiveness and efficiency fire and rescue inspections in Spring 2021, when it will follow up on the findings.

## 2. **Finance**

- 2.1 Conclusions from this inspection have no financial implications to the Council.

## 3. **Risk implications and mitigations**

- 3.1 The Fire Authority and members of the Fire and Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee will continue to monitor the performance of the fire and rescue service to ensure that any risk from ceasing this process is mitigated through effective performance management through the Performance and Assurance Framework.

## 4. **Policy alignment and compliance**

- 4.1 This report has positive implications for the community as it supports the continued improvement journey of the Fire and Rescue Service to all residents in West Sussex.

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**Chief Fire Officer**

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### **Appendix A – COVID Inspection letter**

#### **Background papers**

None