



## Northamptonshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel

8<sup>th</sup> September 2022

### Office of the Northamptonshire Police Fire & Crime Commissioner

#### HMICFRS Inspection – NFRS Outcomes

#### 1. Introduction

1.1 In July 2017, HMICFRS extended its remit to include inspections of England's fire and rescue service. We now assess and report on the efficiency, effectiveness and people of the 44 fire and rescue services in England.

1.2 In their first inspection report HMICFRS noted that Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service required improvements in a number of areas. For example, the service required improvement to its effectiveness. Its response to emergencies is inadequate. It required improvement to how it:

- prevents fires and other risks;
- protects the public through fire regulation; and
- responds to national risks.

However, HMICFRS judged the service to be good at understanding the risk of fire and other emergencies.

1.3 Another area of improvement identified was the service's efficiency and in particular, making use of resources and in making the service affordable.

1.4 Finally HMICFRS concluded that the service required improvement to the way it looks after its people. It was inadequate at getting the right people with the right skills and required improvement to how it ensures fairness and promotes diversity and how it manages performance and develops leaders. They did acknowledge that they service was good at promoting the right values and culture.

1.5 Overall, HMICFRS concluded that they would like to see improvements in the year ahead.

#### 2. **HMICFRS Inspection 2022**

2.1 A full inspection of the service was carried out earlier this year which looked in detail at work across three categories – effectiveness, efficiency, and people.

The inspection found that there had been major improvements in the Service's effectiveness at responding to and preventing fires and protecting the public through regulation. In their report, the Inspectors reported that they were "pleased to see the service has made significant progress since the 2018 inspection in how effectively and efficiently it keeps people safe and secure from fires and other risks."

- 2.2 These areas of work were individually graded as 'Good', and the Service received a 'Good' grading across the board for its operational effectiveness. An overview of the inspection can be found at appendix A and a copy of the full report is included at Appendix B.

### **3. Effectiveness**

- 3.1 Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service's overall effectiveness is good compared to requiring improvement following its 2018/19 assessment.

- 3.2 HMICRFS noted that they were encouraged to see that the service has responded well to the areas for improvement they identified in their first inspection and that there has been a positive direction of travel.

- 3.3 Areas of positive work identified by HMICRFS include:

- The development of an effective integrated risk management plan (IRMP) which uses data and intelligence to identify a range of risks and it describes how it will mitigate them. NFRS now has effective processes in place to gather and disseminate risk information throughout the organisation.
- The allocation of more resources to its prevention function allowing it to mitigate the risks it has identified. NFRS has evaluated its methodology for conducting home fire safety checks and adapted this to better target the highest risk in its communities. The service has effective relationships with a range of partner organisations which allow it to safeguard vulnerable people and collaboratively reduce the number of fires and other emergencies.
- NFRS have undertaken a detailed review of its risk-based inspection programme (RBIP) to make sure this is more proportional. NFRS now targets its activity at premises that present the highest risk. It has also responded to their last inspection by improving the way it engages informally with businesses to make sure they comply with fire safety legislation.
- NFRS has taken appropriate action to address HMICRFS's cause of concern about its response capability. It now has sufficient resources available to give an emergency response in line with its own performance

standards. It has extensively reviewed these standards to make sure available resources meet risk and demand.

- HMICFRS found improvements in the NFRS's capability to respond to major and multi-agency incidents. It has established effective plans to respond to incidents and it tests these plans regularly with other agencies and fire and rescue services. Staff now have a better understanding of Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) principles, although HMICFRS still found that not all staff understand their role in responding to marauding terrorist attack incidents.

#### **4. Efficiency**

4.1 Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service's overall efficiency is good compared to required improvement following its 2018/19 assessment.

4.2 Areas of positive work identified by HMICFRS include:

- NFRS has made significant progress in improving its efficiency. The change in governance and additional support from central government has allowed it to stabilise and secure its financial position, both now and in the future. It has successfully established an adequate level of reserves and can demonstrate a balanced budget over the duration of its medium-term financial plan (MTFP).
- NFRS now has a clear rationale when allocating resources to its prevention, protection and response functions. This is clearly linked to risks identified in its IRMP. The service then uses a strong performance management framework to ensure these resources perform efficiently against objectives in the IRMP.
- The governance change has actively introduced new opportunities for collaboration. These have given the service the capacity and capability it needs to modernise the organisation. A joint enabling services function with Northamptonshire Police now provides functions including fleet, estates and information and communications technology (ICT). HMICFRS did note that NFRS should make sure it comprehensively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits of this collaboration.
- HMICFRS did find that the service's ICT infrastructure is not fit for purpose and is significantly hampering staff productivity. However, NFRS has plans in place to address this, but it should make sure this continues to be an important priority.

#### **5. People**

5.1 In its latest report, HMICFRS found that Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service requires improvement at looking after its people. It was noted the

NFRS has taken some action to respond to the areas HMICFRS identified in their first inspection, but it still needs to make significant improvements.

- 5.2 HMICFRS did acknowledge that senior leaders show strong strategic intent to improve the culture, embed values and promote EDI, however the Inspectors concluded that the service isn't making enough progress in this area. They found that it is failing to implement the objectives outlined in its strategies to make sure it effectively looks after its people. Staff widely misunderstand the benefits of a diverse workforce. Despite a high proportion of staff members understanding the service's values, there are still examples of behaviours that are contrary to those values.
- 5.2 Whilst NFRS has a range of appropriate policies and procedures to manage workforce concerns such as grievances and disciplines, Inspectors concluded that it inconsistently applies these policies and there are managers throughout the organisation who don't understand them.
- 5.3 Since the last last inspection, NFRS has made some improvements to its promotion process. The inspectors found that this is now more structured and has improved staff members' understanding and perception of fairness. However, they felt it could still take more action to identify and develop high-potential leaders to meet its long-term needs.
- 5.4 The Inspectors also noted that NFRS has positively responded to thier cause of concern about its processes to provide, record and monitor risk-critical training. It now has appropriate systems in place to make sure skills are maintained and that there is effective corporate oversight of this process.

## **6. Next Steps**


















- 6.1 I am pleased that the independent assessment from HMICFRS confirms what I believed was the case – that Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service is providing a much-improved service in the way they keep the county safe. Colleagues in the Fire and Rescue Service shuld be proud of how much they have improved, and I always believed that moving under my governance, with increased opportunities for joint working, would enable Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service to deliver the best possible service to the people of this county.
- 6.2 I am disappointed by what HMICFRS had to say about values and inclusion and there is clearly much work that needs to be done in that area. Work is already underway to address the concerns raised in the report. For example, it is my expectation that plans are put in place to improve the culture as soon as possible. This will be kept under constant review through the Accountability Board process and it will be a priority for the incoming new Chief Fire Officer when he takes up his post later in the year.

6.3 I will also be looking for opportunities for further collaboration with Northamptonshire Police as both organisations work to build trust and confidence across the board.

## **7. Recommendations**

5.1 That the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel considers the content of the report and its appendix.

**Stephen Mold**

Question	This inspection	2018/19
 <b>Effectiveness</b>	 <b>Good</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Understanding fires and other risks	 Good	Good
Preventing fires and other risks	 Good	Requires improvement
Protecting the public through fire regulation	 Good	Requires improvement
Responding to fires and other emergencies	 Good	Inadequate
Responding to major and multi-agency incidents	 Good	Requires improvement
Question	This inspection	2018/19
 <b>Efficiency</b>	 <b>Good</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Making best use of resources	 Good	Requires improvement
Future affordability	 Good	Requires improvement
Question	This inspection	2018/19
 <b>People</b>	 <b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Promoting the right values and culture	 Requires improvement	Good
Getting the right people with the right skills	 Good	Inadequate
Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	 Requires improvement	Requires improvement
Managing performance and developing leaders	 Requires improvement	Requires improvement