



**DORSET & WILTSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE
AUTHORITY**

Item 20/10

MEETING	Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority
DATE OF MEETING	12 February 2020
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	HMICFRS - Annual assessment of fire and rescue services in England
STATUS OF REPORT	For open publication
PURPOSE OF REPORT	To consider and note
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	Having now completed all inspections, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) have provided the first annual report regarding the state of fire and rescue services in England. The report provides an overview of this assessment, along with the recommendations for the Home Office or the National Fire Chiefs Council.
RISK ASSESSMENT	Failure to learn from the findings of HMICFRS may lead to the Service missing improvement opportunities.
COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT	None for the purpose of this report
BUDGET IMPLICATIONS	None for the purpose of this report
RECOMMENDATION	Members are asked to: 1. Note the content of the report.
BACKGROUND PAPERS	State of Fire and Rescue. The annual assessment of fire and rescue services in England by Sir Thomas Winsor, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services. Report dated January 2020. https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/state-of-fire-and-rescue-annual-assessment-2019/

	<p>Effectiveness, efficiency and people 2018/19 - Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service. Report submitted to the Authority on 30 September 2019.</p> <p>https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/frs-assessment-2018-19-dorset-and-wiltshire/</p>
APPENDICES	None
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 As Members are aware, as part of the then Home Secretary's ministerial reform programme, a new inspection regime was established in 2017. Since June 2018, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) has recently inspected all fire and rescue services in England.
- 1.2 In pursuance of section 28B of the Fire and Rescue Service Act, Sir Thomas Winsor, in his capacity as Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services for England is required publish an annual report of the state of the sector to Parliament. This report introduces his report and more specifically outlines the key recommendations for the Home Office and the National Fire Chiefs Council.

2. Inspection methodology

- 2.1 Members may already be aware that the inspection methodology currently focuses on the Service, not the Authority. Each service is assessed in relation to three main question (pillars) namely:
- How **effective** is the fire and rescue service in keeping people safe from fire and other risks?
 - How **efficient** is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe from fire and other risks?
 - How well does the fire and rescue service look after its **people**?
- 2.2 Each pillar is supported by several supporting diagnostic questions.
- 2.3 Following their inspection, each fire and rescue service receives a graded judgement for each of these pillars and the supporting diagnostic questions. These judgements may range between outstanding, good, requires improvement and inadequate.
- 2.4 As Members will be aware from previous reports and presentations to the Authority, the Service was inspected in the Autumn 2019. Pleasingly the Service was graded as 'Good' in all three pillars, making it one of higher performing fire and rescue services in England.

3. Key recommendations arising from the national assessment

- 3.1 Sir Thomas Winsor's report draws together the findings from all his inspections. The report provides an overall commentary of his findings along with the gradings of each individual service. In addition to this overview, he makes four key recommendations for the Home Office or the National Fire Chiefs Council namely:

Setting expectations to create modern fire and rescue services fit for the future

- (1) By June 2020 the Home Office, in consultation with the fire and rescue sector, should review and with precision determine the roles of: (a) fire and rescue services; and (b) those who work in them.

3.1.1 As part of these inspections, there has been much discussion about the limits and scope of fire and rescue services. This is perhaps not surprising given the level of localism afforded to authorities over the past 10-15 years. Sir Thomas has therefore asked the Home Office to determine, in consultation with the fire sector, whether the functions specified in the 2004 Act are still current. If not, it should set out clearly its expectations of FRSs and what the responsibilities of a firefighter should encompass.

Potential reform of employment arrangements

- (2) By June 2020, the Home Office, the Local Government Association (LGA), the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and trade unions should consider whether the current pay negotiation machinery requires fundamental reform. If so, this should include the need for an independent pay review body and the future of the 'grey book'.

3.1.2 As Members are aware, it is for the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services (the NJC) to determine firefighter pay. This is a national body covering the United Kingdom. In Sir Thomas's view, these negotiating mechanisms are hindering services from modernising to best meet the needs of the public. He has indicated within this recommendation that an independent pay review body may have brought a swifter conclusion to an on-going pay dispute between the employers and the Fire Brigades Union than current arrangements. He has therefore called upon the Home Office, the LGA, the NFCC and trade unions to consider whether these arrangements are effective.

3.1.3 As Members may also be aware, the NJC oversees conditions of service for firefighters (included in what is known as the 'grey book'). Despite calls for reform, this book has not been reviewed for many years. Sir Thomas has highlighted that in his opinion, whilst some fire and rescue services, (including Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service) have been able to put arrangements in place to meet local circumstances; the 'grey book' is a barrier to reform. He has therefore recommended to these national bodies that it should be reviewed to consider whether it is still fit for purpose and if it establishes, maintains or intensifies intended or unintended barriers.

Operational independence for chief fire officers

- (3) By September 2020, the Home Office should consider the case for legislating to give chief fire officers operational independence. In the meantime, it should issue clear guidance, possibly through an amendment

to the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, on the demarcation between those responsible for governance and operational decision making by the chief fire officer.

- 3.1.4 Sir Thomas has fully acknowledged that fire and rescue authorities have a fundamental role in setting priorities and holding chief fire officers to account to make sure services meet the priorities set by them. Unlike chief constables, who have operational independence, chief fire officers do not. However, he has indicated that as part of his wider analysis, some authorities are extending this remit and determining operational direction. This has led to tension between some chief fire officers and their authorities, whereby authorities have prevented them from making decisions to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their services. He has stated in his report that he believes that chief fire officers are best placed to determine the operational workings of their services and should be given substantially greater freedom to run their services as they see fit so that they are able to meet the priorities in their integrated risk management plans.

A code of ethics for fire and rescue services.

- (4) By December 2020, the National Fire Chiefs Council, with the Local Government Association, should produce a code of ethics for fire and rescue services. The code should be adopted by every service in England and considered as part of each employee's progression and annual performance appraisal.

- 3.1.5 While the inspectorate has seen some services with a positive culture, with staff working to accepted behaviours (such as our own), the culture in others has been determined as poor. In Sir Thomas' view, fire and rescue services would benefit from a national code of ethics which specifies and establishes the exemplary standards of behaviour for all staff. This code should be at the heart of everything the services do and make it clear to staff what behaviour is acceptable in their everyday work. He makes it clear that this code of ethics should be fully embedded within all key organisational processes.

4. Summary and key points

- 4.1 The inspection regime continues at pace. It is shortly to embark on the next cycle of inspections helping to build a renewed sector-wide picture of position and progress. In addition, it has been indicated that they may also conduct thematic inspections of cross-sector relevance. They have also signalled, that where they have wider governance concerns, they may inspect fire and rescue authorities themselves using a methodology that they will devise and consult upon. Whilst it is yet to be fully detailed, it is anticipated that the Service will be inspected again in the summer or autumn of 2020. To support this, and reduce the inspection burden, Officers have largely aligned the performance framework.