



**DORSET & WILTSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE
AUTHORITY**

Item 23/06

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| MEETING | Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority |
| DATE OF MEETING | 8 February 2023 |
| SUBJECT OF THE REPORT | Inspection of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service in 2022: Final report |
| STATUS OF REPORT | For open publication |
| PURPOSE OF REPORT | To discuss and note |
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | <p>This paper provides an overview of the Service's inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), undertaken in early 2022.</p> <p>Pleasingly, the Inspectorate have rated the Service as one of the best performing fire and rescue services in England.</p> <p>This paper will be supported by a short presentation on the Service's inspection and the recently published Annual Assessment of fire and rescue services in England conducted by the Inspectorate.</p> |
| RISK ASSESSMENT | The Service has been rated as one of the best performing fire and rescue services in England. Failure to maintain this high standing may adversely affect the corporate reputation of the Service and potentially the Authority. |
| COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT | None for the purpose of this report |
| BUDGET IMPLICATIONS | None for the purpose of this report |

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| RECOMMENDATIONS | Members are asked to discuss and note the report. |
| BACKGROUND PAPERS | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Inspection of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service 2018-19: Final Report. Report to the Authority. 30 September 2019. www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/dorset-and-wiltshire-fire-and-rescue-service-report-2018-19.pdf <li>2. Response to Covid-19, an inspection of Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service. Report to the Authority. 11 February 2021. https://www.dwfire.org.uk/about-us/who-we-are/hmicfrs/reassuring-covid-19-report-from-inspectorate/ <li>3. State of Fire and Rescue. The Annual assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England. 2022 by His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Service. https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/state-of-fire-and-rescue-annual-assessment-2022/ |
| APPENDIX | Appendix A - An inspection of Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services in 2022 |
| REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT | <p>Name: Derek James, Deputy Chief Fire Officer</p> <p>Email: derek.james@dwfire.org.uk</p> <p>Tel no: 01722 691000</p> |

1 Introduction

1.1 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (the Inspectorate) has a comprehensive inspection methodology. It is centred on three pillars namely:

- How effective is the service in keeping people safe from fire and other risks? (Effectiveness)
- How efficient is the service at keeping people safe from fire and other risks? (Efficiency)
- How well does the service look after its people? (People)

1.2 Following their inspection each fire and rescue service receives a graded judgement for each pillar and the supporting diagnostic questions. These judgements may range between outstanding; good; requires improvement and inadequate.

1.3 In October- November 2018, the Inspectorate scrutinised the Service and rated the organisation as 'Good' against all three pillars in their report of June 2019. This was one of the highest ratings for any fire and rescue service in England. In her press release, Wendy Williams who is His Majesty's lead Inspector for the Midlands, Wales, and South West areas, stated:

'Our first inspection of Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service has found that it is performing to a high standard in all areas'

'The residents of Dorset and Wiltshire can be confident that they are receiving a quality service.'

1.4 In 2020, the Inspectorate then was asked by the Home Office to look at how the sector was responding to the Coronavirus pandemic. Again, the Service received a very pleasing report from the Inspectorate. This was discussed and noted by the Authority in February 2021.

1.5 As Members are aware, in early 2022 the Inspectorate reviewed the Service's overall effectiveness, efficiency, and people arrangements for a second time. The paper now before Members details the outcome and key findings of this recently received report.

2 The inspection process

2.1 The Inspectorates methodology is very comprehensive. It eventually comprised of:

- A self-assessment against a set of key questions

- A two hour strategic briefing from the Strategic Leadership Team and Chair of the Authority
- 228 documents were submitted prior to the inspection
- 121 pieces of additional evidence requested over the course of the inspection
- 32 interviews conducted with managers and key members of staff
- 6 focus groups held across a range of areas
- 9 desktop reviews conducted to examine the adherence to key processes and procedures
- 12 confidential station visits were held with wholetime and on-call firefighters
- 5 external partner interviews conducted
- A confidential on-line staff survey conducted by the Inspectorate
- A questionnaire for representative bodies

2.2 The process involved a considerable degree of preparation, liaison and coordination from lead officers beginning in the autumn of 2021. The Inspectors were on site for a six-week period between February and April 2022.

2.3 Due to the need for local, regional, and national moderation, by the Inspectorate, the draft report was received for factual accuracy checking in November 2022. The final report was formally received on the 20 January 2023, alongside all other fire and rescue service reports, in Tranche 3 of the inspection round.

3 Key findings

3.1 The Service's report is provided as Appendix A. The table below highlights how these judgements have improved since the last full inspection.

| Pillar | 2022 | 2018 |
|---------------|-------------|------|
| Effectiveness | Good | Good |
| Efficiency | Outstanding | Good |
| People | Good | Good |

3.2 It is pleasing to note that the Service has improved its overall ratings and has achieved the highest possible rating for efficiency. Together these ratings make it one of the best performing fire and rescue services in England.

- 3.3 In her recent press release, Wendy Williams, His Majesty’s lead Inspector for the Midlands, Wales, and Southwest areas, stated:

“Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service has made excellent progress and is performing well”

“I congratulate Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service on its first-rate performance in keeping people safe and secure from fires and other risks. Since its last inspection, it has made improvements in many areas.”

- 3.4 As set out in their report, an overview of the judgements for the pillars and their sub-diagnostics is as follows.

| EFFECTIVENESS | 2022 | 2019 |
|--|-------------|----------------------|
| Overall rating | GOOD | GOOD |
| Understanding fires and other risks | Good | Requires improvement |
| Preventing fires and other risks | Good | Good |
| Protecting the public through fire regulation | Good | Good |
| Responding to fires and other emergencies | Good | Good |
| Responding to major and multi-agency incidents | Good | Good |

| EFFICIENCY | 2022 | 2019 |
|------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Overall rating | OUTSTANDING | GOOD |
| Making best use of resources | Outstanding | Good |
| Future affordability | Good | Good |

| PEOPLE | 2022 | 2019 |
|--|-------------|-------------|
| Overall rating | GOOD | GOOD |
| Promoting the right values and culture | Good | Good |
| Getting the right people with the right skills | Outstanding | Good |
| Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity | Good | Good |
| Managing performance and developing leaders | Good | Good |

- 3.5 It is particularly pleasing to have a received such high scores in the People pillar, particularly an ‘Outstanding’ judgement for our workforce planning arrangements, which is both complex and affects a significant proportion of our expenditure.

- 3.6 As well as receiving high overall ratings, the Inspectorate have also highlighted four examples of nationally noteworthy innovative or promising practice. These include our value for money and performance management dashboards, partnerships with utility companies to secure carbon monoxide detectors and the personal appraisal system and how it recognises positive performance by individuals.
- 3.7 As one might expect the Inspectorate have highlighted three areas for improvement namely:
- Ensuring that safety flashes containing urgent risk information have been read and understood by all staff
 - Ensuring that staff who are on dual contracts (i.e., firefighters who undertake both wholetime and on-call duties) do not exceed their working hours
 - Improve the diversity of its workforce, particularly for wholetime firefighter roles
- 3.8 Over the coming year, Officers will examine these areas for improvement and determine what additional work or investigations are needed.

4 Next steps for the Inspectorate

- 4.1 Earlier this year, the Inspectorate ran a public consultation on a revised draft fire and rescue service inspection programme and framework commencing January 2023.
- 4.2 Moving forward the inspection process will now:
- **Remove overall pillar judgments.** This mirrors the approach that is taken in their Police Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Legitimacy (PEEL) inspections. This would mean the report would no longer focus on three simple ratings but rather on the 11 judgements associated with the sub-diagnostic questions. Officers had previously raised concerns that this might confuse and dilute the public understanding of how their fire and rescue service was rated.
 - **Have smaller batches of publications.** This will enable them to moderate and issue reports more quickly. This is a welcome move, as it has taken around 11 months from fieldwork to report to secure our report.
 - **Include an 'adequate' rating.** Whilst the Inspectorate continue to require fire and rescue services to achieve the 'good' rating. An additional rating will be used, the five ratings will therefore be inadequate, requires improvement, adequate, good, and outstanding. This is again aligned to the approach within the police.

- 4.3 The next round of sector wide full inspections will commence in January 2023, and it has yet to be decided where the Service fits within this inspection cycle. At present the Inspectorate have stated that they do not intend to carry out thematic inspections.

5 Summary

- 5.1 This inspection report is particularly pleasing and indicates that local residents and partners can be further assured that they are receiving a high performing and cost-effective public service.
- 5.2 Ultimately these ratings are a testament to the professionalism and hard work of operational and corporate staff at all levels and right across the Service.