



**DORSET & WILTSHIRE  
FIRE AND RESCUE  
AUTHORITY**

Item 21/28

MEETING	Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority
DATE OF MEETING	16 June 2021
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	State of Fire 2020 and imminent White Paper on Fire Reform
STATUS OF REPORT	For open publication
PURPOSE OF REPORT	For consideration and to note
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	This paper provides an overview of the key findings from the annual assessment of fire and rescue services in England. It is the second of such reports from Sir Thomas Winsor, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services. As well as recommendations for the sector as a whole, there are a number of national recommendations. It is anticipated that these will be discharged through the forthcoming White Paper on fire sector reform.
RISK ASSESSMENT	Failure to learn from the findings of the Chief Inspector may lead to adverse impacts on the Service and the Authority's high reputational standing.
COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT	None for the purposes of this report
BUDGET IMPLICATIONS	None for the purposes of this report
RECOMMENDATIONS	Members are asked to note the State of Fire report 2020 and approve the suggested way forward for collectively responding to the imminent White Paper on Fire Reform.
BACKGROUND PAPERS	State of Fire and Rescue. The annual assessment of fire and rescue services in England. Report of Her

	<p>Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Service. 2020.</p> <p><a href="https://www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/state-offire-and-rescue-2020-single-page-format.pdf">https://www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/state-offire-and-rescue-2020-single-page-format.pdf</a></p>
APPENDICES	None for the purposes of this report
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## 1. Introduction

1.1 Sir Thomas Winsor, Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services for England has published the second of his annual reports to the Secretary of State under section 28B of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. The report the assessment of efficiency and effectiveness of fire and rescue services in England since the last report published in January 2020. This paper outlines the key recommendations for the Home Office and the National Fire Chief's Council.

## 2. Inspection methodology

2.1 As Members may be aware, the inspection methodology currently focuses on the Service not the Authority. Each Service is assessed in relation to three main questions (pillars) namely:

- How **effective** is the service in keeping people safe from fire and other risks?
- How **efficient** is the service at keeping people safe from fire and other risks?
- How well does the service look after its **people**?

2.2 Each pillar is supported by a number of supporting diagnostic key lines of enquiry.

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 2018. Pleasingly the Service was graded as 'Good' in all three pillars making it one of the higher performing fire and rescue services in England.

2.5 The second round of inspections was due to commence in March 2020 however this was suspended due to the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. These inspections have now resumed in February 2021. The Service is currently planned to be inspected in the Spring 2022 and internal preparations are well underway.

2.6 The Inspectorate have signalled that there will be some additional areas of focus for round 2 inspections to include:

- a greater focus on race and diversity, and how services are overcoming undue inequalities
- productivity of services
- an assessment of how services are identifying and planning against their risks and
- more case file reviews in relation to protection and buildings safety.

2.7 In addition to these general inspections, Members will recall that the Inspectorate undertook a specific inspection of the response to the pandemic by fire and rescue services in England. Following this inspection in the summer of 2020, the Chief Fire Officer took a very positive report to the Authority in February, about the Service's response to the national pandemic.

### **3. Key national recommendations arising from the State of Fire report**

3.1 The Chief Inspector has previously made six recommendations for national reform of the fire and rescue sector, which he said remain necessary and need to accelerate. Sir Thomas re-emphasised his recommendations for this reform with revised completion dates due to the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic.

3.2 The national recommendations made in Sir Thomas Winsor's previous annual report acknowledged that despite good progress, the report still remained live and relevant. The second annual report proposes new completion dates for these outstanding recommendations which align with work that is already underway such as the Home Office's Police and Crime Commissioner review and forthcoming fire reform programme.

3.3 The first national report made six national recommendations:

- i. The Home Office should determine the role of fire and rescue services, to remove any ambiguity
- ii. The sector should remove any unjustifiable variation, including in how they define risk
- iii. The sector should review, and reform how effectively pay, and conditions are determined
- iv. The Home Office should invest chief fire officers with operational independence, whether through primary legislation or in some other manner
- v. There should be a code of ethics
- vi. The Home Office should ensure that the sector has sufficient capacity and capability to bring about change.

3.4 Whilst Sir Thomas acknowledges that some encouraging progress has been made, there is much to do, and given delays caused by the national response to the coronavirus pandemic, has proposed new deadlines on many of these national organisations. He has also stated that he would not make any more national recommendations, at this point, as it is important for the sector to act on the previous recommendations, which are about fundamental reform.

#### **4. Fire Reform**

- 4.1 The Government announced on 16 March 2021 that it would consult on fire sector reform in a new White Paper, later in the year. It stated that the paper will deliver a set of reforms for fire and rescue services across the areas of; professionalism, people, and governance.
5. It is anticipated that the consultation period will commence in late June/ early July. Given the significance of this White Paper, and its timing, it is helpful to determine the mechanism for the Authority to collectively consider and respond to the formal consultation. It is therefore proposed that Members be invited to attend a virtual seminar on 28 July 2021, where the contents of the White Paper can be presented by Officers and debated by Members. Following the seminar, responses to the consultation questions posed by government could be gathered and synthesised in order to develop a formal collective response which could be sent through delegated approval via the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Authority.
- 5.1 It should also be noted here that Members are of course also able to respond to the consultation as individuals.

#### **5. Summary and key points**

- 5.1 The progress required to complete the national recommendations is awaiting further national work such as the imminently expected White Paper on Fire Reform. In the meantime, the HMICFRS inspection regime continues. Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service is in the third tranche of inspections due to commence in 2022.
- 5.2 While the content of the White Paper has not been published in time for consideration at this meeting, Members are invited to decide the most appropriate consultation mechanism as set out in the report to enable the Authority to respond to the consultation within the, as yet, unreleased timescales.

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