



**Hampshire  
& Isle of Wight**  
FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

## **HIWFRA Standards and Governance Committee**

Purpose: Noted

Date: **27 SEPTEMBER 2023**

Title: **ASSURANCE REPORT: FIRE STANDARDS AND HMICFRS  
AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT PROGRESS UPDATE**

Report of Chief Fire Officer

### SUMMARY

1. This report provides Members with an assurance update on the Service's progress in adopting and embedding Fire Standards within the Service and also on the progress being made against the His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Areas for Improvement (AFIs).

### BACKGROUND

2. At the 22 March 2023 Standards and Governance Committee meeting, Members received two separate reports. One which outlined the progress being made against adopting Fire Standards, and the other which stated the findings of the HMICFRS round 2 inspection during April-June 2022. Officers committed to reporting back to the Authority, on a 6-monthly basis, to provide an update on the current status of both the adoption of the approved Fire Standards and the work in progress against the Areas for Improvement (AFIs) identified as an outcome of the HMICFRS round 2 inspection. This report provides an update for Members to note on both areas.

### FIRE STANDARDS

3. Fire Standards are an important mechanism that set out how fire and rescue services operate. Fire Standards cover the whole spectrum of what we do as a Fire Service and provide the assurance framework to give us an understanding of areas where we are performing well, with strong controls in place, and areas where we can learn and improve. Fire Standards have been designed to bring consistency to the sector, to support the delivery of

legislative requirements and drive change and improvement. The report presented to [Standards and Governance on 22 March](#) provides more detailed background information.

4. Currently there are 16 approved Fire Standards as the table below illustrates. Each Fire Standard has a number of desired outcomes for which we currently carry out a high level appraisal to determine what controls we have in place to meet them. The high level appraisal results in an assurance rating being given to the Fire Standards, as demonstrated in the table below:

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Date Published</b>	<b>Assurance Rating</b>
Emergency Response Driving	16/02/2021	Substantial
Operational Competence	16/02/2021	Substantial
Operational Learning	16/02/2021	Reasonable
Operational Preparedness	16/02/2021	Substantial
Code of Ethics	18/05/2021	Substantial
Community Risk Management Planning	18/05/2021	Substantial
Prevention	30/07/2021	Substantial
Protection	03/09/2021	Substantial
Safeguarding	31/01/2022	Substantial
Fire Investigation	31/03/2022	Reasonable
Emergency Preparedness & Resilience	31/05/2022	Reasonable
Data Management	02/08/2022	Reasonable
Leading and Developing People	21/12/2022	Analysis in progress
Leading the Service	21/12/2022	Analysis in progress
Communication and Engagement	30/03/2023	Analysis in progress
Fire Control	30/03/2023	Analysis in progress
Commercial and Procurement	Expected December 2023	
Finance and Internal Governance		
Asset Management		
Digital and Information Technology		

5. There are three ratings that can be given to a Fire Standard:
- (a) Substantial: this means that there is deemed to be a sound system of assurance in place that can be evidenced over a number of different areas.
  - (b) Reasonable: this means that there is a sound system in place with some controls however non-compliance is identified and actions are created for areas of improvement.
  - (c) Limited: this means that there is deemed to be significant weakness or non-compliance and improvement is required.
6. Since the roll out of the approved Fire Standards first started in February 2021 the Learning and Assurance team, in conjunction with subject matter experts, have carried out a high level appraisal of 12 of the published Fire

Standards. A further 4 Fire Standards are in the process of being analysed. This process will continue until the Fire Standards board have released all the Fire Standards that they intend to release.

7. Members will note that two of the Fire Standards, Leading and Developing People and Leading the Service were in the process of being analysed when we last gave an update in March 2023. Progress has been made, however due to the scale and breadth of these two Fire Standards, we have not yet completed the analysis and given an overall assurance rating.
8. To ensure we are continuously learning and improving, the process for assessing ourselves against the Fire Standards will be an ongoing process. Once all the Fire Standards have had an initial high level appraisal and been given an assurance rating, the Learning and Assurance Team will implement a rolling programme of assurance. This will involve a deeper look into each Fire Standards desired outcome to help us better understand our current position in relation to meeting the Fire Standard. We will seek evidence to illustrate compliance and ensure actions are taken where non-compliance is identified. The rolling programme will identify where improvements need to be made as well as highlighting our areas of strength. The Learning and Assurance team have started the rolling programme of assurance and are revisiting some of the Fire Standards that were introduced first.

#### HMICFRS AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT (AFI)

9. The HMICFRS Round 2 inspection for Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service (HIWFRS) took place from April to June 2022. Our report was published on 20 January 2023 with the following ratings:
  - (a) Effectiveness – Good
  - (b) Efficiency – Requires Improvement
  - (c) People – Requires Improvement
10. The HMICFRS report resulted in 24 Areas for Improvement (AFIs) being identified. It was reported to the Standards and Governance Committee on 22 March 2023, that there were 23 AFIs, however whilst determining what activity is underway to address the AFIs, it has been identified that there are 24.
11. 20 of the 24 Areas for Improvement are being addressed as part of Safety Plan 2020-2025 activity, Directorate plan activity or as part of Business as Usual activity. For the remaining four areas, there is no specific plan in place to address these at this time. A full explanation of why the 4 AFIs are not being addressed was given to Members in the [March 2023 Standards and Governance Committee report](#).

12. The table below clarifies all the HMICFRS AFIs received by HIWFRS and identifies which are currently being progressed.

Area for Improvement	Status
The service should ensure it gathers and records relevant and up-to-date risk information	In progress
The service should ensure that all risk and safety-critical information has been read and understood by staff.	In progress
The service should make sure it quality assures and evaluates its prevention work so it understands the benefits better	In progress
The service should make sure it meets the targets it sets for its risk-based inspection programme.	In progress
The service should make sure it has an effective quality assurance process, so staff carry out audits to an appropriate standard.	In progress
The service should put in place a programme of multi-agency exercises so its procedures for responding are well tested and understood.	In progress
The service should ensure it has an effective system for staff to use learning and debriefs to improve operational response and incident command	In progress
The service should make sure it puts in place and delivers its plan to adopt national operational guidance	In progress

Area for Improvement	Status
The service should make sure it participates in a programme of cross-border exercises, with learning from them obtained and shared	In progress
The service needs to show a clear rationale for the resources allocated between prevention, protection and response activities. This should reflect, and be consistent with, the risks and priorities set out in its integrated risk management plan.	In progress
The service should make sure there is a testing programme for its business continuity plans, particularly in high-risk areas of service.	In progress
The service should monitor secondary contracts to make sure working hours aren't exceeded.	In progress
The service should make sure staff understand the value of positive action and having a more diverse workforce.	In progress
The service should make improvements to the way it collects equality data to better understand its workforce demographic and needs.	In progress
The service should make sure it has robust processes in place to undertake equality impact assessments and review any actions agreed as a result.	In progress
The service should make sure that all staff understand the benefits of equality, diversity and inclusion and their role in promoting it.	In progress

Area for Improvement	Status
The service should ensure it has an effective system in place to manage staff development, performance and productivity.	In progress
The service should improve all staff understanding and application of the performance development review process	In progress
The service should ensure its expected values and behaviours are understood and demonstrated at all levels of the organisation and that managers actively promote these standards.	In progress
The service should assure itself that its use of enforcement powers prioritises the highest risks and includes proportionate activity to reduce risk.	<p>No plans to address this AFI as stated in the March 2023 Standards and Governance Committee report.</p> <p>We are content that the Authority uses Fire Safety enforcement powers adequately. The Authority has recently approved a new policy which describes the checks and tests used to ensure evidence and cases are handled appropriately. We have an ongoing approach to engage with businesses with our local inspectors. We are strengthening our community engagement approach through a new team and this will include businesses.</p>

Area for Improvement	Status
<p>The service should make sure it effectively addresses the burden of false alarms.</p>	<p>No plans to address this AFI as stated in the March 2023 Standards and Governance Committee report.</p> <p>This is an area that we made representations to the inspectorate on, as they fail to acknowledge that the majority of our false alarms (61% of all false alarms from April 2020 to December 2022) are at domestic premises, meaning non-attendance could potentially create a risk to life. Furthermore, attending these domestic false alarms also give us a valuable opportunity to offer community safety advice. The Service will continue to raise this issue within the NFCC, for a wider consideration of policy regarding false alarms.</p> <p>For non-domestic premises we adopted a call challenge policy some years ago which continues to screen out unwanted mobilisations.</p>
<p>The service should have effective measures in place to assure itself that its workforce is productive and that their time is used as efficiently and effectively as possible to meet</p>	<p>No plans to address this AFI as stated in the March 2023 Standards</p>

Area for Improvement	Status
<p>the priorities in the integrated risk management plan.</p>	<p>and Governance Committee report.</p> <p>HIWFRS is actively engaged in the Home Office workstream to define and report on productivity measures for FRS staff including Firefighters. We will continue to invest our energy and resources to this approach to align nationally with other FRS and the Home Office and will not generate separate thinking at this stage.</p>
<p>The service should assure itself that senior managers are visible and demonstrate service values through their behaviours.</p>	<p>No plans to address this AFI as stated in the March 2023 Standards and Governance Committee report.</p> <p>We have engaged with our teams to determine their view of visibility and what it means to them. Directors continue to engage with their teams on a regular basis, mixing online and in person events and meetings. The Chief Fire Officer hosts a regular briefing to the Service, located at a station, interviewed by staff and broadcast (and filmed) to all staff. The Internal Comms team continues to visit middle manager forums and</p>



Area for Improvement	Status
	shares “hot topics” across all levels of the organisation to help shape conversations and disseminate information.

13. Outside of an HMICFRS inspection period, Officers continue a programme of engagement with our HMICFRS Service Liaison Lead to ensure the relationship between both parties grows and develops.
14. HIWFRS have been informed that our round three inspection period will be February 2025. Ensuring the Service is ready for inspection is a really important aspect for everyone across the Service and inspection readiness work is already underway.
15. Alongside the round three HMICFRS inspection, HMICFRS have confirmed they will be carrying out a Misconduct Handling thematic inspection. This is following on from the Values and Culture spotlight report published on 31 March 2023. The HMICFRS Misconduct Handling thematic inspection will involve inspecting 10 Fire and Rescue Services (FRS), with results published in June 2024. HIWFRS are not one of the 10 FRS however we will be submitting data as part of the thematic inspection and also completing an HMICFRS cultural survey.

#### SUPPORTING OUR SAFETY PLAN AND PRIORITIES

16. **Learning and Improving:** we have the support of policy and guidance with the freedom to use our discretion to do the right thing, learning from ourselves and others.
17. The outcome of our HMICFRS inspection has provided a great opportunity for self-reflection along with the identification of areas where we can improve. Many of the areas for improvement can be linked to activity identified in year four of our Safety Plan 2020-2025, as well as Directorate Plans and business as usual activity. In year four of our Safety Plan 2020-2025 we committed to a Safety Plan activity: identify any gaps or risks, by undertaking assurance activity against and responding as necessary, to external reviews and reports including the HMICFRS report. This report provides Members with an update on the assurance activity linked to the Safety Plan activity stated above.

18. The adoption of the Fire Standards framework throughout the Service plays an important role in supporting our objective of 'learning and improving' and ensuring 'high performance'. Ensuring that we have an accurate reflection of where as a Service we can develop ourselves to be better, will in turn lead to higher performing teams and safer communities.

## COLLABORATION

19. For Fire Standards, collaboration takes place with the Fire Standards Board, the National Fire Chiefs Council, the Local Government Association and various other fire and rescue services, including HIWFRS, in the development and implementation of new Standards across the Fire Sector.
20. Once the Fire Standards Board releases a new standard to Fire and Rescue Services, the Learning and Assurance team collaborate across the Service with all colleagues who can contribute towards the assessment of the status of that particular Fire Standard.
21. The work undertaken to support the development of the Fire Standards contributes directly to the inspection framework as they increasingly incorporate this into their programme. HMICFRS also collaborate with the Fire Standards Board, the National Fire Chiefs Council, the Local Government Association and various other fire and rescue services, including HIWFRS, in the development and continuous improvement of the HMICFRS framework.
22. HIWFRS ensure collaboration with HMICFRS through our engagement programme with our Service Liaison Lead and also through attendance at Chief and Chair events, Service Liaison Officer events, representation on the HMICFRS External Reference Group and on the HMICFRS Technical Advisory Group.

## RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

23. The Fire Standards Board have released 16 Fire Standards with further standards to be released. HIWFRS have committed to fully embedding Fire Standards across the Service and plan to use the Fire Standards framework as our Assurance Framework moving forward. Fire Standard assurance is overseen by the Learning and Assurance Team, with input provided by the relevant teams and specialists across the Service. Each Fire Standard also has an Executive Group sponsor.
24. During an HMICFRS inspection, resource requirements increase dramatically. However, currently, HIWFRS are not being inspected so are managing the requirements for engagement and tracking progress against

the Areas for Improvement with current resources as part of the Learning and Assurance Team. However, to ensure we are fully prepared and begin to integrate inspection as part of business as usual across the Service, we are reviewing resources in this area.

### IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

25. For the purpose of reporting this update to the Authority, no impact assessment is required. However, change activity underway that contributes towards an HMICFRS Area for Improvement or a Fire Standards desired outcome, will be assessed separately as part of the change process.

### LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

26. The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England states that every Fire and Rescue Service will be subject to inspection by HMICFRS. Fire Standards are subject to scrutiny from HMICFRS and they have been particularly interested in our approach to the adoption of Fire Standards in previous inspections. HMICFRS inspection is also a requirement of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.
27. The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England also states that every Fire and Rescue Service must implement the approved standards through its work and that HMICFRS will incorporate the standards into their inspections.

### RISK ANALYSIS

28. Failure to complete activity that has been highlighted through HMICFRS Areas for Improvement before the next Inspection in February 2025, leaves the Service exposed to the risk of a poor outcome from inspection and reputational risk. It also demonstrates the absence of a learning and improvement culture and does not meet the Services priority to learn and improve and be a developing organisation.
29. Failure to comply with Fire Standards, in some areas, would mean that we are not meeting our statutory and legal responsibilities including, but not limited to, community risk management, emergency response driving and complying with health and safety legislation when delivering operational response. The latter, as an example, could also have potential financial impacts were we found to be breaching health and safety legislation.

30. Failure to comply with the Fire Standards may also lead to reputational damage and missed opportunities to identify and embed learning and improvement, a priority of the Safety Plan.

### EVALUATION

31. HIWFRS acknowledge the importance and value that HMICFRS brings. It provides an opportunity for the Service to understand where we can improve to make life safer and increases our self-awareness and ability to learn.
32. The adoption of Fire Standards across the Service provides an opportunity to carry out an appraisal which results in the identification of areas for improvement. It provides an evaluation of the current position which can be taken as a measure for future success and progress. All which contributes to strengthening the Service and facilitating learning and improving.

### CONCLUSION

33. This assurance report provides an update to the Authority on the progress the Service have made in adopting Fire Standards across the Service and also the work being carried out to acknowledge the HMICFRS Areas for Improvement.
34. Further reports will be presented to the Standards and Governance Committee on a six monthly basis.

### RECOMMENDATION

35. That the Service's approach to the four AFIs identified as not having a specific improvement plan be approved by the HIWFRA Standards and Governance Committee
36. That the HMICFRS AFI and Fire Standards update report be noted by the HIWFRA Standards and Governance Committee

### BACKGROUND PAPERS

37. [22 March 2023 Standards and Governance Committee Fire Standards Report](#)
38. [22 March 2023 Standards and Governance Committee HMICFRS Round 2 Inspection report](#)

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