

## **Surrey Fire and Rescue Service Inspection Improvement Actions**

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service was inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in summer 2018 and a further revisit took place in October 2018, as part of an inspection programme for all UK fire and rescue services. The resulting Report of Findings highlighted areas where we are performing well and two key areas we need to improve, which encompasses seven recommendations.

We took immediate action to address these recommendations and are also undergoing a significant programme of work to transform our Service.

Following on from the original inspection and revisit, the HMICFRS also sent a small team of inspectors to revisit the Service again on 2-4 September 2019. The purpose of this visit was to review the action we have taken against the causes of concern identified in July and October 2018 and it also highlighted any areas that require further improvement and focus.

HMICFRS were due to carry out a second full inspection in June of this year. Unfortunately due to the current COVID 19 pandemic this inspection has been postponed until further notice. However, we are in regular contact with our HMICFRS lead officer and continue to provide data and documents that reflect our progress and performance.

Obviously the impact of this terrible and far reaching pandemic on our service delivery will be assessed as part of our transformation programme on an ongoing basis.

Progress on the key areas of concern and seven recommendations, as well as a summary of the revisit findings is shown below:

**Key area 1:** Surrey Fire and Rescue Service doesn't have a robust and sustainable system to support its operational response model.

### **Recommendation 1. Put in place a response plan based on a thorough assessment of risk to the community**

Our Community Risk Profile has been updated to include the most recent data about the risks within Surrey. This information helps us to understand where the risks associated with places in the county are, where the most vulnerable people are and when and where the risks are greater. This helps us to plan the positioning of fire and rescue resources (firefighters and fire engines) to keep Surrey safe.

The Community Risk Profile is a key document that informed our 'Making Surrey Safer Plan 2020-2023' which is our new Integrated Risk Management Plan (Making Surrey Safer Plan) to help us to manage our resources for responding to emergencies more

efficiently. We used this risk information to inform our modelling of the best distribution of resources to respond to emergencies. This analysis has been independently verified to confirm it is robust and accurate.

The Community Risk Profile also helps us identify the resources required to reduce the risks through community and business safety prevention activity.

The IRMP (Our Making Surrey Safer Plan) was approved by our Fire and Rescue Authority (Surrey County Council) on the 24 September 2019.

The revisit letter from HMICFRS dated 05 November 2019 stated that they found this to be a comprehensive and evidence based assessment of risk and considered options. They said it provided an opportunity for the people of Surrey to have a say on proposals and that the proposals were linked to the findings of their inspection.

We are introducing the new Service operating model in phases. The first phase successfully went live in April 2020. Delivery of the second phase is being assured so that we can fully understand the impact of the current national emergency of COVID19 on the outcomes we expect and on the risk data that is the foundation of our planning.

**Recommendation 2. Ensure the Service has the appropriate resources (people and equipment) to respond to risk in line with its Integrated Risk Management Plan.**

Since August 2019 the governance structure for SFRS has been reviewed and now includes the renewed Workforce Working Group. This group plans at strategic level staff numbers and succession planning and is underpinned by a variety of policies and frameworks relating to our people. The Workforce Working Group now have access to comprehensive data relating to staffing levels and anticipated shortfalls which allows an improved level of evidence based decision making around workforce planning.

We have recruited between Jan-Dec 2019 85 operational staff and 57 support staff, 142 in total. This includes 10 new staff who transferred from West Sussex Control Room as part of the creation of Joint Fire Control. Our continued recruitment ensures that we will achieve full establishment at the end of implementation.

Whilst COVID19 has delayed recruitment, plans are in place to recommence all activities. There will be courses for new recruits starting in June, August and September which include on-call and wholetime staff. Promotion processes for Crew Commander, Watch Commander and Assistant Group Commander are all underway. Planning is taking place for a Group Commander process and offers of appointment have been made to successful Area Commander candidates.

Our new governance structure includes a Resources Working Group which ensure oversight of this key area of the business. We also have a robust Capital Replacement Programme, which will fund the vehicles, equipment, etc. we need. We have secured additional capital investment to enable our new ways of working.

**Recommendation 3. Ensure the Service understands and actively manages the resources and capabilities available for deployment.**

At the time of the initial inspection, HMICFRS found that there had been a lack of effective controls in place to monitor and manage overtime. An overtime action plan was put in place and delivered against by the Service; this issue is now resolved to the satisfaction of HMICFRS, as confirmed in their revisit letter.

**Recommendation 4. Tell the people of Surrey what benefits its service provision and ways of working in the operational response model will give them.**

HMICFRS told us that we interact with the public in a positive way. We are building on this foundation to clearly tell the people of Surrey about the services we are providing. We consulted with residents on the draft proposals in our Making Surrey Safer Plan and also published the implications of our proposed response model (how we allocate fire and rescue resources to emergencies) at a local level in our Equality Impact Assessment.

We engaged with residents in several ways during our consultation for our plan. We explained our analysis of the risks in Surrey, through the Community Risk Profile, and how we intended to meet these risks. We used various ways of telling people in Surrey, which include local media, social media, consultation materials in Libraries and Borough and District offices, advertising at fire stations and online, articles in resident publications and web content. We actively encouraged people to feedback their views on our three proposals for change through our online survey and through face to face meetings.

HMICFRS told us in their revisit letter that they found specific efforts were taken to engage with hard to reach groups using Surrey County Council networks such as the Surrey Coalition of Disabled People group. In total 1687 responses were received to the consultation and this was a higher rate of response to similar consultations seen in most other services.

We are continuing to build on this approach to engagement through our Customer Interface programme which is looking at how we engage with residents and stakeholders and how this can be improved. We have updated our website to ensure it meets the needs of our stakeholders and this went live in April 2020. We will continue to focus our efforts to ensure that we target the most vulnerable in our society to provide the information they need, when they need it, in an easily accessible way. This will be especially important when we consider the impacts of continued social distancing moving forwards as a result of the COVID19 pandemic.

**Key area 2:** Surrey Fire and Rescue Service doesn't use its resources efficiently to manage risk or its financial and physical resources effectively to keep people safe.

**Recommendation 5: Ensure that the resourcing model meets our risk demand sustainably.**

Recommendations 1 and 2 outlined how we analysed the risk in Surrey and informed how we should resource the service in line with the risk profile. The Community Risk Profile also uses forecasted data, such as changes to population for groups vulnerable to fire between now and 2030.

We have ensured that our resourcing model, which is included within our Making Surrey Safer Plan, takes account of the risk we have and the way we expect some risks to change. The plan was approved at Cabinet in September 2019.

We will continue to monitor risk throughout the implementation of the Making Surrey Safer plan and are currently reviewing the profile to consider the impact of the pandemic on risk. The outcome of this will form part of the review of the implementation of Phase 2 of the Making Surrey Safer Plan.

**Recommendation 6. Ensure the Service workforce model supports the operational model to manage risk efficiently and sustainably**

A key principle of the Making Surrey Safer Plan is to realign resources delivering greater prevention and protection activities, stopping emergencies from occurring in the first place. Enabling these changes, the Service has implemented and embedded a new Workforce Resourcing policy, which provides support to managers across the Service to ensure we have the right people, in the right place with the right skills at the right time. The creation of our Community Resilience teams has also provided opportunities for new and existing staff to undertake different and/or specialist roles.

We have refreshed our selection methods to incorporate assessment against behaviours as well as operational/skills and ability as well as putting frameworks in place to ensure consistency of application across our processes. Additionally, we have reviewed our workforce data requirements to ensure we use evidence to inform our decision making.

We have focused on ensuring we performance manage our workforce in a more progressive modern way as well as updating the majority of our people policies.

To ensure we have the ability to deliver more prevention and protection activities we have established a Workforce Working Group to explore career pathways across the Service and look at how we can incorporate these into a talent framework. The Workforce Working Group meets on a monthly basis to also ensure staffing levels support the operational delivery model and provide appropriate levels of resilience.

The Service are establishing a more agile and flexible workforce and to do this we have opened up the opportunity for staff to take up differing types of employment contracts. These include the development of bank contracts for wholetime and on-call staff and more flexible contractual arrangements for on-call staff. We have also been able to offer on-call migration opportunities into wholetime employment. All ongoing

recruitment and promotion processes have been adapted to run in a COVID19 environment. An Equality Impact Assessment has also been drawn up to understand and mitigate any issues that may arise due to this situation.

**Recommendation 7. Ensure that the Service uses the available budget prudently to support its risk management activities**

We will continue to robustly monitor our finances. This includes regular financial monitoring meetings to ensure the prudent use of available budgets across departments.

The Making Surrey Safer Plan is appropriately funded. Our new operating model will be more efficient.

We will also review in light of the impacts of the pandemic and our response.

**The HMIFRS revisit letter indicated that they would like to see further progress in the following areas:**

**Fire engine availability.**

The Making Surrey Safer Plan has identified that we have too much appliance availability at night and not enough during the day. This is based on five years worth of data.

April 1<sup>st</sup> 2020 saw the implementation of Phase 1 of the Making Surrey Safer Plan and the removal of 4 frontline appliances overnight, and an increase of 2 frontline appliances during the day on Saturdays and Sundays. As a result the Service has been closer to specified availability levels almost continuously.

**Increase of recruitment to On-Call firefighter roles.**

Work is underway to improve the recruitment of on-call staff through detailed Station Action Plans and changes to Catchment Areas.

The on-call review is now a fully established and resourced project. This includes the provision of additional on-call Support Officers dedicated to the delivery of key workstreams.

This project has however been impacted by the pandemic. The focus for managers and staff has been in responding to the pandemic and less on the development of the workstreams. It is planned that this will be a focus area for the recovery period for the Service. It is however pleasing that we have been able to recruit 9 members of staff for a course that will commence in August. This course has been adapted and condensed to deliver to the original timeline, enabling staff to be able to provide operational cover.

**Attract and recruit more representative workforce.**

We will continue to ensure we put actions and measures in place to attract and recruit a more diverse workforce as reflected in our most recently reviewed People Strategy.

Ahead of our most recent recruitment campaign, we redesigned our messaging and promotional materials to accurately reflect the role of the firefighter with the aim of attracting a wider audience to apply for the role. We used social media to ensure that the message was targeted to those groups which were underrepresented in our workforce and refreshed and continue to improve our website.

We set up 'have a go' days for potential applicants to experience the selection processes they would have to go through to become a firefighter and continue to collaborate with a broad range of partners to engage with our local communities, helping us to understand the diverse needs of the people we serve so we can tailor our services and safety initiatives to those who need them most.

Along with our blue light partners we worked with Public Service Colleges to promote the role of firefighter to students and intend to continue this work moving forward.

Additionally, we have become a corporate member of the Women in the Fire Service to get support and a wider network of expertise to inform any positive action initiatives we may wish to pursue.

We have developed our workforce Fairness and Respect Network into a formal group which will scrutinise the Service and hold it to account, giving a voice to those who are under-represented and providing opportunities to share ideas, mentor colleagues, acquire new skills and participate in the development of diversity and inclusion initiatives.

To continue to ensure we are attracting a diverse workforce, we are reviewing our workforce data to ensure that we always have and maintain accurate and comprehensive workforce data to inform our strategic direction in terms of recruitment, retention and progression.

### **Proactive communications to the public.**

A communications and engagement plan has been developed and is now in implementation. This plan covers both communications with the public as well as communications internally with our staff and is continually updated. Our Customer Interface project includes:

- Updating our website so that it is easier to access and use. The first phase of updating the website has been completed which was to radically change the look and feel for users. This involved rebuilding from scratch, auditing of information, the removal of duplication and out of date information. Also updating and including new information strands. Importantly, the design and build has been based around fire service users and includes the ability to change and update the site remote from Surrey County Council. Phase 2 is to conduct a second audit, build in a decision tree to triage safe and well visits (SAWV) and to build virtual buildings highlighting SAWV information. It is planned to link this to causes of fire in high rise buildings and how to maintain common areas within them.

- Messaging on vehicles. The vehicle messaging has been affected by the suspension of trading due to the pandemic and a delay in purchasing of new vehicles. As we return to normal we will continue our plan for geographic messages (water safety in the north, wildfire in the west and road safety around the strategic road network).
- Thank you to everyone who responded to our customer survey through our webpages. We are currently bringing the outcomes together.

We are reviewing our communication plan to ensure it takes into account the impacts of the COVID19 pandemic, including for example the implications of continued social distancing to protect the vulnerable.

We hope that you have found this useful and informative. We will continue to update our progress on a regular basis.