

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.

HMICFRS told us they were concerned that the Service did not have a robust and sustainable operating model to manage our fire and rescue resources. They were also concerned about how we managed our financial and physical resources effectively and efficiently. They made seven recommendations to address these concerns. 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.

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 aim to start to introduce the new Service operating model in April 2020 using a phased approach so we can be assured that the changes are delivering the outcomes we expect.

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.

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.

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.

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 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 a new Workforce Resourcing policy, which provides support to managers across the Service to ensure we have the right people with the right skills in place.

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. The creation of our Community Resilience teams has also provided opportunities for new and existing staff to undertake different and/or specialist roles.

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.

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. We are confident that once the first phase of change has been made in April appliance availability will improve, as will performance targets.

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.

Attract and recruit more representative workforce.

In order to address one of the key recommendations of the HMICFRS the Service has recruited a Diversity and Inclusion Lead to ensure that we can focus on improving representation within the workforce to better represent our community profile. Work is now underway to develop the programme.

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
- Messaging on vehicles
- Working with our Contact Centre to create a single front door for our customers
- Development of Customer Survey