

## **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 2021. However, in the meantime HMICFRS will carry out a virtual inspection focusing on our response to COVID-19 and the impacts it has had on our service. This will take place over a two week period from Monday September 2021. A further inspection focusing on our progress against the two causes of concern from our 2018 report will take place before the end of the calendar year, dates to be confirmed.

As mentioned in our previous update, the impact of the terrible and far reaching COVID-19 pandemic on our services 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 is refreshed and updated annually 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

provision of proactive prevention and protection activities, targeted for the most vulnerable in our communities, to reduce risks and 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 (IRMP). We used this risk information to inform our modelling of the best distribution of resources to respond to emergencies. This analysis has been independently scrutinised, verified and assured on multiple occasions, to confirm it is robust and accurate.

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 went live in April 2020. Delivery of the second phase is being assured independently by Brunel University so that we can fully understand the impact of changing legislation, the findings of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry(s) and the current national emergency of COVID-19, on the outcomes we expect and on the risk data that is the foundation of our planning. The new service operating model is subject to continuous review and assurance.

**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 (WWG). This group is focussed on workforce planning including succession planning and is underpinned by a variety of policies and frameworks relating to our people. The WWG has access to comprehensive data relating to staffing levels and anticipated shortfalls which allows an improved level of evidence based decision making around workforce planning. It has also receives a quarterly workforce report which guides implementation of all areas of the People Strategy through this group.

We attracted 538 applicants for the role of firefighter. Twelve of those who have been appointed started their training in May of this year and a further twelve successful applicants started their training in September. We are about to launch an ongoing recruitment campaign for firefighters to join on both wholtime and on-call contracts. 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. Additionally, we are running a pilot of commencing an ongoing Recruitment campaign to recruit Firefighters on both on call and wholtime contracts.

Our new governance structure includes a Resources Working Group which ensures oversight of the Logistics teams, a key area of the business in the provision of suitable

and sufficient vehicles, equipment, etc. We also have a robust Capital Replacement Programme, which will fund the vehicles, equipment, etc. we need. We have also secured additional capital investment to enable our new ways of working, including investment in property.

**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 however we will continue to monitor and manage on an ongoing basis.

**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 sharing more news about the variety of teams within SFRS, including Business Safety, Joint Fire Control and our Fire Investigation Team.

We have been building on our communications plan to ensure that we are continuing to communicate with the public in a variety of ways. As a result, we have recently opened an Instagram account to capture a younger audience. We are ensuring that our communications are clear and transparent and help inform the public on the Making Surrey Safer Plan and the benefits it will bring to Surrey.

We are continuing to build on our approach to engagement through our Customer Interface project which is looking at how we engage with residents and stakeholders. 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. Importantly the design and build has been based around fire and rescue service users through user testing and includes the ability to change and update the site remotely from Surrey County Council.

We will continue to focus our efforts to ensure that we target the most vulnerable in our communities 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 COVID-19 pandemic.

Within phase 2 of this project we are building a decision tree to triage safe and well visits and building virtual buildings highlighting safe and well information. It is planned

to link this to causes of fire in high rise buildings and how to maintain common areas within them.

We are also updating our website to ensure that our recruitment information is easily accessible for people wanting to work for our service.

**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.

Our Community Intelligence Team has been expanded to increase data analysts. This team works with the Data and Digital Team to continue to identify, build and maintain different risk profiles ensuring that the service is confident that the Community Risk Profile reflects the 11 Boroughs and Districts across Surrey.

**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 the behavioural framework 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 many of our people policies.

Our Workforce Working Group (WWG) is exploring career pathways across the service and looking at how we can incorporate these into a talent framework. The

WWG meets on a monthly basis to also ensure staffing levels support the service delivery model and provide appropriate levels of resilience.

The service are establishing a more agile and flexible workforce and to do this we are exploring the opportunity for staff to take up differing types of employment contracts. These include the development of bank and extended 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 new and ongoing recruitment and promotion processes have been adapted to run in a COVID-19 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 continue to review our budget considering the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the outcomes of our transformation programme.

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

**Fire engine availability.**

1 April 2020 saw the implementation of Phase 1 of the Making Surrey Safer Plan. The changes that were implemented within Phase 1 included changes at Camberley, Fordbridge, Guildford and Woking Fire Stations who now have one immediately available fire engine available at night, rather than two. Haslemere and Walton Fire Stations have improved immediate availability as they have now changed from 5 working days to 7 working days.

Since the implementation of Phase 1, our fire engine availability is reflected on average as:

- Day = 22 fire engines.
- Night = 21 fire engines.

This represents an improvement when compared to the period during which the HMICFRS revisited and is above our minimum level of fire engine availability required, as detailed within the Making Surrey Safer Plan.

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

New and additional On-Call Support Officers are in place to improve on-call availability, recruitment and contractual arrangements. This investment in support and development of the on-call in Surrey, represents the most significant in over 20 years.

It is recognised nationally that the recruitment of on-call is a challenge for all Fire and Rescue Authorities. We have been carrying out research and analysis to understand how we can transform our approach to on-call and have now developed a plan to take this forward. We have also provided a strategic document to the new Ministerial Advisory Group, identifying potential legislation changes, policy changes, etc. that could support the viability of the on-call offer nationally.

We have recruited 7 members of staff who started their training course in August which will last 8 weeks. We have further courses planned and plan to be at full establishment by the end of the delivery of the Making Surrey Safer Plan.

**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 across our workforce and revamped our recruitment website.

We set up #SurreyFireFit which is a programme for potential applicants to get support and advice on the selection processes they would have to go through to become a firefighter. To complement this we have recently launched a mentor scheme for new starters and those interested in joining the Fire Service to provide guidance and tailored support.

We 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 working in a joined up way with our Business Community Intelligence and Schools teams.

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.

Finally, we recently undertook a Rapid Improvement Event to review our targeting, attraction and recruitment practices, which we are confident will make a difference to those members of our community considering a role in the fire and rescue service and that they will be best supported to achieve such.

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

As explained in Recommendation 4, a Communications and Engagement Strategy has been developed and is now in implementation. This strategy covers both communications with the public as well as communications internally with our staff and is continually updated. Objectives within the plan are:

#### **External communications**

- Improve public perception of the Making Surrey Safer Plan and SFRS.
- Increase promotion of community safety work and campaigns for vulnerable people particularly, with the aim of increasing self-service Safe and Well Visits by 400%.
- Support the work with businesses to improve their understanding and compliance of fire safety legislation.
- Help increase recruitment of people from underrepresented groups.
- Improve the out of hours duty press cover for SFRS.

#### **Internal communications**

- Improve internal communications for all SFRS staff to ensure it is clear and concise.
- Support SFRS staff through the recovery and possible second wave of COVID-19.

We are continually updating our Communications and Engagement Strategy by listening to feedback from both our staff and the public to ensure we are reflecting the needs of all.

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