



**TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**Item No 6**

**MEETING: FIRE AUTHORITY 22 JANUARY 2024**

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**SUBJECT: HMICFRS THEMATIC INSPECTION OF TWFRS 2023**

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER/CHIEF EXECUTIVE (THE CLERK TO  
THE AUTHORITY)**

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the outcome of the recent thematic inspection of Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS), by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS).
- 1.2 The findings of this inspection provides the third and latest independent feedback within a year on how the Service is managed, and the culture within the Service, in addition to the independent staff survey and cultural reviews, undertaken last year.
- 1.3 Feedback from HMICFRS inspections support the Service's drive for continuous improvement, and provides assurance about performance.
- 1.4 This paper provides Members with an update on the summary feedback from HMICFRS following this inspection. No formal report is provided to any of the participating services by the HMICFRS.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 On 19 July 2023, HMICFRS wrote to all Chief Fire Officers (CFOs) to advise that HMICFRS would carry out a thematic inspection of the handling of misconduct cases in FRS in England, namely to examine the extent to which services have taken steps to implement the recommendations made in their spotlight report 'Values and Culture in the Fire and Rescue Service', published on 30 March 2023.
- 2.2 The terms of reference for the inspection stated that HMICFRS would be examining the following as part of the inspection, with findings reported to the Home Secretary:
  - the extent to which services are identifying and investigating misconduct;



- the effectiveness of misconduct processes and how consistently they are applied;
- how confident fire and rescue service staff are in raising concerns and in misconduct processes; and
- the role of fire and rescue authorities and other organisations in handling misconduct.

2.3 Members will be aware that TWFRS was selected as one of ten of the 44 Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) in England to be inspected as part of this thematic inspection.

2.4 The last three thematic inspections are currently underway, with a national report due to be published in summer 2024. HMICFRS have confirmed that there will be no graded judgements and/or reports published for individual services inspected, and no FRS will be named in the national report.

2.5 The thematic inspection in TWFRS was undertaken over three weeks, between 4 to 22 December 2023.

2.6 On 4 January 2024, HMICFRS provided a 'hot debrief' to the Principal Officers of TWFRS. This debrief contained a highlight summary of the findings from the thematic inspection, and was delivered by the Service Liaison Lead (SLL) and Assistant Portfolio Director for Thematic Inspections.

### **3 INSPECTION METHODOLOGY**

3.1 HMICFRS carried out a comprehensive range of activities as part of the inspection, including:

- data analysis and document review;
- desktop review of a sample of complaint, grievance, discipline, and whistleblowing files and other Service documents;
- a staff survey (extended out to ex-FRS staff);
- interviews with key individuals;
- focus groups;
- reality testing exercises.

3.2 The inspection activity was conducted via a combination of onsite and remote activity and engagement. Over one hundred staff were engaged with during the inspection either individually or as part of focus groups (not including staff who submitted feedback through the inspection survey).

3.3 The inspection included interviews with the the Chair of the Fire Authority, Chief Fire Officer, Head of HR, Head of L&D, Head of Corporate Communications, HR advisors and staff companions who have supported any grievance and disciplinary cases.



## **4 FEEDBACK ON FINDINGS FROM THE INSPECTION**

4.1 No formal service report is provided however the following summary feedback was provided to TWFRS Principal Officers in the Hot Debrief on 4 January 2024:

4.2 Positive practice:

- Senior leaders work hard to promote and model the values of the Service, and communicate expectations
- An improvement culture is recognised by staff
- Staff are proud to work for TWFRS
- Staff received good support following the national TV coverage of the culture in TWFRS last year
- Public complaints are dealt with efficiently and in a timely manner, and all parties are kept up to date with progress
- Where issue of a serious nature have occurred, the Service has used external organisations to investigate

4.3 Areas for consideration:

- Whilst misconduct investigations and appeals are dealt with in line with procedure, they could be dealt with in a more timely manner;
- Some inconsistencies were evident in the application of policy and procedure, for example the level they were dealt with;
- More training could be provided to build confidence amongst staff dealing with misconduct at an informal level.

4.3.1 HMICFRS acknowledged that the Service is on an improvement trajectory. For Members reassurance, the Service has already taken steps to address the three areas noted above, for example enhancing the training provided to middle and senior managers last year by scheduling sessions for supervisory managers.

4.4 Innovative Practice:

Finally, HMICFRS advised that TWFRS' current approach to mentoring and developing staff to become investigating officers was considered innovative practice, and one they would be sharing as a result of this inspection.

4.4 HMICFRS also advised, in the Hot Debrief, that it was refreshing how open and transparent the Service, and staff, had been throughout this inspection process. They also noted how well the Service had co-ordinated and managed the inspection process.



- 4.5 The Chief Fire officer was also given the opportunity to provide feedback to HMICFRS on the inspection process.

## **5 ROUND 3 INSEPCCTIONS 2023-25**

- 5.1 In January 2023, HMICFRS commenced the first of the Round 3 full inspections for all 44 FRS in England.
- 5.2 TWFRS are due to commence our Round 3 inspection in April 2024, with document requests, staff survey and self-assessments to be conducted in March 2024. The Service has been advised that any findings from the most recent thematic inspection may be used in the round 3 inspection in March.
- 5.3 Members will be updated on progress of the Round 3 inspection as appropriate.

## **6 RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 6.1 HMICFRS inspection assesses how the Service is performing in the pillars of effectiveness, efficiency and people and helps identify improvements which will support the Service in achieving the vision of '*Creating the Safest Community*'.
- 6.2 The Service already has an established continuous improvement approach that takes into account any feedback and findings from HMICFRS inspection activity, in addition to our own programme of self-assurance. This ensures the Service manages inspection, and any associated risks, in the most effective and efficient way.

## **7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no financial implications in respect of this report.

## **8 EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no equality and fairness implications in respect of this report.

## **9 HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no health and safety implications in respect of this report.

## **10 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 The Authority is recommended to:



- a) Note the contents of this paper and the associated background reports.
  - b) Receive further progress reports relating to HMICFRS as appropriate.
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## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The under mentioned Background Papers refer to the subject matter of the above report:

HMICFRS Report: [Values and culture in fire and rescue services](#)

HMICFRS Report: [Fire and Rescue Services Inspection Programme and Framework January 2023](#)

