

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	AUTHORITY BUDGET MEETING		
DATE:	22 FEBRUARY 2018	REPORT NO:	CFO/013/18
PRESENTING OFFICER	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	PHIL GARRIGAN	REPORT AUTHOR:	DEB APPLETON
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT GROUP		
TITLE OF REPORT:	NATIONAL FRAMEWORK AND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE INSPECTION CONSULTATION		

APPENDICES:	APPENDIX A:	NATIONAL FRAMEWORK AND MFRA RESPONSE
	APPENDIX B:	FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE INSPECTION DOCUMENTS AND MFRA RESPONSE

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Members of the development of:
 - a. the new draft National Framework and
 - b. the Fire and Rescue Service Inspection Framework.

and to provide details of the Authority's response to both consultations.

Recommendation

2. That Members note the details of the draft National Framework and Fire and Rescue Inspection framework and the MFRA response to consultation on both proposals.

Introduction and Background

National Framework

3. In 2016, the Home Office outlined a programme of fire and rescue Authority reform which included:

“Transforming local governance of fire and rescue by enabling mayors and police and crime commissioners to take on responsibility for fire and rescue services where a local case is made;

Establishing Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) as an independent inspection regime for fire and rescue authorities;

Developing a comprehensive set of professional standards to drive sector improvement;

Supporting services to transform commercially with more efficient procurement and collaboration;

Increasing the transparency of services with the publication of greater performance data and the creation of a new national fire website; and –

Driving forward an ambitious programme for workforce reform including through enhancing: professionalism; management and leadership; training and development; equality and diversity; improved culture; and options for flexible working.”

4. The requirement for a Fire and Rescue National Framework, which sets priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) in England in connection with the discharge of their functions, was established in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. The National Framework was last updated in 2012 and the Home Office has determined that changes are needed which warrant a full revision of it at this time to embed the fire reform programme such as the creation of a new inspectorate for fire and rescue services and the creation of the National Fire Chiefs Council. The new draft Framework also reflects the provisions in the Policing and Crime Act 2017 on emergency services collaboration and changes to fire and rescue governance.
5. The Home Office proposes the priorities and objectives for FRAs as set by the Framework (Appendix A) to be:
 - identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their areas face;
 - make appropriate provision for fire prevention and protection activities and response to fire and rescue related incidents;
 - collaborate with emergency services and other local and national partners to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of service provision;
 - be accountable to communities for the service they provide; and
 - develop and maintain a workforce that is resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse.

Officers have reviewed the proposed provisions of the National Framework and submitted a consultation response to the Home Office which is attached at Appendix A.

Fire and Rescue Service Inspection

Background

6. In July 2017, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary's (HMIC) remit was extended to include inspections of Fire and Rescue Authorities in England. It is now called Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).
7. This is the first inspection programme and framework for fire and rescue service inspections. HMICFRS recently consulted on their approach to fire and rescue service inspection (consultation documents and MFRA response is attached at Appendix B). As part of their inspection reports, HMICFRS will provide graded judgments, which will help the public to see how well their fire and rescue service is performing.
8. The fire and rescue services inspection programme is intended to enable HMICFRS to draw together evidence from inspections of all 45 fire and rescue services in England which will consider:
 - the operational service provided to the public (including prevention, protection, resilience, and response);
 - the efficiency of the service (how well it provides value for money, allocates resources to match risk, and collaborates with the police and ambulance services); and
 - the organisational effectiveness of the service (how well it promotes its values and culture, trains its staff and ensures they have the necessary skills, ensures fairness and diversity for the workforce and develops leadership and service capability).
9. The fire and rescue services inspections will not include an assessment of corporate governance or the accountability structures provided by the Fire and Rescue Authority, Police and Crime Commissioner, locally elected Mayors and, in London, the Mayor's Office.
10. HMICFRS intend to gather information to inform their assessments in relation to a number of Key Lines of Enquiry using a range of methods that include:
 - analysis of documents and data
 - reviews of operational incidents
 - surveys of the public, and of fire and rescue services staff
 - interviews; focus groups
 - observations of fire and rescue practice

11. Following the first round of full inspections, HMICFRS intends to move to a risk-based inspection programme, which will be developed and consulted on separately. This allows inspection activity and resources to take account of known risks to public safety and to reflect the assessed performance of each fire and rescue service.

Graded judgments

12. Fire and Rescue Authorities will be assessed and given graded judgments for the three principal questions in the inspection methodology (efficiency, effectiveness and people). HMICFRS may give a single overall judgment for each service. They will test this during pilot inspections taking place in West Yorkshire, Norfolk and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Services and make a final decision as to their approach when the pilots have concluded (April 2018).
13. The categories of graded judgment will be:
 - outstanding;
 - good;
 - requires improvement; and
 - inadequate
14. Good will be based on policy, practice or performance that meets pre-defined grading criteria that are informed by any relevant national operational guidance or standards. If the policy, practice or performance exceeds what is expected for good, then consideration will be given to a graded judgment of outstanding. If there are shortcomings in the policy, practice or performance of the fire and rescue service, then consideration will be given to a graded judgment of requires improvement. If there are serious critical failings of policy, practice or performance of the fire and rescue service, then consideration will be given to a graded judgment of inadequate.
15. As well as the public consultation, HMICFRS has established a fire and rescue service external reference group. Its members include those who have specific skills and experience in the areas that will be inspected. MFRA has several officers currently engaged with HMICFRS to assist them in refining the framework.
16. Following the outcomes of the consultation and three pilot inspections it is intended that the full inspection programme will be carried out in three tranches commencing in summer 2018. There will be 15 FRA's in each tranche and MFRA is in the second tranche – autumn/winter 2018. The full extent of the resources required to prepare for inspection and not known at the moment. The Director of Strategy and Performance (as the Service coordinator for inspection) will work with colleagues to establish any additional resources that may be required.

17. Officers have reviewed the proposed Inspection framework and submitted a consultation response to HMICFRS which is attached at Appendix B.

Equality and Diversity Implications

18. There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report. E&D will be a key part of the inspection framework.

Staff Implications

19. Many staff will be involved in the inspection process. The Strategic Management Group have consulted with staff in relation to the consultation and staff will be engaged with during all aspects of the inspection.

Legal Implications

20. The Authority is required to give due regard to the Fire and Rescue National Framework.
21. Inspection will be a requirement of the National Framework.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

22. There are no significant financial implications arising from this report at this time. Any costs associated with inspection preparation are being met from existing budgets, but this will be reviewed as the process progresses.

Risk Management, Health & Safety, and Environmental Implications

23. There could be as yet undetermined organisational risks associated with receiving a poor inspection report. This will be kept under review as the process develops.

Contribution to Our Mission: *Safer Stronger Communities – Safe Effective Firefighters*

24. The National Framework sets out expectations for all fire and rescue services and inspection process is designed to provide a judgement on the way in which the Service is delivering against its objectives and obligations.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

GLOSSARY OF TERMS
