MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	COMMUNITY SAFETY AND PROTECTION COMMITTEE		
DATE:	3 SEPTEMBER 2026	REPORT NO:	CFO/07/2627
PRESENTING OFFICER	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, NICK SEARLE		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY & PERFORMANCE, DEB APPLETON,	REPORT AUTHOR:	GROUP MANAGER UCHE IHIEKWE
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TEAM (SLT)		
TITLE OF REPORT:	HMICFRS 2025 INSPECTION - AGREED IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS		

APPENDICES:	APPENDIX A:	HMICFRS INSPECTION ACTION PLAN

Purpose of Report

1. To inform the Members of the improvement actions agreed following detailed review of the 2025 HMICFRS inspection report, and to set out the arrangements for their delivery, monitoring, evaluation and assurance.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that the Members:

   a) note the 17 improvement actions and 73 supporting sub-actions arising from the 2025 HMICFRS inspection, as summarised in Appendix A;

   b) note that nine actions respond directly to three formal Areas for Improvement and eight actions address significant narrative findings elsewhere in the inspection report;

   c) endorse the transfer of the agreed actions to the Service-wide Action Tracker (The Tracker) for ongoing management, reporting and evaluation; and

   d) note that overall delivery will be governed through the Service Improvement Board, with material risks, exceptions or decisions escalated to the Strategic Leadership Team where required.

Introduction and Background

3. HMICFRS published its 2025 inspection report for Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service in March 2026. An initial report was presented to the Strategic

Leadership Team on 7th April 2026, setting out the inspection judgements, areas of positive practice and matters requiring improvement, together with the proposed Service Improvement Process. The full inspection report can be found here:
[Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service 2025–2027 - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services]

4. Since that report, Strategy and Performance has completed a detailed review of the inspection findings. This included analysis of the formal Areas for Improvement and the wider narrative within the report, engagement with the relevant Directors and Area Managers, and development of proportionate actions, sub-actions, definitions of completion and measures of success.

5. The review deliberately extended beyond the formal Areas for Improvement. Where the inspection narrative identified a material weakness, gap in assurance or opportunity to improve, an action has been agreed even where HMICFRS did not issue a formal Area for Improvement. This provides a more complete and transparent response to the evidence contained in the inspection report.

6. The completed review has produced 17 actions supported by 73 sub-actions. Nine actions address the three formal Areas for Improvement relating to project governance, talent management and leadership development, and Equality Impact Assessments. The remaining eight actions address significant inspection narrative concerning cross-border and multi-agency exercising, Prevention, and Protection.

Inspection theme	Lead area	Actions	Basis
Project governance	Strategy & Performance	3	Formal AFI
High-potential staff and aspiring leaders	People & Organisational Development	3	Formal AFI
Equality Impact Assessments	People & Organisational Development	3	Formal AFI
Cross-border exercising	Response	1	Wider narrative
Multi-agency exercising	Operational Preparedness	1	Wider narrative
Protection assurance and evaluation	Protection	3	Wider narrative
Prevention integration, targeting and evaluation	Prevention	3	Wider narrative

7. Each action has been structured to include a clear action statement, supporting sub-actions, a definition of completion and measures of success. This ensures that closure is based on demonstrable delivery and evidence of impact, rather than completion of activity alone.

8. Appendix A lists the agreed action titles, lead areas, action owners and target dates currently recorded.

Management, Reporting and Assurance

9. All agreed actions will be entered into the Service wide Action Tracker as HMICFRS action types. The tracker will provide a single source of truth for ownership, target dates, sub-actions, BRAG status, progress updates, evidence and evaluation.

10. Where appropriate, actions will be supported by an action level logic model. The logic model will record the rationale for the action, required inputs and activities, expected outputs, intended short, medium and long-term outcomes, assumptions, risks and benefits. This will retain the definition of completion and measures of success while providing a stronger basis for evaluation and benefits realisation.

11. Responsible officers will provide proportionate updates through the Action Tracker in accordance with the established reporting cycle. Updates will distinguish between delivery activity, outputs achieved, emerging evidence of outcomes and any issues affecting timescale, capacity, dependencies or sustainability.

12. The Service Improvement Board will provide the principal governance and scrutiny route. It will review progress, challenge delivery and evidence, consider risks and dependencies, and determine whether actions are ready for closure. Material exceptions, unresolved barriers, changes of scope or matters requiring strategic direction will be escalated to the Strategic Leadership Team. Day to day delivery of the projects required to achieve the actions will be governed by the Service's Strategic Boards as appropriate.

13. Actions will only be recommended for closure where the agreed definition of completion has been met, and sufficient evidence exists against the measures of success. Closure of an action will not prevent continued monitoring where benefits or outcomes require a longer period to become fully demonstrable.

Equality and Diversity Implications

14. The agreed programme includes three actions specifically addressing HMICFRS's Area for Improvement concerning Equality Impact Assessments. These actions will strengthen the process, template, guidance, governance, quality assurance and tracking of actions arising from EIAs.

15. EDI considerations will also be applied across the wider programme by ensuring that improvement activity considers protected characteristics, vulnerability, accessibility, seldom-heard communities and disparities identified through data or feedback. The existing Equality Impact Assessment for the Service Improvement Process will be reviewed as the programme develops.

Staff Implications

16. The action programme will require engagement and delivery activity across several Functions. Relevant responsible officers and teams will need sufficient capacity to complete agreed actions, provide evidence and participate in governance and evaluation arrangements.

17. The actions concerning talent management and leadership development are intended to improve staff understanding, confidence, fairness and transparency in the identification, development and promotion of high-potential staff and aspiring leaders.

Legal Implications

18. There are no direct legal implications arising solely from this report. Delivery of the programme will, however, strengthen assurance against relevant statutory duties, including equality duties, and the inspection and improvement requirements arising under the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

19. No additional budget requirement is identified through this report. Individual actions will be delivered through existing departmental resources unless a separate business case identifies a need for investment.

20. The formal Area for Improvement relating to project and programme management is directly concerned with value for money and intended outcomes. The agreed actions will strengthen proportional project governance, benefits realisation, evaluation and organisational oversight.

Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications

21. The action programme addresses known organisational risks and assurance gaps identified through the HMICFRS inspection. Recording actions within The Tracker and scrutinising them through the Service Improvement Board will support timely escalation and mitigation of delivery risks.

22. Several actions are intended to improve operational preparedness, interoperability, Prevention targeting and Protection assurance. Successful delivery will therefore contribute indirectly to community and responder safety.

Environmental Implications

23. There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report. Environmental impacts and sustainability considerations will be considered within individual actions where relevant.

Contribution to Our Vision:	***To be the best Fire & Rescue Service in the UK.***
Our Purpose:	*Here to serve, Here to protect, Here to keep you safe.*

24. By converting inspection findings into owned, measurable and governed improvement activity, the programme will support a reflective, evidence-led and forward-looking organisation that learns continuously and improves outcomes for staff and communities.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

HMICFRS - MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE 2025 INSPECTION REPORT.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

NONE