

**ESSEX POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER
FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY
Essex County Fire & Rescue Service**



Meeting	Service Leadership Team	Agenda no.	6j
	Strategic Board		8
Date of Meeting	30th April 2024		
	13th June 2024		
Report Authors:	Tracy King, Assistant Director		
Presented By	Moira Bruin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer		
Subject	Cycle 3 HMICFRS Final report and action plan		
Type of Report:	Information		
Action Point No.	N/A	For Publication	Yes

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) accepts the Cycle 3 HMICFRS report and notes the proposed approach to the areas for improvement identified.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper outlines the findings in the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service Cycle 3 HMICFRS report and details how areas for improvement will be addressed.

BACKGROUND

From August 2023 to the end of October 2023 Essex County Fire and Rescue Service had their third HMICFRS Inspection. HMICFRS took a hybrid approach to inspection with a mixture of virtual and on-site activity such as interviews, desktop reviews and focus groups took place across a 10-week period. Following inspection, the Service received a hot debrief on 27 October 2023, the report for pre-publication checks on 6 December 2023 and the final report was published on 8 March 2023. The full report is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

The approach to grading for cycle 3 inspections was changed and the Inspectorate no longer issues overall grades to each pillar (effectiveness, efficiency, and response) as they did in cycles 1 and 2. Grades are now issued against each of the 11 diagnostics that form the framework of the Inspection. The table below sets out the grades awarded to Essex Fire for the cycle 3 Inspection.

Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Requires improvement	Inadequate
	Understanding fire and risk	Responding to major incidents	Public safety through fire regulation	
	Preventing fire and risk	Managing performance and developing leaders	Responding to fires and emergencies	
	Future affordability		Best use of resources	
			Promoting values and culture	
			Right people, right skills	
			Promoting fairness and diversity	

The narrative of the report writes positively about the progress that has been made by the Service since our cycle 2 inspection in 2021 and the first inspection in 2019. A summary of the positive narrative is provided below:

Effectiveness

- The service knows the risks it faces and consults with the public has clear prevention and protection strategies based on its IRMP
- The service has an effective IRMP
- The service builds its understanding of risk using data from operational activity
- The service has increased activity to implement its prevention strategy
- The service has improved the targeting of its prevention activity
- Staff in the central prevention team are skilled and confident in carrying out safe and well visits
- The service responds well to safeguarding concerns
- The service collaborates well with others to reduce the number of fires and other risks
- The service tackles fire-setting behaviour
- Evaluation of prevention work has improved
- The service has a protection strategy linked to its IRMP
- The service has set itself an achievable RBIP (Risk Based Inspection Programme)
- Workforce planning and resourcing of protection work has improved
- The service has a new strategy for working with businesses
- The service is attending fewer unwanted fire signals
- Staff understand how to command incidents safely
- Control staff are more integrated with service activities
- Staff can easily access risk information
- The service evaluates operational performance
- The service keeps the public informed of incidents
- The service is prepared for major and multi-agency incidents
- The service works well with other fire and rescue services
- Staff are trained in and familiar with JESIP
- The service works well with other partners
- The service uses national learning

Efficiency

- Financial plans are built on sound scenarios
- Collaboration is producing some benefits
- The service has good continuity arrangements
- The service is showing better financial management
- The service is making better use of reserves
- Fleet and estates strategies support future service provision
- The service is making better use of technology to improve efficiency and effectiveness
- The service takes advantage of opportunities to secure external funding and generate income

People

- The service's culture continues to improve
- The service promotes mental and physical health and well-being
- Staff understanding of absence management has improved
- Workforce planning has improved,
- The service is improving its approach to EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion)
- The service has open and transparent promotion and progression processes

The service was credited with positive practise for its safe share scheme through the HMICFRS report. HMICFRS said

The safe share scheme prevents potential escalations

In January, the service introduced a 'safe share' scheme for staff to confidentially and anonymously report concerns or seek support.

It closes the gap between openly reporting concerns internally and whistle-blowing externally. Through this, issues that are affecting staff are being identified earlier than they would have been previously. This has prevented potential escalations.

All positive practise identified is placed on the NFCC (National Fire Chiefs Council) positive practise portal. The Portal provides details about interventions, which have been developed by one or more Fire and Rescue Services to address a particular need, concern or organisational change recognised by the NFCC or HMICFRS as an innovative or positive practice. These practices are in different functional areas and may include operational and non-operational responses, business practices and good ideas.

Through the cycle 3 inspection the Service also achieved clearance of the Cause of Concern against protection which had been issued in 2019 (cycle 1 Inspection). The Protection Team must be commended for the excellent work they have done to improve the protection function. HMICFRS acknowledge improvements in protection such as: -

- The service's protection strategy is clearly linked to the risks it has identified in its IRMP
- Staff across the service are involved in protection activities, and when needed, they feedback information effectively
- The service has now set itself an achievable RBIP, which is informed by local risk information. It is based on an improved dataset, which the service is continuing to update
- Better planning of its workforce to meet the demands of its protection strategy
- The service's RBIP is focused on its understanding of its highest-risk buildings
- Detailed monitoring and performance management of the protection function
- The service has a new quality assurance policy for protection that is aligned with the service's overall assurance framework

Through cycle 3 the Service managed to clear 14 Areas for Improvement Identified in the cycle 2 inspection. The areas for improvement cleared were in the following areas: -

- The service should make sure it allocates enough resources to meet its prevention strategy
- The service should make sure staff understand how to identify vulnerability and safeguard vulnerable people
- The service should evaluate its prevention activity, so it understands what works.
- The service should ensure it works with local businesses and large organisations to share information and expectations on compliance with fire safety regulations.
- The service should make sure its operational staff have good access to relevant and up-to-date cross-border risk information.
- The service should make sure that it is taking action to reduce non-pay costs and can demonstrate how it is achieving value for money.
- The service needs to better understand the financial challenges it faces. It should strengthen the assumptions that underpin its plans to manage the risk of fire and other risks now and in the future.
- The service should have a clear and sustainable strategic plan for the use of its reserves which promotes new ways of working.
- The service needs to assure itself that it is maximising opportunities to improve effectiveness and efficiency through the better use of technology.
- The service should make sure that its absence/attendance procedures are consistently applied.
- The service should make sure its workforce plan takes full account of the necessary skills and capabilities to carry out the IRMP.
- The service needs to assure itself that all staff are appropriately trained for their role. It needs to ensure all staff keep their skills up to date and have a consistent method of recording when they have received training.
- The service should review how effective its policy on bullying, harassment and discrimination is in reducing unacceptable behaviour towards its staff.
- The service should make improvements to the way it collects equality data to better understand its workforce demographics and needs.

HMICFRS identified 5 new areas for improvement in our Cycle 3 report. The breakdown of areas of improvement across each pillar is shown below:

Pillar	Number of areas of improvement	Detail
Effectiveness	3	<p>The service should make sure that its quality assurance process is effective, so staff carry out audits to an appropriate standard and they are accurately recorded.</p> <p>The service should assure itself that its use of enforcement powers prioritises the highest risks and includes proportionate activity to reduce risk.</p> <p>The service should improve the availability of its fire engines to make sure it can respond better to incidents.</p>
Efficiency	0	
People	2	The service should make sure all firefighters are appropriately trained in safety-critical skills, such as

		breathing apparatus use and driving. The service should assure itself that all managers are appropriately trained and supported in their roles.
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There were x areas for improvement that remain open from the cycle 2 report which are embedded into the continuous improvement plan. These are as follows: -

Pillar	Number of areas of improvement	Detail
Effectiveness	4	<p>The service should ensure it gathers and records relevant and up-to-date risk information.</p> <p>The service should make sure its Response Strategy provides the most appropriate response for the public in line with its Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).</p> <p>The service should ensure that its procedures for responding to terrorist-related incidents are understood by all staff and are well tested.</p> <p>The service should make sure it participates in a programme of cross-border exercises, sharing the learning from these exercises.</p>
Efficiency	3	<p>The service needs to show a clear rationale for the resources allocated between prevention, protection, and response activities. This should be linked to risks and priorities set out in its IRMP.</p> <p>The service should assure itself that its workforce is productive.</p> <p>The service should assure itself that it makes the most of collaboration opportunities and that they are value for money.</p>
People	5	<p>The service should make sure all staff understand and demonstrate its values.</p> <p>The service should monitor secondary contracts to make sure working hours are not exceeded</p> <p>The service should make sure issues identified through its staff survey are appropriately addressed and that actions taken are communicated to staff in a timely way</p> <p>To identify and tackle barriers to equality of opportunity, and make its workforce more representative, the service should ensure diversity and inclusion are well understood and become important values of the whole of the service.</p>

		The service should put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop, and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders
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The service now has a total of 17 areas for improvement detailed in the cycle 3 report.

The service takes each of the areas of improvement and embeds them into the Continuous Improvement plan (previously known as the Annual Plan) to ensure focus on the required improvement is not lost, and progress can be monitored through both Continuous Improvement Board and the Police Fire and Crime Commissioners Performance and Resource Board.

For each Area for Improvement the Continuous Improvement Plan sets out the detail of the area for improvement, definition of done and what future deliverables are planned along with an indication of when those deliverables will be achieved.

The service has always embraced HMICFRS inspections as an opportunity to learn and assist us on our journey of continued improvement but recognises that there is still work to do to improve.

OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS

None in relation to this report as the Service has an obligation to respond to the areas identified within the HMICFRS report.

RISKS AND MITIGATIONS

None in relation to this report

LINKS TO FIRE AND RESCUE PLAN

Annual Plan activity and the portfolio of change are aligned to Fire and Rescue Plan priorities and the Integrated Risk Management Plan themes. By incorporating HMICFRS areas of improvement into the Annual Planning process there are then clear links to how the planned improvement will contribute to our strategic goals and objectives.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None in relation to this report

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None in relation to this report

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

None in relation to this report

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

We have considered whether individuals with protected characteristics will be disadvantaged as a consequence of the actions being taken. Due regard has also been given to whether there is impact on people who may identify as being within each of the following protected groups as defined within the Equality Act 2010:

Race	N	Religion or belief	N
Sex	N	Gender reassignment	N

Age	N	Pregnancy & maternity	N
Disability	N	Marriage and Civil Partnership	N
Sexual orientation	N		

The Core Code of Ethics Fire Standard has been fully considered and incorporated into the proposals outlined in this paper.

This approach is an enabler for the ongoing development of our culture towards a Service that has high performing teams with a focus on service delivery and accountability.

HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None in relation to this report

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Our Cycle 3 report has been widely shared across the service with both managers and staff.

FUTURE PLANS

The HMICFRS State of Fire Report will be published in Spring 2024

The HMICFRS Thematic report into misconduct is due to be published in Summer 2024

The Service is likely to have its next full HMICFRS inspection in 2026

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS AND APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Cycle 3 HMICFRS Report [Essex Fire and Rescue Service 2023-2025 - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Essex-Fire-and-Rescue-Service-2023-2025-Report.pdf)

Background paper: Cycle 2 HMICRS Report [Essex - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicrs/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Essex-Report-2021-22.pdf)

Background paper: Cycle 1 HMICRS Report <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicrs/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Essex-County-Fire-and-Rescue-Service-Report-2018-19.pdf>