

CABINET- 19 December 2023**CABINET RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF THE COMMUNITIES, ENVIRONMENT & HIGHWAYS SELECT COMMITTEE****Item under consideration: SURREY FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT & HMICFRS INSPECTION****Recommendations:**

That the Communities Environment and Highways Select Committee:

- I. Expresses appreciation of the efforts of Surrey Fire and Rescue Service and notes ongoing public support for the service and improvements that have been made to bring about a positive working culture.
- II. Expresses concern over the number of areas for improvement identified in the HMICFRS inspection and in particular the general lack of performance management and oversight within protection that is identified. This affects productivity and effectiveness. The Select Committee urges Officers to ensure there is clear direction and guidance to staff on prioritising risk and targeting activity; better performance management and quality assurance to ensure high risk premises are inspected in agreed timeframes; and audits carried out to a consistent and acceptable standard, whilst also maintaining the good progress that has been made in other areas.
- III. Echoes the concern of HMICFRS that only one prosecution was carried out in the five years from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2022 and that the service doesn't consistently use its full range of enforcement powers or take appropriate opportunities to prosecute those who don't comply with fire safety regulations. The Select Committee notes that prosecution rates have improved since April 2022 and urges the Cabinet Member for Fire and Rescue, and Resilience to keep this issue under review; to ensure that the service's relationship with the Council legal team is effective and that adequate support is provided to enforce fire safety legislation.
- IV. Notes that HMICFRS identifies a number of areas where poor ICT systems are limiting productivity and operational effectiveness (e.g., where records cannot be adequately updated due to system constraints) and even outdated reliance on several paper-based systems which are inefficient and hinder productivity. The Select Committee

urges a review of the adequacy of existing systems in supporting and maximising operational efficiency and effectiveness and a check on deliverability of the ICT Strategy to determine whether it remains fit for purpose and whether the Service has the capacity and capability to complete these projects.

Johnathan Hulley
Chairman, Communities, Environment & Highways Select Committee

Cabinet Response:

- I. We are delighted that the hard work and professionalism of our staff has been recognised. These are staff who, on a daily basis, put their lives on the line to protect the residents of Surrey. A positive working culture is a vital cog in this process. It is accepted that we have commenced an improvement journey, and it will be the staff themselves who own and drive improvements across the service.

- II. SFRS are continually reviewing their Performance Management Framework, the understanding of such across the workforce, and supporting governance arrangements. This includes a suite of Key Performance Indicators to monitor performance. For example, Safe and Well Visits, audits, risk information and other key areas of delivery.

The Service has reviewed its Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) and will include a different measure of risk utilising a wider range of factors. This method has been reviewed by the National Fire Chiefs Council and external peers who have confirmed that the content of our RBIP with regards to Very High, High and Medium risks are equivalent to those on their risk radar. SFRS's timeline on inspection frequency is also equitable to that expected in a RBIP.

The revised RBIP sets out expectations of the workforce and our fire safety managers are better enabled to manage and distribute work to the inspectors.

There is now a more robust system of allocating audits to inspectors in line with the RBIP and ensuring that very high and high-risk premises are prioritised for inspection. This will be further enhanced by the introduction of a new software system called Prevent and Protect (P&P).

Inspectors are encouraged to 'work smarter' and spend most of their time in the community, working with businesses and Responsible Persons. This expectation will also be supported with the new P&P software system, enabling every visit to 'collect once and use many times'. Furthermore, we are currently discussing additional tools that will enable enhanced remote working, such as the types of vehicles they use.

- III. The service is working with SCC's legal team to understand the appetite to pursue more prosecutions. However, these must comply with legislation and meet the public interest test, targets cannot be set against the number of prosecutions. The National Fire Chief's Council is in the process of creating a National Prosecutions Team to offer support to fire and rescue services, including legal advice. SFRS will monitor this to ensure it keeps abreast of developments.
- IV. Assurances have been given by the service that the deliverables in the ICT strategy can be achieved. The service has regular meetings to monitor delivery of IT projects with IT&D colleagues. The IT Projects Board and Asset Board are supported by SFRS's Resources Working Group. IT&D chair the project board and attend the working group meetings.

An IT roadmap has been developed highlighting the key projects over the coming years that support the delivery of the ICT strategy.

Kevin Deanus
Cabinet Member for Fire and Rescue, and Resilience
19 December 2023

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