

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services Inspection 2024: Cause of Concern and Areas for Improvement Update

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Executive Summary

This report provides an update on Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service's (SFRS) response to the 2024 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection, addressing a Cause of Concern (CoC) and 30 Areas for Improvement (AFIs). It outlines progress in governance, risk management, performance, digital strategy, and financial oversight.

2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to note the report.

3 Background

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service was inspected by HMICFRS in the summer of 2024 as part of Tranche 3 of the inspection programme. The subsequent [Inspection Report](#), published in November 2024, identified:

- One Cause of Concern (CoC), comprising five key elements.
- 30 Areas for Improvement (AFIs) requiring service-wide enhancements.

In response, SFRS has developed a comprehensive action plan to address these issues and drive sustained improvements. This report provides an overview of progress made in implementing these measures.

4 AFI Progress Report

AFI	Description	Progress Indicator	Estimated Completion
1	The service should evaluate its prevention activity so it understands what is most effective.	On Schedule	30/04/2027
2	The service should make sure it quality assures its prevention activity so staff carry out safe and well visits to an appropriate standard.	On Schedule	01/04/2027
3	The service should regularly monitor and check compliance with prohibition and enforcement notices that have been served	Behind Schedule	30/06/2025
4	The service should make sure it effectively addresses the burden of false alarms.	Behind Schedule	31/03/2026
5	The service should make sure it has an effective quality assurance process, so staff carry out audits to an appropriate standard.	Behind Schedule	31/07/2025
6	The service should make sure it has an effective system for learning from operational incidents.	Future Review	TBC
7	The service should make sure its method of sharing fire survival guidance information with multiple callers is understood by staff and is well tested.	Future Review	TBC
8	The service should make sure it is well prepared to form part of a multi-agency response to a terrorist incident, and its procedures for responding are understood by all staff and are well tested.	On Schedule	18/06/2026
9	The service should make sure that it is taking steps to reduce non-pay costs and can show how it is achieving value for money.	Future Review	TBC
10	The service should make sure it has appropriate business continuity arrangements in place, regularly review the arrangements and test them to make sure they take account of all foreseeable threats and risks	On Schedule	31/12/2025
11	The service should make sure it effectively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration activity.	Future Review	TBC
12	The service should have a clear internal structure with appropriate governance arrangements to make sure the selection, design and delivery of projects are well managed, represent value for money and provide the intended outcomes.	On Schedule	31/12/2025
13	The service needs to assure itself that it is making the most of opportunities to improve workforce productivity and develop future capacity through use of innovation, including the use of technology.	Behind Schedule	Due
14	The service should make sure it has the right skills and capacity to successfully manage change across the organisation.	Behind Schedule	Due

15	The service should make sure its estates management programmes are linked to its community risk management plan, and that it understands the impact future changes to those programmes may have on its service to the public	Future Review	TBC
16	The service should make sure all staff understand and demonstrate its values.	On Schedule	31/03/2026
17	The service should assure itself that senior managers are visible and demonstrate the service's values through their behaviours	On Schedule	31/03/2026
18	The service should make sure staff have access to services to support both their mental and physical health.	On Schedule	31/12/2025
19	The service should proactively monitor working hours (including overtime) to improve staff well-being	Behind Schedule	Due
20	The service should assure itself that its arrangements for managing health and safety are effective	Future Review	TBC
21	The service should make sure its workforce plan takes full account of the skills and capabilities it needs to implement its community risk management plan.	Future Review	TBC
22	The service should review its succession planning to make sure that it has effective arrangements in place to manage staff turnover while continuing to provide its core service to the public.	Behind Schedule	Due
23	The service should assure itself that all staff receive the right training for their role.	Future Review	TBC
24	The service should review how effective its policy on bullying, harassment and discrimination is in reducing unacceptable behaviour towards its staff.	On Schedule	31/07/2026
25	The service should identify and overcome barriers to equal opportunity, so its workforce better represents its community, including making sure staff understand the value of positive action and having a diverse workforce.	Behind Schedule	30/06/2026
26	The service should make sure it has robust processes in place to carry out equality impact assessments, and review its policies and procedures to make sure those staff with a protected characteristic aren't disproportionately affected.	On Schedule	30/04/2026
27	The service should improve the way it collects equality data so it can better understand its workforce's demographics and needs.	On Schedule	31/12/2025
28	The service should improve all-staff understanding and application of the performance development review process.	On Schedule	31/12/2025
29	The service should make sure its processes for the selection, development and promotion of staff are open and fair, and it should do more to make sure staff have confidence in promotion and selection processes.	On Schedule	31/12/2025
30	The service should put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders.	On Schedule	31/12/2025

5 AFI Progress Narrative- Behind Schedule

A review of the risks, issues and dependencies impacting the progression of AFIs has identified the following enabling focuses to facilitate improvement:

Digital and data systems

Progress towards AFIs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 13, 19, 27, and 30 is impacted by the availability of suitable digital and data systems.

Risk mitigation includes: the development of the digital and data strategy, recruitment into key strategic and PowerApps developer roles, as well as the prioritisation of AFI dependent dashboards and systems by the Digital Systems Governance Group.

Increased availability of digital and data systems is expected to improve management of data through dashboards, improve performance management, and increase data accuracy.

Workforce planning

Progress towards AFIs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 12, 14, 22, 25, and 28 is impacted by the availability of key personnel and skills.

Risk mitigation includes: the prioritisation of the workforce planning workstream, recruitment processes in place for key roles with recent key appointments in Resources, ICT, Portfolio Management Office and Business Continuity.

Further workforce planning is expected to improve capacity and skills in key teams.

Organisational Assurance framework

Progress towards AFIs 1, 2, and 5 is impacted by identified organisational assurance deficiencies.

Mitigation includes the prioritisation and development of Organisational Assurance and Evaluation frameworks. The draft evaluation strategic document has been shared with Improvement Board members for consultation.

Expected benefits to improved organisational assurance includes further developed organisational learning, quality assurance and evaluation.

Development of Performance Indicators

Progress towards AFIs 13, 16, 24, 26, and 28 is impacted by the availability of performance indicators.

Risk mitigation includes: the research, consultation and ongoing development of a suite of performance indicators for all teams.

6 CoC Progress Report

Cause of concern: The service doesn't have adequate processes, controls or internal governance arrangements in place to manage strategic risks, performance and improvement plans.

CoC Element	Description	Progress Indicator	Estimated Completion
1	There are appropriate strategic oversight arrangements in place to manage risks, performance and improvement plans effectively	On Schedule	01/03/2026
2	The corporate risk register is actively used to mitigate and manage known risks	On Schedule	21/07/2026
3	All processes in place to support performance management are effective	On Schedule	31/07/2026
4	There is access to accurate data and analysis to support effective performance management	Behind Schedule	30/11/2028
5	There are robust processes for reporting accurate and suitably detailed finance and risk information to the FRA	On Schedule	31/12/2025

7 CoC Progress Narrative

1 – Strategic Oversight Arrangements

Owner: Deputy Chief Fire Officer

Detail: Appropriate strategic oversight arrangements are in place to manage risk, performance, and improvement plans effectively.

Update: This workstream remains on schedule for completion by 1 March 2026. Recent progress includes the research, consultation and ongoing development of performance indicators.

Progress continues across the three identified delivery elements, with updates logged and governance oversight in place to ensure trajectory remains.

Assessment: On Schedule

2 – Corporate Risk Register Utilisation

Owner: Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Detail: The corporate risk register is actively used to mitigate and manage known risks.

Update: New monthly SMT corporate risk review process now in place. Reporting of corporate risks and status to be brought to September SAP. Guidance for corporate risk owners issued in September. Policy remains in the Brigade Order publishing process

Assessment: On Schedule

3 – Performance Management Processes

Owner: Deputy Chief Fire Officer

Detail: All processes supporting performance management are effective and consistently applied.

Update: This workstream has seen progress in the development of an Evaluation policy and launch of new departmental plans to include CPIs. The recently revised approach, has extended development timelines, and is intended to provide a sustainable and integrated solution. Recent progress includes the SMT approval of NFCC recognised leadership development programmes for supervisory and middle managers.

Assessment: On Schedule

4 – Data Access and Analysis

Owner: Head of Digital and Data

Detail: Access to accurate data and robust analysis supports effective performance management.

Update: Recent progress includes the agreement in principle of the Digital and Data Strategy at SMT (July). This workstream is currently behind schedule, attributable to changes in strategic ownership following the retirement of the ICT Manager and associated workstream lead. Particularly impacted are:

- 4.3 – Development of a Resource and Staffing Plan

All elements have had revised timelines following the appointment of the new Head of Digital and Data, who has programmed a data audit to facilitate the ongoing development of the data strategy, and a skills gap analysis to support a 90-day action plan and structural review,

Assessment: Behind Schedule

5 – Financial Reporting Processes

Owner: Chief Fire Officer

Detail: Robust processes are in place to ensure accurate, timely, and detailed financial reporting to the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA).

Update: Recent progress includes the agreement of a Portfolio Management Approach to be utilised at the strategic planning day November 2025. Commencing on 1 October a Service Level Agreement for Monitoring Officer role finalised with Telford and Wrekin.

Timelines have been extended to the end of 2025 to allow for recruitment for S151 roles.

Assessment: On Schedule

8 Conclusions

The Service continues to make steady progress in addressing the Cause of Concern and the 30 Areas for Improvement identified by HMICFRS. With 22 AFIs actively monitored and the majority progressing on schedule, the Service demonstrates a clear commitment to continuous improvement and organisational resilience.

Key enablers such as digital transformation, workforce planning, and enhanced organisational assurance frameworks are being prioritised to overcome existing challenges and accelerate progress.

While some AFIs remain behind schedule, targeted mitigation strategies are in place to manage risks and maintain momentum. The Service Management Team will continue to oversee delivery, ensuring that improvement actions remain aligned with strategic objectives and inspection expectations.

9 Capacity

Implementing the action plan may require additional resourcing in particular areas, potentially impacting existing workloads and necessitating additional capacity within teams. Where achieving an element of the CoC or AFI requires additional staffing or financial investment, this will be assessed and scrutinised through SMT and will form part of the Service Programme Board and project methodology to ensure effective resource planning.

10 Fire Alliance / Collaboration / Partnership Working

Collaboration with the NFCC, other Fire and Rescue Services, and external partners will be essential to drive improvements, share best practices, and access additional expertise, ensuring a coordinated approach to service enhancement.

11 Financial Implications

Addressing AFIs may require investment in governance, data systems, training, and workforce planning. Any financial implications will be subject to SMT scrutiny and considered within the Service Programme Board, ensuring cost-effective implementation.

12 Legal Comment

Strengthened governance, risk management, and financial oversight will support compliance with statutory responsibilities and ensure adherence to regulatory frameworks, mitigating legal risks.

13 Communications

Clear internal and external communication, will promote staff engagement, increase stakeholder confidence, and transparency in service improvements.

14 Community Safety

Enhanced risk management, performance oversight, and resource planning will contribute to more effective community safety activities, ensuring the service meets evolving public safety demands.

15 Environmental

There are no environmental impacts arising from this report.

16 Equality Impact Assessment

Strengthening workplace culture, diversity, and inclusion initiatives will help ensure fair treatment, equal opportunities, and alignment with national equality standards.

17 Health and Safety

There are no health and safety impacts arising from this report.

18 Fire Standard Core Code of Ethics and Human Rights (including Data Protection)

Improved governance, data accuracy, and reporting processes will support adherence to ethical standards, national fire standards, and data protection regulations.

19 ICT

The ICT team, while currently operating with vacancies, may be impacted by the increased demands and workload associated with delivering the Cause of

Concern (CoC) and Areas for Improvement (AFIs). As part of the action plan development, it was identified that ICT involvement is required in over 90% of the AFIs, highlighting the critical role of digital solutions, data management, and system improvements.

Resource planning within ICT will be subject to SMT scrutiny to ensure the team can effectively support service-wide improvements while managing existing operational pressures.

20 Insurance

No significant impact anticipated; however, improved risk management and governance may contribute to reduced liability exposure and improved organisational resilience.

21 The On-call Service

Workforce planning improvements and clearer risk management processes will help ensure more effective integration, training, and support for on-call staff, contributing to improved service delivery.

22 Public Value / Service Delivery

Enhancing performance management, risk oversight, and governance will drive improved service delivery, increased efficiency, and greater public confidence in the service.

23 Reputation

There are no reputational impacts arising from this report.

24 Security

There are no security impacts arising from this report.

25 Training

Staff training and development will be integral to the implementation of the action plan, particularly in performance management tools, governance processes, and cultural improvements. Training requirements will be assessed through SMT and the Service Programme Board to ensure alignment with organisational priorities.

26 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

27 Background Papers

[Link to HMICFRS Inspection Report 2024](#)