

HMICFRS Cause of Concern Progress Report

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Executive Summary

This report details the Service's progress towards improvement identified by the HMICFRS Cause of Concern

2 Recommendations

The Standards, Audit and Performance Committee is asked to note the report.

3 Background

Following the June 2024 inspection, the HMICFRS identified the following 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.

This report presents the Service's progress against HMICFRS's Cause of Concern (CoC) action plan towards the recommendations for improvement made, as recorded in in the CoC Action Plan.

4 Progress Report

Cause of Concern	Status	Risks	Timelines (within 6 months)	Executive Summary
Coc 1: There are appropriate strategic oversight arrangements in place to manage risks, performance and improvement plans effectively	Status: In progress 13/22 objectives marked as complete	No risks identified	September 2025 1.1 Develop an internal governance framework with clear policy and structure to ensure the Service is effective and compliant ensuring accountability, transparency and sound decision making aligned to the services goals.	The newly approved service structure, endorsed by the Service Management Team, is scheduled for presentation to the Fire Authority on 25th June. Recruitment for key leadership roles is progressing well, with the Head of Resources appointed to start on 1st September, and the Portfolio Manager now in post as of 9th June. The recruitment process for the Head of Digital and Data concludes on 16th June, and the HR Manager role has also been successfully filled. Additionally, the draft Organisational Assurance Strategy has been prepared and is attached for review.
CoC 2: The corporate risk register is actively used to mitigate and manage known risks.	In progress 4/8 objectives marked as complete	No risks identified	No timelines (within 6 months)	The SAP report outlining the proposed new risks, along with the draft Risk Management Protocol, have been added to the planner, with SAP scheduled for 21st July to formally approve both. At that point, the protocol will be progressing through the BO process. While formal approval is pending, the Service Management Team (SMT) has already reviewed and provided a position status on the new risks and will formally adopt them following SAP approval.
CoC 3: All processes in place to support performance management are effective	In progress 6/15 objectives marked as complete	No risks identified	Due 3.3 Ensure leaders, at all levels, across the organisation are provided with appropriate development and guidance to be effective at managing performance in their respective roles.	Work continues on the development of CPI and CHI measures, which will be incorporated upon completion, with the overall timeline to be reviewed once these are agreed. The IPDR process has been successfully launched ahead of its planned July 2025 implementation date, with positive engagement reported across stations and teams. Ongoing communication and engagement is maintained through monthly meetings between the Organisational Development (OD) Officer and Station Managers, Watch/On-Call Watch Managers meetings, and regular updates to the Executive Team. Since 2023, all delegates progressing through the Career Progression Gateway (CPG) have been offered coaching or mentoring opportunities, with encouragement to engage in such support ahead of the process to aid development and challenge perceptions. A review of leadership development training, including the outcomes of the NFCC's Supervisory Leadership Development Programme and Middle Manager Leadership Development Programme — trialled in service since late 2023 and mid-2025 respectively — is underway, with a report being prepared by the OD Officer for Service Management Team consideration in July (date TBC). The recent alignment of the NFCC's Core Learning Pathway with the Service's promotion processes further reinforces assurance that leaders and managers are being developed appropriately for their roles.
CoC 4: There is access to accurate data and analysis to support effective performance management.	In progress 5/13 objectives marked as complete	Retirement of current Head of ICT impacting delivery and timelines for CoC and AFIs Risk response plan: The recruitment process for the Head of Digital and Data concluded on 16th June.	April 25 4.2 Delivery of a Digital and Data Strategy that supports Service priorities (aligned to 3.1) July 25 4.3 Develop a resource Staffing Plan to build capacity and relevant expertise for the successful execution of the Digital and Data Strategy.	As per previous update

		<p>Recruitment for key leadership roles is progressing well, with the Head of Digital and Data appointed to start on 3rd September</p> <p>Options being considered to support any gaps in this position to ensure continued leadership</p>		
<p>CoC 5: There are robust processes for reporting accurate and suitably detailed finance and risk information to the FRA</p>	<p>In progress</p> <p>5/9 objectives marked as complete</p>	<p>No risks identified</p>	<p>June 25</p> <p>5.1 Develop a robust budget setting, monitoring and reporting framework that provides accurate, transparent and timely information at all levels of governance.</p> <p>July 25</p> <p>5.2 Strengthen the involvement of statutory officers in strategic management and decision making.</p>	<p>The final draft of the Statutory Officer Report was shared for inclusion in the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) AGM agenda on 25th June 2025, with the document attached to Planner. The final draft of the Scheme of Delegations, updated following feedback from the Chair, Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer, and Brigade Managers, was also shared for FRA submission and similarly filed for evidence.</p> <p>The Service Structure Report was submitted for inclusion in the FRA agenda pack and has been filed under item 5.2 and attached to the Planner. Additionally, a report outlining the outcome of the DCFO recruitment process, including the preferred candidate, was produced and is scheduled for ratification at the FRA meeting on 25th June 2025; this too is included in the file for item 5.2 and attached to the Planner.</p>

5 Summary of HMICFRS improvement discussions (25 June)

Following the recent discussion regarding the upcoming HMICFRS revisit in July, key preparatory actions and themes have been identified to ensure a robust and coordinated response to inspection activity.

Additional Document Request

The HMICFRS will take some time to digest the submitted documents. This will give him the opportunity to gain a greater understanding of Service approach and progress to the cause of concern. If additional information or documentation is required prior to the inspection revisit then this will be communicated through the Service Liaison Officer (SLO) to Service Management Team (SMT).

Inspection Activity Focus:

Desktop Reviews: These are emerging as the preferred format for individual inspection engagement. The use of the Planner tool – incorporating evidence, commentary, and timelines – was praised by HMICFRS SLL Andy Groom for its structured project management approach. A comprehensive Planner will enhance individual preparedness and support effective responses during inspection.

Leadership and Strategic Focus:

There is a clear expectation that strategic direction and improvement efforts are visibly led not only by the Executive team (notably the CFO, whose engagement was commended) but also by Heads of Department and AMs.

Demonstration of Progress:

Clear articulation of improvement objectives and anticipated outcomes is expected. This includes identifying delivery mechanisms such as risk management frameworks, and clarifying roles, responsibilities, and systems used to support implementation.

6 Conclusions

All areas of the HMICFRS Cause of Concern action plan are actively in progress and on track to meet the identified timelines. All associated risks are being effectively managed, ensuring continued progress and assurance with improvement expectations.

7 Next Steps

To provide increased governance and oversight, peer Executive team scrutiny of Cause of Concern progress continues to be chaired by AM Transformation and Collaboration on a 4- weekly basis.

The week commencing the 21 July 2025 the HMICFRS are programmed to carry out a reinspection regarding progress towards the identified cause of concern.

8 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9 Legal Comment

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

10 HMICFRS Areas For Improvement, Cause of Concern, External Audit Recommendations

This report is directly related to the HMICFRS Cause of Concern recommendations.

11 Communications

Communication impacts arising from this report will be managed through the HMICFRS communications strategy

12 ICT

The ICT impacts have been highlighted in the report and the Risk Management document regarding digital, data and ICT systems support. This is being managed through the Programmes Board.

13 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

14 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.