

## AVON FIRE AUTHORITY

<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>Policy and Resources Committee</b>
<b>MEETING DATE:</b>	<b>Thursday, 18 April 2024</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Service Improvement</b>

### 1. **SUMMARY**

- A Service Improvement Team has been established, bringing together the HMICFRS Round 3 Inspection response, remaining Transformation work packages and the Efficiency & Savings work programme.
- This is the first combined report of Service improvement activities and contains the twelfth update to committee of the Transformation Programme.
- It sets out a progress update relating to the HMICFRS Round 3 and Spotlight Report action plans, Transformation projects, and the Efficiency & Savings Programme.
- Provides an update on HMICFRS revisit activities.

### 2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 The Policy and Resources Committee is asked to:

- a) Note the content of the report and make any recommendations or suggestions it sees fit.

### 3. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 HMICFRS carried out its third full ('Round 3') inspection of Avon Fire & Rescue Service between May and August 2023 which included an assessment of effectiveness, efficiency and how it looks after its people.

3.2 At the AFA meeting on 10 February 2021, Members approved the funding and expenditure for the Service Transformation Programme.

3.3 During the AFA meeting on 04 October 2023, due to funding pressures, members approved the continued development and implementation of a crewing model that reflects 4 personnel on every pumping appliance at wholtime stations, except for Hicks Gate which will be maintained on 5 due to Key Point Indicators (KPIs) for National Resilience.

- 3.4 Following the decision at the AFA meeting on 20 March 2024 to approve Option 2 (3) and remove the revenue contribution of £500k to the capital programme, the implementation of the crewing model described in paragraph 3.3 will be delayed until the 2025/26 financial year.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The total budget approved by the Fire Authority in February 2021, for the Transformation programme equates to £2.473m funded through approved reserves of £1.964m and through the approved Capital Strategy.
- 4.2 With the budget in place for the remainder of the programme, the Head of Service Transformation works with the Head of Finance and the appointed Finance Business Partner to ensure correct scrutiny of budgetary management and reporting is in place.
- 4.3 The Efficiency & Savings programme work will feed into the Medium Term Financial Plan and budget setting for future years. This progress report does not have any direct financial implications.
- 4.4 Reporting of progress made in the HMICFRS action plan does not have any direct financial implications.

#### **5. KEY CONSIDERATIONS**

- 5.1 Progress made against HMICFRS reports, Transformation, and Efficiency & Savings is now recorded by Responsible and Action Owners using a newly designed Improvement Register and Performance Dashboards. Progress is monitored by the Service Improvement Team and reported to both the Service Improvement Board and Service Leadership Team on a regular basis.

##### **Service Improvement Board**

- 5.2 To ensure that the service improvement programme in relation to the HMICFRS Causes of Concern, is delivered within the agreed expectations of the actions plans, a Service Improvement Board (SIB) has been established.
- 5.3 The SIB will provide additional oversight and assurance of the strategic intent to deliver the service's commitment to making our communities safer and the organisation stronger in its actions for improvement against all HMICFRS Causes of Concern.
- 5.4 The full SIB Terms of Reference are included in **Appendix 1**
- 5.5 The Service has engaged with external stakeholders and invited them to join the SIB, acting as a critical friend providing professional challenge and strategic assurance of actions delivered.

- 5.6 External board members include representatives from a Unitary Council, Stand Against Racism and Inequality (SARI), Bristol Women’s Voice, National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the Local Government Association (LGA)
- 5.7 The board first met in January 2024 and has met three times to date. Initially meeting monthly while the board became established, it will now meet bi-monthly allowing time for actions to be completed and begin to embed within the Service.

**HMICFRS action plan**

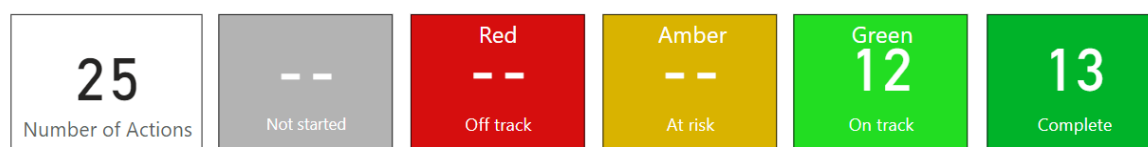
- 5.8 In response to the HMICFRS Round 3 report (**Appendix 2**) the Service has created an action plan which is sub-divided into three sections; accelerated causes of concern, causes of concern, and areas for improvement. A dashboard summary of progress against each of these is set out below.

**Accelerated Causes of Concern**

Mobilising Software

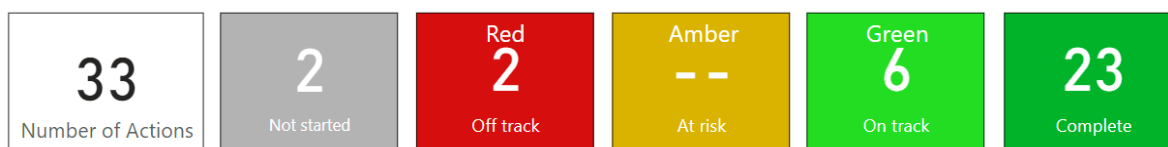


Site Specific Risk Information (SSRI)



**Causes of Concern**

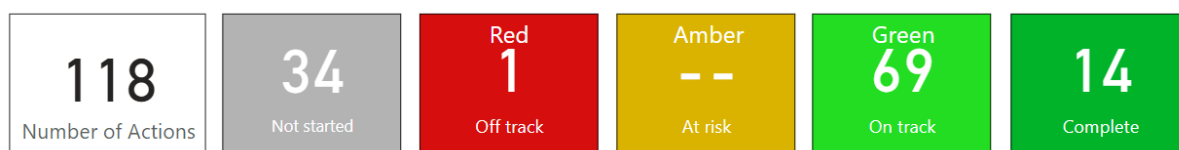
Prevention



## Culture



## Areas for Improvement



5.9 There are 31 Areas for Improvement identified in the HMICFRS Round 3 report. The Service has identified 118 actions in response.

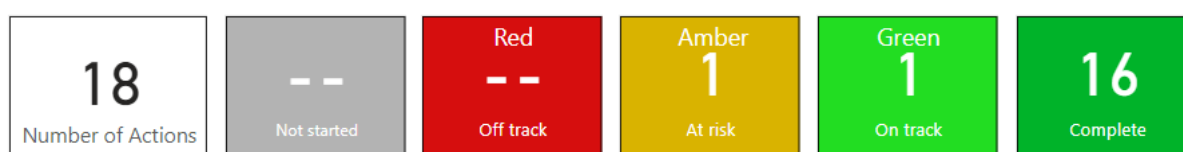
5.10 Currently there are three actions 'off track'.

- a) Both 'Prevention' cause of concern actions relates to delays in delivering prevention training to crews. This is due to those crews prioritising SSRI accelerated cause of concern activities. The current planned completion date for the training is 30.11.24. Efforts are being made to get these actions back on track.
- b) The third action off track relates to an area for improvement action to review automated systems to reduce administration updating SSRI information. This has been delayed due to a delay in the rollout of the rear-mounted mobile data terminals (MDT) in front line appliances. Testing of a rear mounted MDT on an appliance is now underway. The full rollout will be undertaken once testing has been satisfactorily completed.

## HMICFRS Spotlight report – Values and Culture

5.11 On 30.03.23 HMICFRS published a report (**Appendix 3**) into values and culture of all 44 fire and rescue services in England, and draws on evidence inspectors have gathered since 2018. HMICFRS published recommendations to be addressed by both national bodies as well as fire and rescue services with the aim of improving values, culture, fairness and diversity. There are 18 recommendations directed at fire and rescue services.

5.12 Below is the Service dashboard of progress against those recommendations.



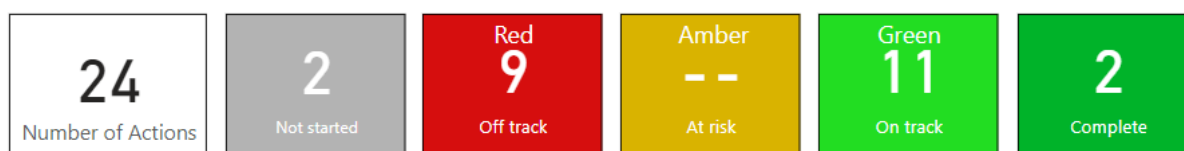
- 5.13 The action at risk is the recommendation that: *By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should have plans in place to ensure they meet the "Fire Standards Board's 'Leading the Service' standard and its 'Leading and Developing People' standard.* This had an original completion date of 01.06.23.
- 5.14 It has been determined that additional resources are required to fully review Fire Standards and conduct a detailed gap analysis exercise to support the initial gap analysis conducted by Values & Culture Lead. A project team was established in March 2024 to take this work forward.
- 5.15 A workshop was undertaken at the February 2024 Service Leadership Team meeting to identify where the Service already meets the 'Leading the Service' Fire Standard. A revised completion date of 30.09.24 has been agreed.
- 5.16 The Service response to the recommendations will be published on its new website shortly.

### Round 3 Re-visits by HMICFRS.

- 5.17 HMICFRS carried out their first re-visit between 04.12.23 and 08.12.23.
- 5.18 The Service received a letter from HMI Wendy Williams on 08.03.24 (**appendix 4**) advising that two further re-visits would take place in 2024. The first took place on 19.03.24 and 20.03.24 and focussed on the accelerated cause of concern relating the mobilising system. The Service will be advised by letter of the outcome of that revisit in due course.
- 5.19 A further revisit is planned for the period 02.09.24 to 13.09.24 which will focus on the three other causes of concern.

### Transformation

5.20 Work package dashboard



### High Priority work

- 5.21 There are currently three priority areas of work in the Transformation Programme: Improvements to the Firewatch IT system, policy reviews, and the Flexi Duty System review.

## **Firewatch IT system**

- 5.22 A 'development' system has been delivered to the Service with the latest version (7.8) of the Firewatch software. This version does not have new functionality but has a completely different 'look and feel' as it is web-based. It does have 'single sign on' which when deployed will mean users no longer need to log into the system with a username and password. This will remove a bugbear for staff and reduce administration around resetting forgotten passwords and security related password changes.
- 5.23 Engagement with stakeholders is underway to determine how much training and guidance material will be needed to navigate this web-based version.
- 5.24 The Performance Team are evaluating the work required to update the reporting from this latest version of the software.
- 5.25 Training and implementation plans are being developed for On-Call crews covering the new software version 7.8 and mobile app. This will enable the Service to cease using the current (and failing) Rappel system. This work is being supported by the On-Call Support Officers, enabling a short window of time between the launch of version 7.8, and the rollout of the mobile app.
- 5.26 Version 7.8 is anticipated to be implemented by the end of May and the mobile app by the end of June 2024.

## **Policy Reviews**

- 5.27 There are now only two Service policies which do not have a future review date.
  - i. Secondary Employment Policy
  - ii. Secondary Contract Policy
- 5.28 Work is taking place to bring these last remaining policies into date and launching the associated toolkits. It is anticipated that this work will be complete by 30.04.24.
- 5.29 With effect from 01.04.24, policy reviews will become core business, using the processes and tools developed by the Transformation Team in collaboration with stakeholders. The Policy Administration Co-ordinator role moves to the Corporate Assurance Team on that date, and I am delighted to be able to confirm that Izzy Simmons will be remaining with the Service for at least another 12 months to continue this valuable work and ensure the substantial progress made on bringing Service policies into date is maintained.

## Flexi Duty System Review

- 5.30 Due to several reasons, there has been limited progress made on this area of work since the last report. However, this will be addressed over the next two months.
- 5.31 The content and design of the consultation document to be shared with Flexi Duty Officers and the Fire Brigade Union (FBU) regarding the proposals presented to the Service Leadership Board will be finalised with the work package sponsor and issued during April 24.
- 5.32 The consultation is planned to run for a period of four weeks to give sufficient time for them to be fully considered and a response given. The responses will be collated for consideration and to determine next steps.

## Work packages with the status 'off track'

- 5.33 There are currently nine work packages which are off track based on the original completion date. The table below sets out the reasons why and progress made so far.

Reference	Description	Progress	Reason for delay
WP22	Managing job applications for corporate roles	50%	On hold due to stakeholder capacity in 2023/24. Recruitment taking place. This work is expected to recommence in July 2024.
WP27	Interviews and offers – corporate roles	50%	
WP29	How we welcome and induct new corporate staff	70%	
WP41	Overhauling the Discipline Policy	90%	Content complete – toolkits being built during April. Revised policies and toolkits to be launched by end of April 2024 along with a new Professional Standards Board
WP42	Overhauling the Grievance Policy	90%	
WP43	Introducing a Mobile Data and Device Management Policy	80%	Brief delay in completing the consultation work. Publication is expected by the end of April 2024
WP44	Review of Flexible Working Hours Policy (flexi-time scheme for corporate staff)	20%	On hold in 2023/24 due to reduced capacity in the Transformation Team. This work is expected to recommence in July 2024.
WP45	Agile working approach	20%	
WP50	Approach to those leaving the Service	25%	On hold in 2023/24 due to reduced capacity in the Transformation and HR teams. This work is

			expected to recommence in August 2024.
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5.34 It is still anticipated that all the above work packages will be completed by the 31.03.25 when the programme is due to end.

### **Efficiency and Savings**

5.35 The completion of an internal recruitment process has resulted in the Efficiency and Savings Team being fully established with three members as of 01 March 2024.

5.36 Designing the programme of work has so far been the area of focus with progress being made in the following areas:

- i. Planning the implementation and transition to a crewing model of 4 riders across wholetime stations (except hicks Gate).
- ii. Planning a review of resource management processes to identify improvements in resource allocation and workforce planning.
- iii. Planning the introduction of a flexible rostering system for wholetime staff at station 03 Yate.

## **6. RISKS**

6.1 The outcome of the HMICFRS Round 3 inspection report and associated action plans are relevant to the following corporate risks: CR01 – Performance targets; CR02 – Prevention and protection; CR03 – Response and rescue; CR04 – People capacity, capability and resilience; CR06 – Control and mobilising; CR08 – Financial capacity; CR11 – Financial systems; CR16 – Health, safety and wellbeing; and CR18 – Business continuity management.

6.2 Transformation Programme risks are contained in the Corporate Risk CR19 – Change and Transformation.

6.3 A proposal to amend CR19 to incorporate HMICFRS, Transformation and the Efficiency and Savings Programme is being presented to the Service Leadership Team (SLT) on 24.04.24.

6.4 The Efficiency and Savings Programme is also relevant to CR20 – Funding and Resource Pressure Risk.

## **7. LEGAL / POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 Transformation is included as Key Objective 7 in the Service Plan 2023-2026 and as such contributes to the Service Plan Priority of making our Service Stronger.



7.2 Improving Our Service is Key Objective 5 in the Service Plan 2024-2028 (Transformation is now a component of this objective).

## **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

8.1 AFA report 20.03.24 (Updated 2024/25 Revenue Budget and MTFP, item 10)

8.2 AFA report 04.10.23 (Budget Shortfall Options, item 8)

8.3 PRC report 13.12.23 (Transformation Programme update, item13)

8.4 PRC report 13.12.23 (Progress Report on changes to crewing models, item 12)

8.5 PRC report 29.09.23 (Action plans in response to HMICFRS Accelerated Causes of Concern, item 11)

## **9. APPENDICES**

1. Appendix 1 Service Improvement Board Terms of Reference
2. Appendix 2 HMICFRS Round 3 Inspection Report
3. Appendix 3 HMICFRS Spotlight Report – Values and Culture
4. Appendix 4 Letter from HMI Wendy Williams

## **10. REPORT CONTACT**

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