



Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP  
Chair, Home Affairs Select Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

28 March 2018

## **INSPECTION OF FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITIES IN ENGLAND**

A key element of the Government's fire reform programme is the creation of a rigorous and independent inspectorate for fire and rescue authorities in England to support the continuous improvement of this critical service. After consideration, last summer the Home Secretary extended the remit of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (which is now known as Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services – "HMICFRS") to provide this function. Subsequently, Her Majesty appointed Sir Thomas Winsor as the Chief Fire and Rescue Inspector and the inspectorate's other inspectors as fire and rescue inspectors; these roles are all in addition to their existing policing inspection responsibilities. HMICFRS has recruited a team of around 50 individuals – a number of which are drawn from the fire and rescue sector – to deliver this new function.

I am writing to inform you that the Home Secretary, pursuant to section 28A of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, has approved HMICFRS' fire inspection programme and framework. As a result, HMICFRS' inspectors are now able to act in accordance with it and use their inspection powers. Unlike police inspection, there is no statutory requirement for HMICFRS to publish this document before Parliament; however, in the interests of transparency I wanted to bring this to your attention and I attach a copy for your information. The programme/framework will also be published on HMICFRS' website and a copy will be placed in the House Library with this letter.

The first set of inspections will begin imminently. Reports on individual services will be published on an ongoing basis with reports covering the first fifteen inspections set to be

published by the end of the year. Over the course of their inspection programme HMICFRS will assess how effective and efficient each of the 45 fire and rescue authorities – or more pertinently the fire and rescue service the authority oversees - in England are at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks and an overall judgment will be provided. The chief fire and rescue inspector will report to Parliament annually providing an assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of fire and rescue authorities in England who had been inspected during that year. The Home Secretary and I have asked for regular updates as and when key findings emerge.

You are welcome to share this letter with your Committee.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nick Hurd". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly informal style.

**Rt Hon Nick Hurd MP**