

EXTRACTS FROM HMICFRS INSPECTION REPORT

How efficient is the service at keeping people safe and secure?

Good

Summary

An efficient fire and rescue service will manage its budget and spend money properly and appropriately. It will align its resources to its risk. It should try to keep costs down without compromising public safety. Future budgets should be based on robust and realistic assumptions. Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service's overall efficiency is good.

The service is good at making the best use of resources. However, the benefits of collaboration and partnership should be evaluated, to make sure resources are being used productively...

The service is involved in extensive partnerships and collaborations with other agencies. These include shared back-office services with the police, and the North West Fire Control, which is shared with neighbouring fire and rescue services. However, there is scope for more formal arrangements to monitor, review and evaluate collaborative activities.

Making best use of resources

Good

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service is good at making best use of resources. But we found the following areas in which it needs to improve:

Areas for improvement

- The service should ensure there is effective monitoring, review and evaluation of the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration.

(other area not relevant to this report)

Collaboration

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service's collaboration with Cheshire Constabulary to share a single support function providing back-office services is at an advanced stage. In April 2018, the final planned staff transfers from the fire and rescue service to work for the police in this joint function were made. At the outset, the benefits were expected to be:

- reduced frontline support costs;
- improved service;
- environmental benefits (leading to cost savings).

Indications in the 2015 business case were that estimated financial savings would be in excess of £1.4m. The total savings forecast in January 2017 was just over £670,000. The service was preparing to evaluate the expected benefits later in 2018.

We saw extensive partnerships and collaborative activities with fire and other agencies. Some of these – such as the North West Fire Control – had been subject to post-implementation reviews or other evaluations. However, this is not systematic, and there is scope for more formal arrangements for the service to monitor, review and evaluate the benefits and outcomes of its principal collaborative activities.