

Item Number	Item 3 – Paper 1
Title of Paper	Fire Standards Progress Update
Decision or Information	For information and decision
Date of Meeting	8 th March 2024
Presented by	Fire Standards Team
Attachments	None.

Summary

This paper provides an update on the progress made in developing the final phase of the initial suite of Fire Standards. This covers the following standards – Internal Governance and Assurance, Procurement and Commercial, and Digital and Information Technology.

The Board is asked to note the contents of this paper, including the contents of Paper 2 *“Fire Standard Board: Written Submission to the Senedd’s Equality and Social Justice Committee Inquiry into Fire and Rescue Services in Wales”* and to make a decision regarding asset management.

Fire Standards Development – Progress Highlights

This progress report reflects the change of priorities agreed at the October and December Fire Standard Board (FSB) meetings to reconsider the timelines for periodic review work on published standards at the start of the next financial year.

The prioritisation of the new Fire Standards and exceptional review of three existing Fire Standards is outlined below.

Revisions to existing Fire Standards - Delivering the Recommendations of the HMICFRS’s Spotlight Report

Safeguarding, Leading the Service, Leading and Developing People Fire Standards

These three Fire Standards were republished in January 2024 and Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) were informed of the revisions to their content. These changes met the recommendations made to the Fire Standard Board in the HMICFRS spotlight report on values and culture in fire and rescue services.

Resources Fire Standards

The progress made in respect of these Standards is described below:

Internal Governance and Assurance Fire Standard

- The draft Internal Governance and Assurance Fire Standard consultation closed on 15th January 2024 having received 32 responses. The Board agreed to extend the original consultation deadline by one month due to the Christmas and New Year break.
- Two comment review sessions are scheduled with the Subject Matter Expert (SME) group at the beginning of March.
- The draft Fire Standard will be shared with the Fire Standards Board for approval for quality assurance following comment resolution and quality assurance review.
- Expected publication is April 2024. Approval to publish will be sought from Board members via email after they have sight of the final standard and the quality assurance report.

Procurement and Commercial Fire Standard

Following an Extraordinary Board Meeting with the Finance Leads in September 2023, the Fire Standards Team has incorporated some of the elements that were contained in the proposed Financial Fire Standard (this standard was not taken forward) into the Procurement and Commercial Fire Standard amending it from its previous title of Procurement and Asset Management Fire Standard. The other finance elements are expected to be included in five existing Fire Standards as previously agreed by the Board and outlined in the [Appendix: Revised Timeline for 2024/25](#). When the proposed elements from finance have been included in the Fire Standards these will be brought to the Board for approval.

- The Procurement SME group which consisted of persons from both Fire and Rescue Services and the Home Office, including members of the NFCC Strategic Commercial Board, advised against combining asset management with procurement. The revised standard has now been drafted titled the Procurement and Commercial Fire Standard.
- A draft of this Fire Standard is being presented to the Board at this meeting and approval is being sought for it to go out to consultation.
- If the Standard is approved for consultation the timetable through to quality assurance and governance to publication is anticipated to be late May 2024.

Digital and Information Technology Fire Standard now known as Digital and Cyber Security Fire Standard

- Work on this Standard has been initiated and four SME workshops have taken place to date.
- The SME group has advised changing the name to Digital and Cyber Security Fire Standard.

- Once final changes have been made to the draft of this Fire Standard it will be presented to the Board via email shortly after this meeting for approval for consultation.

Asset Management

As with finance, asset management is an area which does not have a standard. A separate standard on asset management is, of course, possible. The alternative is for a mapping exercise to be done against existing Fire Standards to see where aspects of asset management fit. This could form part of an exceptional review process with financial management into existing Fire Standards. Conducting this exercise will, of course, require resources which will impact on our delivery timeline.

If the Board decides that a map analysis exercise is the right way forward that may impact the exception and period reviews below and revised timeline will be sent out for email.

Chairs' Meeting and Engagements

Since the last Board meeting on 20th December 2023, the Chairs have had an introductory meeting with the new Home Office representatives on the Fire Standards Board.

Future engagement planned by the Chairs are listed below. NFCC Fire Standards Team (FST) members may also attend one of more of these meetings:

- LGA Fire Conference – 12th & 13th March 2024
- HMICFRS Misconduct Thematic External Reference Group (ERG) – 18th March 2024
- Welsh Government inquiry into governance arrangements for FRS – 18th March 2024
- Service Visit – Cheshire FRS – 3rd April 2024
- NFCC Spring Conference – 22nd & 23rd April 2024
- Emergency Services Times webinar on culture and whistleblowing – April 2024

The Board is asked to note "*Paper 2 - Fire Standard Board: Written Submission to the Senedd's Equality and Social Justice Committee Inquiry into Fire and Rescue Services in Wales*", dated 28 February 2024, for information, which is provided as a written submission for the Welsh Government inquiry into governance arrangements for FRS noted in the list of engagements above.

A service visit to West Sussex was arranged for 11th March 2024, but was postponed due to the service being notified that their HMICFRS inspection would begin on that date. The visit is now being planned for later in the year.

Following a meeting held between the FSB Chairs and NFCC FST, it was agreed that future service visits would be based primarily on round three HMICFRS inspection report grades. To date, HMICFRS has completed 16 round three inspections and published 12 reports. Based on these reports, visits are being now arranged for Avon, Buckinghamshire, Warwickshire, and Surrey.

NFCC Fire Standards Team meetings and engagements of note:

- HMICFRS Technical Advisory Group (TAG) – 8th February 2024

Fire Standards Board Website

The team is looking to enhance the website to allow users to see more easily what amendments have been made to Standards and when. Currently as this functionality does not exist, additional communications are distributed highlighting the specific amendments or additions.

Implementation Support Team Engagement

The Implementation Team continues to support services with embedding the Fire Standards through an ongoing programme of workshops. The following table shows the team's engagement with services since the December 2023 Board Meeting.

Engagements Dec '23 – March '24	Participant Numbers	Service Numbers
Prevention Fire Standard Workshop	18	13
Protection Fire Standard Workshop	15	10
Eastern Regional Fire Standards Assurance Event	30	4
Safeguarding Fire Standard Workshop	11	10
Thematic Leadership Fire Standards – Multiple workshops	64	28
Fire Standards NE Lead Officers Network Meeting	7	7
Emergency Preparedness and Resilience Fire Standard Workshop	7	7
Data Management Fire Standard Workshop	18	7

The team will continue to engage with services at these multi-service workshops in addition to a continuing programme of individual service engagement (35 face-to-face service engagements during this reporting period).

Appendix: Revised Timeline for 2024/25

The table below was presented to the Board at the December 2023 meeting. It has since been updated with the new titles and proposed publication dates for the three Fire Standards in development. The timelines for completion of both exceptional and periodic review work remain unchanged, subject to decisions made by the Board in relation to Asset Management.

Fire Standards	FY 2024-2025														
	Q4 23-24			Q1 24-25			Q2 24-25			Q3 24-25			Q4 24-25		
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
In development															
Resources - Procurement & Commercial															
Resources - Internal Governance and Assurance															
Digital and Information Technology															
Exceptional Review Process Related to Financial scope* (Proposed timelines to be confirmed by FSB)															
Leading the Service															
Leading and Developing People															
CRMP															
Emergency Preparedness and Resilience															
Data Management															
Periodic Reviews* (Proposed timelines to be confirmed by FSB)															
Review: Operational Competence															
Review: Operational Preparedness															
Review: Operational Learning															
Review: Emergency Response Driver															
Review: Code of Ethics															
Review: Prevention															
Review: Protection															

In development

This represents the Fire Standards that will complete the initial suite.

Exceptional Review

This shows a potential timeline for the agreed work to complete the exceptional reviews necessary to consider, and incorporate, where appropriate, the outstanding finance elements into the other Fire Standards identified.

The Exceptional Review could also be extended to consider the asset management elements, which were removed from the Procurement and Commercial Fire Standard. The initial analysis could be completed in April, however, until the analysis is complete it will not be clear whether there will be an additional impact on the timelines.

Periodic review

This shows a potential timeline for starting periodic reviews of published standards. The initial stage of the process will identify if a review is needed and the scale of review required (minor, moderate or major) in line with the agreed review processes.