

Terms of Reference

A number of allegations have been made against Avon Fire and Rescue Authority (the “Authority”). The extent, seriousness and persistence of the allegations made, together with the alleged failures to properly deal with complaints, if well-founded, would indicate that the Authority is failing to comply with its duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement. Such allegations would suggest that the Authority is unable to deliver economically, efficiently and effectively now or in the future.

In exercise of the Secretary of State’s powers under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999 (the “1999 Act”), the inspector will conduct an inspection of the compliance of the Authority with the requirements of Part 1 of the 1999 Act in relation to the Authority’s governance functions, including, but not limited to, the Authority’s duties of accountability and assurance under the Fire and Rescue National Framework.

The Authority’s duty under section 3 of the 1999 Act is to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In undertaking the inspection in relation to the Authority’s functions, and without prejudice to the scope of this inspection, the inspector is directed to consider:

- Decisions and scrutiny by the Authority in relation to salaries and expenses of employees and in relation to spending on hospitality.
- The Authority’s processes and practices for entering into contracts, including procurement contracts.
- The Authority’s compliance with the accountability and assurance requirements under the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (see paragraphs 2.7-2.9 and 3.2-3.3).
- The Authority’s systems and processes to ensure such transparency of information relating to governance as would reasonably be expected of any public authority, including appropriate treatment of whistleblowers.
- Compliance with the seven principles of public life by elected members of the Authority and by senior officers.
- The Authority’s processes and practices for taking action against any member or officer of the Authority who is found not to have met the standards required of that member or officer.
- The Authority’s processes and practices for effectively assessing the validity of any complaints made about members of the Authority and senior officers and the provision made for the appropriate consideration of such complaints.

- Any decisions taken by the Authority to ensure that a culture of fear and bullying does not exist and the action taken by the Authority where it is found to exist.

The inspection shall cover matters in relation to the period 1 January 2011 to 1 February 2017.

In considering the Authority's current and likely future compliance with the requirements of Part 1 of the 1999 Act in relation to its governance functions, the inspector should have regard to all relevant matters, whenever arising.

The inspector is directed to report the findings of the inspection to the Secretary of State by 30 June, or such later date as agreed with the Secretary of State.

Section 12 of the Local Government Act 1999 provides that an Authority inspected must pay the reasonable fees of the inspector for carrying out the inspection.