

## Note of last Fire Services Management Committee meeting

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<b>Title:</b>	Fire Services Management Committee
<b>Date:</b>	Friday 17 November 2017
<b>Venue:</b>	Smith Square Rooms 1&2, Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

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### Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A** to this note

Item	Decisions and actions
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<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest</b>
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The Chair opened the meeting and noted apologies from Cllr Mark Healey, Cllr Jason Ablewhite and Dany Cotton. Cllr Roger Reed attended the meeting as a substitute.

There were no declarations of interest.

<b>2</b>	<b>National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC)</b>
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The Chair introduced Roy Wilsher, Chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), who gave members an update on the work of the NFCC, seven months after it was first established. Roy was clear that a strength of the NFCC was the consistency and continuity it could provide across services and to members. It was noted that the position of the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser to the Home Office no longer existed so Roy, as Chair of the NFCC, took on this role and provided professional and technical advice to the members, the new inspectorate and the Government, particularly in response to major incidents such as Grenfell. Roy also explained that the committee structures of the NFCC were working well and that the nine committees were all up and running.

In terms of providing professional and technical advice, Roy noted that statements on various issues had been put out by the NFCC in recent months and that these included references to marauding terrorism firearms attacks, pay, sprinklers, risk and demand, national resilience and business continuity plans, amongst others. The NFCC was also providing advice to the team working on the new inspectorate, and was being represented at meetings of the Professional Standards Body, the Fire Implementers Group, JESIP and the Strategic Resilience Board. Roy also noted the impact the Grenfell Tower had had on the NFCC, and the work he had been doing as part of the expert panel advising DCLG.

Members were told that the National Operational Guidance team were moving to a central program office, which sits within the London Fire Brigade, and would help manage projects in all areas and would work alongside CFOA staff who had transferred to the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service, while national resilience work was led by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Services. Consideration was also being given to ensuring efficiency and value for money, with a particular focus on fire kit

procurement and the Fire Commercial Transformation programme led by Ann Millington.

Finally, Roy spoke to members about the work done on the National Fire Chiefs Strategy, which the NFCC had worked closely with LGA officers on. The strategy for UK fire and rescue services was designed to complement the Fire Vision and was looking at five key areas: community risk, governance, workforce, finance and a new digital platform.

Members made the following comments:

- A member asked what mechanisms were in place to influence or discuss conversations held between members, officers and other attendees at outside body meetings. Roy noted that all papers for NFCC meetings were available to the public and LGA officers noted that they were happy to circulate reports from meetings where possible. There would also be a standing item on each agenda for members to provide feedback following their attendance at outside body meetings.
- A brief discussion was had about funding and Paul Hancock's previous attendance at an FSMC meeting as CFOA President where he was optimistic that CFOA was moving towards a more independent source of funding. Roy said that in order to have a national group which works, help was needed from fire authorities. He said that a funding agreement needed to be in place by this time next year and while he could not put a figure on it, he said that the aim was to reduce the amount sourced from fire and rescue authorities as far as possible. Roy said he would update the Committee on this at future meetings.

### **Decision**

Members noted the update.

### **Action**

Officers to circulate any relevant reports to members following meetings with outside bodies.

## **3 Fire service funding**

The Chair introduced Phil Hales, Deputy Chief Fire Officer at West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service and Chair of the NFCC's Finance Coordination Committee (FinCC), who set out the work the NFCC had been doing around fire finance.

Phil explained that the FinCC was established in an effort to ensure that technical expertise and advice on finance within the sector was joined up and to reflect the strategic plans of the NFCC. He noted that the NFCC represents the whole of the UK so the FinCC was available to provide advice and assistance to all devolved administrations, and would take into consideration the individual challenges they all faced.

The structure of the FinCC was outlined to members and they were told that the Chair of the Fire Finance Network was the Vice Chair of the Committee. Nine chief fire officers from different governance models also provide scrutiny and strategic advice

for the Committee and the Home Office lead on fire policy also attends the meetings to ensure that their work is not done in isolation but that conversations were also had with key policy makers. A consultancy firm, Somerset Technical Team, which works with counties and shire district councils was also working on gathering data, the aim of which was to help provide a more professional response when working with the Home Office.

Phil discussed the FinCC's key areas of work such as responding to the consultation on the Local Government Finance Settlement, considering a response to the Fair Funding Review and establishing a funding formula fit for a modern fire and rescue service. The Committee had also been looking into the recent changes brought in by the Local Government Finance Act and they were seeking a sector-wide view on dealing with its implications. The NFCC was keen to establish common positions of fire and rescue services and was trying to capture data on this. Phil also mentioned the NFCC funding mechanism and activities being carried out to ensure that where the NFCC was funding work, proper quality assurance checks were being undertaken. The FinCC was keen to ensure that recourses were focused as far as possible on underpinning the strategic priorities of the NFCC.

Following the presentation, members raised a few points:

- There was a discussion about whether fire service funding should be based on risk or demand. Some members felt that there was not a binary choice but that it should be based on a combination of risk and demand, with consideration given to the change of the role and the inclusion of factors such as prevention work, work with other services, additional inspection requirements and the impact this had on resources. It was also noted that both risk and demand varies across the country, and rural areas, for example, had a different type of risk from urban areas. Other members felt more strongly that funding should come from identified risks because demand could only be measured in arrears and it was not possible to assess what the demand would be in the future.
- Members spoke about Police and Crime Commissioners' (PCCs) ability to increasing funding through council tax precepts but it was noted that police budgets are generally much larger than fire budgets so it could not necessarily work in the same way for fire authorities. Concerns were also raised about a cap on precepts and the potential for PCCs' using this in their business cases to promote themselves as being able to raise the precept for fire services.
- Leading on from this, members discussed the current rules prohibiting fire services from raising funding from precepts without a referendum. Members supported the LGA's position that referendum requirements should be abolished for all local authorities. Members also highlighted the need for capital funding for some FRAs.
- A conversation was had about the transformation fund and members were clear that it should not be funded by topslicing FRA budgets. Members wanted to see genuinely new money which had not been topsliced from other grants allocated to the service. Phil Hales agreed with this position and said there was work to do around data and the analysis of fire finance as it currently stands. He said that it would be crucial to put clear numbers in front of the Treasury when trying to influence them and that support from the FSMC would be useful.

## **Decision**

Members **noted** the report.

## **Action**

Officers to proceed as directed, taking members' comments on funding into consideration.

## **4 Fire safety in high rise buildings update**

Mark Norris, Principal Policy Adviser, updated members on the LGA's work in the wake of Grenfell and the efforts to identify the financial impact on both councils and fire and rescue authorities. Mark noted that the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) had asked local authorities to provide details of the number of private high-rise buildings in their area, the deadline for which had passed the previous week and he gave an update on the number of privately owned or managed buildings identified as having ACM cladding on their exteriors. One issue that had come up in conversations with directors of housing across London was that insurers in the private sector were asking how long interim fire safety measures needed to be in place and concerns were noted about capacity issues within the supplier system.

Mark advised members that the interim report from the Dame Judith Hackitt review would be published in early December and that her initial view was that the regulatory system currently in place was not fit for purpose. It was suggested that specific paragraphs which needed to be changed would not be identified and the report would not provide advice to building owners about what materials were needed. The report was likely to look at competency and skills, as well as expertise and training at construction stage. It was thought that the report would look to ensure there were duty-holders with a role in making sure a building had been constructed properly in place in the future, and that there would need to be periodic inspections of buildings. Consideration was also likely to be given to whether fire safety related regulations should apply retrospectively to a building, and that there should be greater clarity between the Fire Safety Order and the Housing Act 2004 with a clearer division in responsibilities between the fire service and local authorities.

Mark said that a further update would be given to members at the next meeting, after the interim report had been published.

In the discussion which follow, a number of points were raised:

- Members felt that the Government had pushed responsibility for the funding of works required in the wake of Grenfell back to housing providers and councils, despite the Secretary of State previously stating that public safety was paramount and that money should not be an impediment to ensuring residents' safety. Members felt that the Government should be held to account over the funding issue and that the LGA should be stronger in challenging the decision not to provide any additional resources.
- A conversation was had about sprinklers and how little action had been taken on this despite the Lakanal House inquest recommending more widespread installation of sprinkler systems. Members acknowledged the cost associated with installing sprinklers in new buildings or retrofitting them but it was also

noted that some buildings could not be altered significantly enough to install them at all so demolition of those buildings could be considered where it would be financially viable to do so. It was also suggested that one London council had charged leaseholders for sprinklers so concerns were discussed about there being a postcode lottery in terms of funding this work. Members also discussed the proposed working group on sprinklers and agreed that membership should not extend past the Fire Commission.

#### **Decision**

Members **noted** the report.

#### **Action**

Officers to take steps to establish a working group on sprinklers.

### **5 Workforce report**

Clair Alcock, Firefighters' Pensions Adviser, updated members on the progression of the pensions Scheme Advisory Board and suggested that details of the new employer contribution rates would be set in 2019. She said that the Board was working with GAD on a number of consultations and had advised GAD that FRAs and elected members were trying to agree to mid-long term financial forecasting and that FRAs would be sent further information as soon as possible.

Cllr Nick Chard and Gill Gittins, Principal Negotiating Officer, spoke briefly to members about the NJC meeting with the All Party Fire Safety and Rescue Parliamentary Group and the discussion had around the New Economy report. The APPG had agreed to sponsor a wider event, due to take place in January, to which all MPs would be invited. Members suggested that it would be interesting to have an agenda item on the New Economy report at the next meeting. Cllr Chard suggested it could be covered in an update at that time on the negotiations as well.

On pay, members were told that discussions were ongoing about the National Employers suggestion to the Employees Side that while negotiations continue there could be a 1 per cent uplift to basic pay effective from 1 July 2017. The Employees' representatives were consulting on the suggestion.

#### **Decision**

Members **noted** the update.

#### **Action**

Officers to proceed as directed by members.

### **6 Outside bodies - oral update from members**

The Chair advised members that he had attended a meeting of the Strategic Resilience Board, noting that the Home Office representatives had declined the offer for an LGA officer with detailed NJC knowledge to attend on this occasion. Discussions were ongoing and a further update would be provided at the next FSMC meeting.

The Chair suggested that those sitting on outside bodies provided officers with a few lines after each meeting they attended, which officers could include in a short paper for each FSMC meeting's agenda.

### **Decision**

Members **noted** the update.

### **Action**

Officers to commission a short contribution from members sitting on outside bodies for an agenda paper for the next FSMC meeting.

## **7 Update paper**

The Chair introduced the update paper and invited comments from members:

- Members sought an update from officers about the Fire Conference and whether it would be filmed so that members of authorities who could not travel to Gateshead could have an idea of the topics and conversations covered. Officers confirmed that the events team were looking into this, and copies of the draft programme were circulated to the members.
- Members asked whether the Shadow Ministers for Fire from the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties ought to be invited and agreed that they should be invited.

### **Decision**

Members **noted** the update paper.

### **Action**

- 1) Officers to confirm with the LGA's events team whether the conference could be filmed.
- 2) Officers to look at the possibility of inviting the Shadow Ministers for Fire.

## **8 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

## **Appendix A -Attendance**

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Ian Stephens	Isle of Wight Council
Vice-Chairman	Ms Fiona Twycross AM	London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA)
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Rebecca Knox	Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service
	Cllr Keith Aspden	North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service
Members	Cllr John Bell	Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Nick Chard	Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Simon Spencer	Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr David Acton	Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Les Byrom CBE	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr John Edwards	West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Judith Hughes	Kirklees Metropolitan Council
	Cllr Thomas Wright	Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority
Apologies	Cllr Jason Ablewhite	Huntingdonshire District Council
	Cllr Mark Healey MBE	Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority
In Attendance	Roy Wilsher	National Fire Chiefs Council
	Phil Hales	National Fire Chiefs Council
	Penny Pender	National Fire Chiefs Council
	Steven Adams	National Fire Chiefs Council
	Chloe Dunnett	Home Office
	Karen Lancaster	Home Office
	Stuart Harwood	Home Office