

Fire Services Management Committee update paper

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

The report outlines issues of interest to the Committee not covered under the other items on the agenda.

Recommendation

Fire Services Management Committee members to discuss the proposals outlined in paragraphs 19 – 23.

Action

Officers to progress as appropriate.

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Fire Services Management Committee update paper

LGA & CFOA Fire Peer Challenge Working Group – Update 2

1. The second meeting of the LGA & CFOA Fire Peer Challenge Working group was held on 20 December 2016.
2. The working group received updates on the future proposals for the LGA & CFOA sector led improvement offer. The aim is to ensure all options compliment and add value to the Home Office inspection of FRS. The working group are developing options for pre and post inspection peer support, thematic peer challenges and a corporate peer challenge for the fire & rescue sector.
3. Members of the working group recognised the strength and value of the corporate peer challenge for fire and stressed that it will need to be different as the future inspection regime is developed. A key principle is that it will be ‘short and sharp’ to avoid additional burden on FRS’s whilst continuing to provide the critical role as a sector led improvement mechanism.
4. Members agreed that the offer could focus on three core elements, broadly covering:
 - 4.1. Setting priorities and understanding and delivering for communities
 - 4.2. Organisational leadership and governance
 - 4.3. Collaboration, transformation and organisational capacity
5. It was felt that the ethos of sector led improvement, peer support and sharing of best practice could be applied to these elements.
6. LGA and CFOA Officers are tasked to further develop the corporate peer challenge offer and other sector led improvement offers dependent on where the Home Office takes inspection. They will consult with a selection of Senior Fire Officers in February with the aim of holding a final consultation workshop at the LGA Fire Conference in March.

LGA and NFCC Fire Reform Board

7. The last joint fire reform meeting between the LGA and CFOA took place on 25 November. The terms of reference for the group have been discussed, and these will

be looked at further at the next meeting taking place after the Fire Services Management Committee meeting on the 27 January. This will ensure that they are reflecting the needs and remits of both organisations. The meeting after that will take place at the LGA's Fire Conference in March.

8. The group has discussed a number of issues already including equality and diversity NJC reform, the CFOA change programme and funding for the National Fire Chiefs Council for the future. Members further discussed workforce reform and the work on the 21st Century Firefighter publication, and agreed the importance of ensuring that it was focused and provided direction for the future. Lead Members agreed that they would have input into the document as it developed and would all sign it off.
9. The group also agreed that the LGA and CFOA would work together to draw up practical responses to the recommendations set out in the Thomas report and would share best practice on diversity and recruitment, potentially through a Knowledge Hub group or other mechanism.

Thomas Review

10. As members discussed at the last FSMC the Thomas Review suggested a number of recommendations for the fire and rescue service and the LGA.
11. One of the first activities that the LGA has undertaken is the creation of a Memorandum of Understanding. The MoU commits its signatories to demonstrably uphold and promote the principles it sets out, deliver the commitments within it and take the specific actions it contains within the timetable agreed. In particular the MoU states that fire and rescue service as a whole should reflect the diversity of the community it serves. The employment of specific groups within the service, such as firefighting personnel should also meet this requirement. A more diverse workforce is needed at all levels up to and including senior managers.
12. The workforce and policy teams at the LGA have worked together on driving forward the MoU. Lead Members have seen and commented on the draft and the LGA will be one of a number of signatories to the final document who also include:
 - 12.1. Asian Fire Service Association
 - 12.2. Chief Fire Officers Association/National Fire Chiefs Council
 - 12.3. Fire Brigades Union
 - 12.4. Fire Officers' Association
 - 12.5. GMB
 - 12.6. quiltbag
 - 12.7. Retained Firefighters Union
 - 12.8. Stonewall
 - 12.9. Unison
 - 12.10. Women In The Fire Service

Sprinklers in new school buildings

13. Following discussions at the FSMC and Fire Commission, the LGA wrote to Lord Nash, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools, to highlight our concerns about the changes to the new version of the Building Bulletin 100 regarding sprinklers in new schools. In the letter we highlighted the damage that fires in these buildings can do to students and families, and how cost effective sprinklers can be. We asked the Department to reconsider its decision on sprinklers and to support the provision of sprinklers in new schools.
14. This was part of a wider campaign from Fire and Rescue Authorities, many of whom campaigned directly with Lord Nash and their local MPs as well as within their local areas. It was also discussed at the Combined Fire Authorities Conference in October, where the Policing and Fire Minister acknowledged the concerns of FRAs and agreed to discuss it further with the Department for Education. Brandon Lewis subsequently wrote to Lord Nash.
15. Lord Nash has now written to the Minister, to outline that the draft revision of BB100 was to update and clarify the guidance which was a number of years old. He recognised that there have been a concern that this meant a change in the Department for Education's position on the use of sprinkler systems in schools, however he confirmed that this was not the case and that they are not changing the rules on fire safety in new school buildings.
16. Lord Nash stated that all new schools must comply with the building and fire safety regulations and that they would be clarifying the language in the final version of BB100 to ensure that the guidance was clear. The Department for Education has also confirmed that they will retain an updated risk assessment and cost benefit analysis tool following calls to do so in the initial consultation. Home Office officials are providing the relevant data to support this. The Department of Education will be clarifying their position with stakeholders.
17. Fire and Rescue Authorities are continuing to work on this issue at a local level, in particular around data collection.

LGA Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition

18. The latest version of the draft programme for the LGA's Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition is attached at **Appendix A**. We are delighted that the Minister for Policing and Fire will be joining us to open the conference. We also have sessions on NJC reform, inspection, equality and diversity, procurement and devolution and governance. The workshops will cover a variety of issues including the independent standards body, the retained duty system, working with health, emergency service collaboration and the review of peer challenge.
19. We have provisionally allocated members chairing responsibilities for some of the sessions. Following feedback from members previously, unless members have requested a particular session, we have allocated members different chairing

opportunities between the first and second sessions of the workshops. If you are not attending the fire conference or if you would like to request a different workshop session please let us know.

20. We are now starting to consider the 2018 conference. The conference will again be held in Gateshead at the Hilton. The changes underway due to the fire reform programme and collaboration, means that we will need to consider how the programme will reflect the breadth of the issues facing the fire and rescue service.
21. We are therefore seeking members' views on the possibility of opening up some sessions on the conference programme to bids from other organisations. This could be for our member fire and rescue authorities, Police and Crime Commissioners, ambulance trusts, health and social care partners, or groups with a particular interest in an aspect of the fire and rescue service.
22. These bids would take the place of the workshops as they are currently formed. At the moment we currently have 5 workshops which are repeated in the afternoon. These are each an hour long, which allows for in-depth discussion, however it does limit the number of topics we can cover within the workshops to 5. One proposal could be that rather than repeating the workshops we restructure the time into three blocks of 40 minutes. Each 40 minute block would contain three distinct workshops, meaning that we could run workshops on up to 9 different topics. This would involve our members directly in the delivery of the conference and ensure that we had a good variety of topics covered. After we had received bids Lead Members would play a key role in deciding on which bids would be taken forward.
23. The LGA has an established bidding process for the National Children and Adults Services Conference and the Annual Public Health Conference. Both conferences regularly receive bids from a wide variety of organisations.

Evaluation of the impact of Fire and Rescue Service interventions in reducing the risk of harm to vulnerable groups of people from winter-related illnesses

24. Public Health England has published an interim evaluation into the impact of the pilot work done by Staffordshire, Gloucestershire and Greater Manchester, in conjunction with Public Health England and CFA, with support from NHS England, on winter related pressures last year. The evaluation explores the impact of broadening the Safe and Well visits to include a focus on risk factors for winter-related illnesses. The pilot focused on the four main contributors to winter-related illness including the prevention of falls, prevention of cold homes, prevention of isolation and ensuring eligible people received the flu immunization.
25. The valuation found that the pilot achieved four of its six objectives:
 - 25.1. Build capacity within pilot areas to deliver Safe and Well visits which systematically focus on a broader range of health issues, including issues relating to winter-related ill-health (including falls, social isolation, cold homes and flu).

- 25.2. Identify households vulnerable to falls, social isolation, cold homes and flu within pilot areas.
- 25.3. Provide targeted interventions to reduce the risk of falls, social isolation, cold homes and flu which may lead to a reduction in the pressures on public services in local areas (for example, A&E admissions to hospital, fire service call-outs, demands for GP and social care services).
- 25.4. Build and strengthen relationships between the FRS and local service partners, including development of referral pathways into other forms of help and support within the community.
26. However, the evaluation was not able to report on the pilot's other two objectives of: reducing the risk of excess winter deaths and demonstrating the value of the FRS in supporting partners to improve health and wellbeing and reduce demand on health and social care services. This was because a detailed breakdown of the use of NHS services had not yet been released so further analysis of the data will be commissioned by CFOA in 2017/18.
27. The full evaluation can be found on the Government's website:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/573558/FRS_winter_pressures_evaluation.pdf

PSAA national scheme for auditor appointments

28. The current contracts for the provision of external audit to all fire and rescue authorities, along with local authorities and other relevant bodies that had their audit appointments overseen by the Audit Commission, are due to end after the completion of the 2017/18 audit. These contracts were novated to Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (PSAA) on the closure of the Audit Commission. PSAA was established in August 2014 by the IDeA to fulfil the role of Transitional Body on closure of the Audit Commission. Since 1 April 2015 it has been undertaking functions delegated by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (CLG) including managing contracts with firms of accountants and appointing auditors to all relevant bodies.
29. PSAA has now been specified by the Secretary of State as the 'appointing person' under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to act as a sector led body capable of negotiating and letting contracts with audit firms on behalf of fire and rescue authorities, local authorities and other relevant bodies who wish to 'opt-in' to such an arrangement. Consequently PSAA is developing a national scheme to be attractive to all relevant bodies, including fire and rescue authorities, and is developing its procurement strategy and approach. The LGA is supporting this approach as it believes this represents the most cost-effective way of ensuring a quality audit service is put in place, and avoids the need for an authority to set an auditor panel for this purpose, either itself or as part of a collective approach.

27 January 2017

30. An invitation was sent out to all authorities in October 2016 and the deadline to opt in to the national scheme for the appointment of auditors is **9 March 2017**. New auditors need to be appointed by 31 December 2017. So far, of the 30 fire and rescue authorities that need to make their own appointment (County services are covered through the County Council audit), 15 have opted in and PSAA is aware of a further 8 which have indicated their intention to do so. A full list of those opting in maintained on the [PSAA's website](#). Any Authority that has not yet opted in, is encouraged to do so and to ensure it meets the 9 March deadline, having taken the decision through a meeting of the full authority. For further information email: appointingperson@psaa.co.uk