

6 March 2017

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

The Fire Services Management Committee members are asked to note the update paper and offers views on how the LGA should respond to the consultation referenced in paragraphs 6 – 8.

Action

Officers to progress as appropriate.

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6 March 2017

Fire Services Management Committee update paper

LGA & CFOA Fire Peer Challenge Working Group – Update 3

1. Officers from the working group held a sector sounding board for senior stakeholders on 9 February 2017 to seek input into the proposals developed by the working group. The sounding board was very well attended with 17 Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) represented.
2. Due to the ongoing lack of clarity regarding how inspection will operate and who will deliver it, it was agreed that the sounding board would focus on ensuring there is clarity regarding the principles by which peer support, as a key strand of sector-led improvement, will operate.
3. It was agreed that having a ‘blended and flexible approach’ to peer support as developed by the working group would enable fire and rescue services and authorities to access what best meets their needs at different points in time and there was strong support for developing a framework to deliver this.
4. It was proposed that the framework would contain three core elements of improvement:
 - 4.1. Inspection Peer Support – Including both pre and post inspection support.
 - 4.2. Corporate and Governance – Including a corporate peer challenge, transitional governance peer support and thematic peer challenges.
 - 4.3. Support Short of Intervention – a team of sector peers provide support to a FRS/FRA that has been rated as under-performing in an inspection.
5. Officers have been tasked with continuing to develop the options and will launch the sector consultation at the LGA Fire Conference, where they are delivering two workshops. Following this the Working Group will meet to ratify proposals and a report will be delivered to FSMC and the Fire Commission before piloting.

Re-employing senior fire officers after their retirement: consultation

6. The Home Office is currently consulting on changing the national fire framework on the issue of senior fire officers retiring from their posts and then being re-employed in the same or very similar roles. The consultation proposes an addendum to the national fire framework. The Home office have identified that the practice mostly affects members of the Firefighter’s Pension Scheme 1992. The full consultation can be read on the Government’s website:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/593051/170220_Consultation_document_-_re-engagement_of_senior_officers.pdf

6 March 2017

7. The draft addendum to the national fire framework is below:
 - 7.1. The re-appointment of principal fire officers to the same or similar posts, a short time after they have retired, has caused concern in recent years. These individuals very often receive their pension benefits on retirement (such as their tax free lump sum) and then return on favourable terms, including an increase in take-home pay through avoiding paying employee pension contributions.
 - 7.2. Fire and rescue authorities must not re-appoint principal fire officers after retirement to their previous, or a similar, post save for in exceptional circumstances when such a decision is necessary in the interests of public safety. Any such appointment must be transparent, justifiable and time limited.
 - 7.3. In the exceptional circumstance that a re-appointment is necessary in the interests of public safety, this decision should be subject to agreement by a vote of the elected members of the fire and rescue authority, or a decision by the appropriate elected representative of the fire and rescue authority. The reason why the re-appointment was necessary in the interests of public safety, and alternative approaches were deemed not appropriate, must be published and the principal fire officer's pension must be abated until they cease to be employed by a fire and rescue authority.
 - 7.4. To ensure greater fairness and the exchange of talent and ideas, all principal fire officer posts must be open to competition nationally, and fire and rescue authorities must take account of this in their workforce planning.
8. The consultation explicitly seeks the views of the LGA to these proposals, with the consultation closing on 4 April. Members' views are sought on the proposals and how the LGA should respond to the consultation.

Fire Reform Board

9. The joint Fire Reform Board held its last meeting following the FSMC in January. The Fire Reform Board has representation from the LGA, the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the Home Office.
10. There was some discussion round the membership of the Board but the purpose of the Board was agreed as:
 - 10.1. Providing an oversight of the work being undertaken within FRAs/FRSs, Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA/NFCC) and LGA FSMC in support of the English Fire Reform programme.
 - 10.2. Initiating activity through the participating bodies (LGA FSMC, NFCC) on specific aspects of the reform programme.
 - 10.3. Providing a mechanism for reporting progress to the Home Office, CFOA (NFCC), LGA FSMC and FRAs.

6 March 2017

- 10.4. Providing a group to progress work with the Home Office on specific elements of the reform such as a revised National Fire Framework.
- 10.5. Engaging in specific aspects of the reform programme as appropriate to ensure that the views of the sector leadership are appropriately represented.
11. The group discussed how the sector was answering the challenges set out by the Fire Minister on Equality and Diversity, including the signature of the Memorandum of Understanding on equality, diversity and inclusion.
12. Members also discussed the reform programme and how the NFCC, LGA and Home Office can work together.
13. The next meeting of the Reform Board will be on 7 March at the Fire Conference and will be discussing the vision for the Service and how the Board will drive forwards the fire reform agenda.

Ministerial roundtable

14. The Policing and Fire Minister invited FSMC Lead Members to a roundtable on 27 February along with the NFCC to discuss the fire reform agenda, in particular workforce reform. A verbal update on the roundtable will be provided at the FSMC meeting.

Fire Minister's speech at Reform – 7 February

15. On 7 February Brandon Lewis, Minister for Policing and the Fire Service, outlined his vision for the reform of the fire service. The LGA were mentioned a number of times in the speech. He discussed his interest in a reformed sector-led improvement offer. He also said that he was encouraged that the LGA, in partnership with the sector had recognised the need to take swift action in response to the Thomas Review and learning from the police. Finally he talked of the LGA and CFOA/NFCC as being at the heart of the fire reform agenda.
16. The full speech can be found on the Home Office website:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/fire-ministers-speech-to-reform>

Policing and Crime Act 2017

17. The Policing and Crime Act 2017 received Royal Assent on 31 January. The full act can be found on the legislation website:
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/3/contents/enacted/data.htm>

Home Office organisational change

18. Following the machinery of government changes the Home Office created the Fire and Resilience Directorate, headed by Dan Greaves. However, to reflect the close linkages

6 March 2017

between the fire and policing reform agendas the Home Office has now created an integrated Policing and Fire Directorate.

19. The current Policing Director, David Lamberti, will lead the new directorate and the current Fire and Resilience Director, Dan Greaves, will move to be Crime Director on a substantive basis. Chloe Dunnett, Head of Fire Strategy and Reform, will remain the key contact for delivery of the fire reform programme. These changes will take effect from Monday 13 March.

Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA): national scheme for auditor appointments

20. The current contracts for the provision of external audit to all fire and rescue authorities, along with local authorities and other relevant bodies are due to end after the completion of the 2017/18 audit. PSAA has been specified as the sector led body to put in place contracts with audit firms on behalf of fire and rescue authorities and other relevant bodies who wish to 'opt-in' to such an arrangement.
21. All fire and rescue authorities, together with almost all other relevant bodies, have now either opted in or advised PSAA that they intend doing so. This will mean that a cost-effective and high quality audit service can be put in place through the procurement exercise currently under way. It is important that any authority that has not yet formally accepted PSAA's invitation to opt in sends the short acceptance form to PSAA by the 9 March deadline. Further information is available on [PSAA's website](http://psaa.co.uk) or by emailing appointingperson@psaa.co.uk.

Strategic Resilience Board

22. Councillor Hilton and Councillor Byrom attended the Home Office's Strategic Resilience Board on 31 January. Discussions covered a range of issues including the updated National Risk Assessment, Marauding Terrorist Firearms Attacks, the National Co-ordination and Advisory Framework (NCAF) as well as updates from Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP), the National Resilience Board and the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme.

Fire Service College

23. The Fire Service College is undergoing some radical changes in staffing arrangements and embarking on plans for significant land-sales which will lead to reconfiguration of the fireground. This will be of obvious interest of stakeholders and Government because of the terms on which the College was sold to Capita.
24. They have asked to update Fire Commission in May on planned changes and Cllr Edwards believes this should take place in order for the sector to scrutinise and influence the proposed changes.
25. Work continues on the Research and Development Hub, single point product testing, firefighter training offer, off-site training closer to home for FRSs and development of the overseas market.

6 March 2017

26. The College expects to be in profit this year.

West Yorkshire fire and rescue service revamps home visits to focus on most vulnerable

27. West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is planning to launch a new home visit programme, Safe and Well, which will see them working closer with the health sector. The focus of the visits will remain fire safety, but firefighters will also act as the “eyes and ears” for their partner agencies and will offer basic advice and make a referral where they see another issue that requires addressing. It is a joint enterprise between the Chief Fire Officers Association, Public Health England, NHS England, the LGA and Age UK.