

23 June 2017

Fire Services Management Committee update paper

Purpose

For information.

Summary

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

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the report.

Action

Officers to progress as appropriate.

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Fire Services Management Committee update paper

Ministerial responsibilities

1. Following the general election the former Policing and Fire Minister, the Rt. Hon. Brandon Lewis MP, has been appointed as the Minister for Immigration at the Home Office. Nick Hurd MP has been appointed as the Policing and Fire Minister. He was previously the Minister for Climate Change and Industry at the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy from 2016-2017, and before that he was Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department of International Development (2015-2016) and the Cabinet Office (2010-2014).

Grenfell Tower, Kensington

2. In the early hours of the morning of 14 June a fire broke out at Grenfell Tower in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Although firefighters from London Fire Brigade (LFB) were at the tower block within minutes of the alarm being sounded, the fire rapidly spread throughout the tower block. 250 firefighters were involved in fighting the fire and rescuing the occupants of the block. At the time of writing there are 30 confirmed deaths, though this figure is expected to increase because of the numbers of people reported missing to the police who lived in the block.
3. The cause of the fire and the reason it spread so quickly through the tower block are now the subject of both an investigation by LFB and a criminal investigation by the Metropolitan Police. Media reports have focused on the possibility that the external cladding applied to the building caused the fire to spread so rapidly, but there is currently no definitive explanation and will not be until LFB concludes its investigation, which could take a number of weeks given the scale of the damage to the building.
4. Given public concerns about the safety of other tower blocks, councils have been reviewing fire safety assessments, relevant documentation relating to any refurbishments work, taking the advice of their fire and rescue services, and contacting residents to reassure them. The Department of Communities and Local Government has also surveyed councils to identify the number of tower blocks that may be at risk, while the LGA has written to council leaders and chief executives about the steps being taken by the sector to reassure residents and themselves that a similar fire could not occur in their own tower blocks.
5. Once the LFB investigation is concluded and the cause of the fire is known, there may have to be changes to fire safety advice, guidance and procedures, including the guidance the LGA published in 2011 on fire safety in purpose built flats. It is therefore proposed that a report is brought back to the next Committee meeting in September on the conclusions of the LFB investigation and what that means for fire safety going forward including any changes needed in policies and procedures.

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Fire and Rescue National Framework

6. With police and crime commissioners now able to take on fire governance, the Home Office has started to look at what changes need to be made to the Fire and Rescue National Framework. An initial meeting was held on 21 April between the Home Office, National Fire Chiefs Council and the LGA. The aim of the review of the Framework is to ensure that the next version is relevant, focused and concise.
7. Issues to be considered for inclusion in the National Framework include:
 - 7.1. Identification and Assessment of Risk
 - 7.2. Prevention and Protection (inc Health agenda)
 - 7.3. Response
 - 7.4. PCC Governance
 - 7.5. Inspection
 - 7.6. Transparency/Scrutiny/Accountability to communities
 - 7.7. Assurance
 - 7.8. Commercial transformation
 - 7.9. The changing role of firefighters
 - 7.10. Workforce and culture
 - 7.11. Equality and diversity
 - 7.12. Standards
 - 7.13. Fitness Principles
 - 7.14. Re-engagement of senior officers
 - 7.15. Requirements for publication of strategic or operational plans.
8. Further work on the National Framework has been delayed by the general election, but as work progresses updates will be brought back to the Committee.

Independent Assessment of Police and Crime Commissioner's business cases

9. The Committee was updated in January on the work with the Home Office on the independent assessment of the police and crime commissioner's business case to take on fire governance where there is not local agreement to this. At that time the model for providing the business case with independent scrutiny was based on a panel of four members bringing together expertise in local government, policing, fire and finance,

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which could be drawn together from a pool, with the flexibility to bring in expertise on particular issues where that was needed.

10. There was then a delay in making progress on the independent assessment due to the reorganisation within the Home Office. A further meeting to discuss the proposals with the LGA, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioner Chief Executives was held on 20 April. Subsequently a different proposal has been circulated by Home Office officials. This would typically see one expert appointed to review the business case and report to the Home Secretary, rather than there being a panel assessing the case. The expert would be selected from one of four sectors (fire, police, local government, finance), though additional experts might be asked to assess the business case if the objections were relevant to more than one sector. Before going back to the Home Office with comments it would be helpful to have members' views on whether the LGA should continue to press for the business case to be reviewed by a panel rather than an individual.

Fire Reform Board

11. The joint Fire Reform Board met during the annual Fire Conference in March. The main items for discussion were the fire and rescue sector's future vision for the fire service, and the continuation of the corresponding trials. The next meeting will take place after the Committee meeting on 23 June.

Strategic Resilience Board

12. Cllr Byrom attended the Home Office's Strategic Resilience Board on 25 April 2017. The items for discussion included Marauding Terrorist Firearms Attacks and updates on the JESIP and the National Resilience Board.

Fire Health Summit

13. Cllr Hilton attended the Fire Health Summit on 13 March 2017. This included a discussion amongst the participating bodies which include NHS England, Public Health England, Age UK, the National Fire Chiefs Council and the Home Office as well as the LGA on next steps in improving collaboration between the health service and fire and rescue services. The summit also received updates on progress in evaluating the contribution that fire and rescue services can make to the health agenda, engagement with Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships (previously Plans) and workforce training.

Fire Statistics

14. The Home Office published a more detailed analysis of the headline fire statistics for the period April 2015 to May 2016 in May (see [here](#)). These showed that there was an increase in the number of incidents attended by fire and rescue services compared with the previous year, with some of this increase resulting from a rise in the number of non-fire incidents attended. This increase was to a large extent due to increases in the number of medical incidents attended.

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15. There was also an increase in the number of fires. The analysis suggested this might be the result of an increase in the number of deliberate fires, within increases in deliberate fires in road vehicles and other buildings increasing by 15 and 16 per cent respectively since 2014-15.

Policing and Crime Act

16. Following the Policing and Crime Act receiving Royal Assent the LGA has published a short guide to the Act and the work the LGA did around it. The Policing and Crime Act (Get in on the Act) can be found [here](#).

Fire Leadership Essentials

17. The LGA will be running two Fire Leadership Essentials courses for Fire and Rescue Authority members this year. They will take place on 18-19 September 2017 and 20-21 February 2018 at Scarman House, Warwick University Conference Centre. Details on how to book for the October course are [here](#) on the LGA's website.