

22 September 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

Fire Services Management Committee members are asked to note the report.

Action

Officers to progress as appropriate.

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Fire Services Management Committee update paper

Fire Reform Programme

Independent assessment of PCC business case for taking on FRA functions

1. The Home Office issued a note to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) on 18 August setting out how the business case put forward by a PCC wishing to take on the functions of an FRA, will be subjected to independent assessment if a relevant local authority objects. The intention is that the Secretary of State will appoint a single organisation to conduct the assessment, although that organisation may bring in other assessors.
2. The Lead Members of the FSMC have written to all FRA chairs to inform them that the LGA does not support this process and expressing disappointment that this was not made clear in the Home Office's communication. The LGA has consistently argued that each independent assessment commissioned should, at a minimum, seek a view from those with fire, police, local government and financial expertise and that to do otherwise would not provide a sufficiently broad view on the entirety of a local case.
3. The LGA has also written to the Minister requesting a meeting to discuss the matter as soon as possible.

Essex Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)

4. In July it was announced that the Essex PCC, Roger Hirst, had received approval from the Home Secretary to take on responsibility for the fire and rescue service in Essex. It is intended that he will become the first Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner in October 2017.

Local Government Association

Avon Fire and Rescue Service

5. The Government commissioned an independent inspector to undertake a statutory inspection of Avon Fire and Rescue Authority. The inspection was carried out by an independent inspector, Dr Craig Barker. The report from the inspection has now been published: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/avon-fire-and-rescue-authority-statutory-inspection-report>.
6. Avon FRA have requested support from the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the LGA. We are currently putting place a bespoke member development package, which will be informed by discussions with the FRA. The FRA have also agreed to the establish an independent improvement board, which will be chaired by Huw Jakeway, Chief Fire Officer at South Wales FRS and Vice Chair of the NFCC. Cllr Rebecca Knox will also be a part of the Board and we will continue to engage with Avon through our regional principle advisers.

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Update on the LGA's Equality Framework for Fire and Rescue (FRSEF)

7. The LGA is revising its Equality Framework for Fire and Rescue Services in England in response to criticism of the sector that its workforce is still too white male dominated. The new framework has strengthened and expanded the sections on workforce issues such as recruitment, promotion and employee health and wellbeing. It also places a greater emphasis on services having a genuinely inclusive culture that is free from harassment or bullying.
8. The new framework has been developed in consultation with a range of stakeholders including the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC), the Asian Firefighters Association and the Inclusive Fire Services Group.
9. The framework is part of the LGA's Sector Led Improvement offer and will support its peer challenges for the sector. A number of services are already piloting the use of the framework. It will be available for all services to use by the end of the year.

LGA Fire Conference

10. The next Annual Fire Conference is due to be held in March 2018. As previously agreed with members we are asking FRAs to submit bids for some sessions within the conference programme. The bidding process is short and asks for people to show how their bid highlights collaboration and partnership working. The bidding process is due to end at the end of September.
11. The Lead Members will decide which bids will be included within the final programme. Lead Members will discuss the draft programme at their next Lead Members meeting in October after which we will share it with the FSMC.

Fire Inclusion and Diversity Masterclass

12. On 26 September the LGA will be holding an inclusion and diversity masterclass to support members in their role to create an inclusive fire service. There will be sessions from HMICFRS and NFCC as well as practical workshops on inclusive leadership and unconscious bias. Please contact lucy.ellender@local.gov.uk if you would like to attend.

Government

National Risk Register of Civil Emergencies – 2017 Edition

13. The Government have produced an updated National Risk Register for 2017. This outlines the likelihood and potential impact of a range of civil emergency risks that could affect the UK in the next five years. Additionally it provides resilience advice and guidance.
14. The updated National Risk Register can be found on the Government's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-risk-register-of-civil-emergencies-2017-edition.

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Fire and Rescue Incident Statistics: England, April 2016 to March 2017

15. The Government have published the latest fire statistics in August. These showed that between April 2016 and March 2017 the fire and rescue service attending 558,963 incidents, which was a six per cent increase on the previous year but a 35 per cent decrease from ten years ago. The increases in incidents attended has been driven mainly by increases in attendance at non-fire incidents.
16. FRSs attended more non-fire than fire incidents in 2016-17. 31 per cent of all incidents were non-fire incidents and 29 per cent were fire.
17. The full statistics are available on the Government's website:
www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/636587/fire-and-rescue-incident-1617-hosb1317.pdf.