

Note of last Fire Services Management Committee meeting

Title: Fire Services Management Committee
Date: Friday 23 June 2017
Venue: Rooms A&B, Ground Floor, Layden House, 76-86 Turnmill Street,
London, EC1M 5LG

Attendance

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

Item	Decisions and actions
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1 Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest

Councillor Jeremy Hilton (Chairman) welcomed the group to the meeting, bid farewell to Councillor Phil Howson, Councillor Darrell Pulk and Councillor Michelle Hudson who are no longer members and welcomed Councillor Kerry Smith as new Vice-Chairman for the Board for the Independent Group.

Councillor Jeremy Hilton paid tribute to the emergency services response to the Grenfell Tower fire and confirmed this would be discussed as part of Item 3: National Fire Chiefs Council (oral update).

Councillor Kerry Smith declared himself to be a member of the Police and Crime Panel for Essex, which would be scrutinising the Police and Crime Commissioner when fire governance was transferred from the Fire and Rescue Authority.

2 Diversity and inclusion

Mark Norris introduced the item around diversity and inclusion in the fire services. He reminded the Committee that January, in response to the Thomas Review, they agreed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) around diversity and organisational culture. Mark confirmed that the MoU was signed after the 21 January 2017 Fire Service Management Committee meeting.

Mark highlighted that the report was intended to update the members of progress on the MoU and asked for approval for actions proposed within the report around monitoring, feedback and reactive actions to any feedback.

A discussion followed in which Members raised the following points:

- The main issues raised in the Thomas Review around oncall firefighters, recruitment and retention. A major part of this appears to be due to low public awareness of the diversity of firefighters roles in public services. In particular, the

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use of unnecessary jargon, such as RDS instead of oncall, was noted as a deterrent to public engagement with recruitment into the fire services.

- The national advertising strategy for the recruitment and retention of oncall firefighters was currently being progressed with a working group with the Home Office. There has already been a national survey and a report detailing its results was expected imminently. This will inform a national recruitment strategy in which inclusion and diversity will be of high prominence and which colleagues will be asked to comment on.
- The real progress which has been made in some areas, for example recruitment of women in Somerset and a more diverse cohort of new entrants in Greater Manchester, that this work was ongoing prior to the Thomas Review and will continue to be of utmost importance.
- Members commented that diversity amongst non-firefighting staff is general good and requested an emphasis on the sharing of positive recruitment practices where they exist with other authorities.
- The members commented that there was no mention of the inspectorates in the paper and were assured by officers that there will be once the inspectorates have been confirmed.

Decision

The Fire Services Management Committee **noted** the actions taken to promote the MoU and **approved** the actions proposed in paragraph 17. They also requested that reference to the inspectorates be specifically included within future reporting.

Action

Officers to include reference to the inspectorates in future work towards the MoU.

3 National Fire Chiefs Council (oral update)

Roy Wilsher (NFCC) gave this oral update. He updated the Committee on the NFCC Chairs and Vice-chairs who are now in place and highlighted that every fire service, except one, has now signed up to the operation principles.

Roy gave an update on Grenfell Tower. As NFCC Chair he had become the advisor to the Government in this area as the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser had been away on the day of the fire. He explained that he had attended all meetings since the event with the Government to put fire and rescue services position ahead. Cladding control is under review and there are 600 buildings might not comply with the building regulations which are going through testing to identify any necessary remedial work. Remedial works have already begun on some buildings that have failed the testing and in some areas of the country sprinklers will be being fitted.

He particularly highlighted the exemplary work of the London Fire Brigade during the fire and commended their bravery in the midst of concerns about the stability of the structure they were working in. He suggested those officers involved in the rescue effort will need and are being offered professional support.

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Councillor Gary Porter (Chairman of the LGA) then gave an update from the LGA perspective. He echoed Roy's sentiments around the fire officers bravery and need for support post the event, in particular assurances that the sector will strive to make them safer in their jobs, to minimise risk for tenants and firefighters in the future.

The Chairman outlined the work currently being done on this event including a team of LGA staff currently embedded in the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and constant conversations between himself and the Department. The focus is on identification of at risk buildings, taking remedial action, mapping out available extra accommodation in case of the need for decant of residents and public reassurance.

Sally Burlington (Head of Policy) requested that members give their feedback on reactions to this event in their individual areas and recommendations of what the LGA can do on their behalf on this issue.

A discussion followed in which Members raised the following points:

- Response to the incident:
 - The need to reassure tenants about their safety, and to find out what went wrong;
 - The strategic and literal capacity of local authorities to deal with the aftermath of these kinds of events and the emergency procedures in terms of evacuation need to be reviewed in light of this event;
 - The co-ordination of mutual aid between councils, particularly in terms of temporary accommodation;
 - The identification of other at risk buildings.
- Public confidence which currently lies with the firefighters, rather than the Local Authority.
- The FSMC offering support to the public enquiry, calling for more funds to return emergency planning to local government and to support the pay negotiation, sharing of best-practice around emergency planning, training leaders to deal with situations and lead on integration and collaboration in emergency plans.
- A lack of clarity about who has responsibility for guaranteeing safety in high rise buildings and the need for a review of these arrangements and more stringent guidance and legislation around this.
- The advantages and pitfalls of retrofitting sprinklers in tower blocks, including the difficulty of asbestos riddled buildings, structural stability for large water tanks and pumps in tower blocks and practical steps which can be taken if sprinklers are not suitable including:
 - Use of water mist suppression systems as a fire safety measure alongside sprinklers.

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- Improving the linkup between fire authorities and councils in terms of open communication and community resilience
- Improvement of communications around this issue to council leaders and officers.
- The motion put before the Committee by the Labour Group was also discussed.
- The potential for government to make it compulsory for certain types of building to go through a fire services review between planning can be agreed.
- Further areas of concern including privately owned flats and other types of at risk building such as hotels.

Decisions

1. Members **noted** the update from Roy Wilsher.
2. Members **agreed** to discuss the proposals in the motion in the item on the Committee's priorities going forward.

4 Fire Vision 2025

Mark Norris introduced this item and asked the Board members to comment on and approve in general terms the draft of the Fire Vision. The Fire Vision was commissioned by the Fire Reform Board in order to articulate the vision for fire reform to ministers, officers and with the wider sector. This vision would also inform future emergency services policy and work programmes.

A discussion followed in which Members raised the following general points:

- The document needs to be shortened and should focus more on proactive rather than reactive measures, should be more outward facing, should have an upbeat message on leadership, and emergency response should be more prominent.
- Localism, the service's community leadership role, local shaping of services to fit local risks, inspection and governance should be included more substantially.
- The document could be more ambitious, particularly around joint-working, including with health services, areas of service interaction, and around being the leader in this field and partner of choice.
- To avoid the Fire Vision returning to the Board multiple times, members suggested a small working group of members and NFCC officers might work on an intensive redraft of the document.

Further specific points of change were mentioned by members:

- Whether the recruitment figures in paragraph 47 are both stretching and attainable and whether the wording should be more flexible around these figures, while

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ensuring that the sector was ambitious to improve diversity.

- Paragraph 7 and the reduction in the number of fires had been facilitated by other changes – such as reductions in kitchen fires.
- The reference to climate change in paragraph 22 needed to be reworded. Risk of flooding mentioned in paragraph 22 should reference the need for Fire Authority oversight in planning on drainage and sites.
- The need to change the references to the NJC in paragraph 43.

Decisions

Members:

1. **Commented** on the draft Fire Vision 2025 document.
2. **Approved** the Fire Vision 2025 document in general terms.
3. **Agreed** it should be revised in light of members' comments and these changes considered by a smaller group of members with the involvement of the NFCC.

Actions

1. Officers to amend the Fire Vision 2025 draft with reference to members comments.
2. Officers to circulate the revised Fire Vision 2025 to a smaller group of members to deal with the finer details of the vision and take direction from this group on further amendments to the vision.

5 Annual Report for 2016/17 and priorities for 2017/18

Mark Norris introduced this item. He highlighted that the report gave the Committee details of achievements against the 2016/17 priorities and asked them to comment on the intended priority areas for 2017/18 as outlined in paragraph 14 of the report.

A discussion followed in which Members raised the following points:

- The need to include fire safety in tower blocks in the Committee's future work.
- The need for the LGA to feed into the Grenfell Tower enquiry.
- Concern that the Committee cannot wait until the start of the next political cycle to consider the improvements in fire safety measures outlined in the motion discussed under item 3, including researching and understanding the various options.
- The creation of a task and finish group with relevant lead members from the other relevant boards, i.e. Safer and Stronger Communities and the Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board, would enable the issues in the motion discussed under item 3 to be considered sooner.

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Decisions

1. Members **noted** the achievements of the Committee against its 2016/17 priorities.
2. Members **commented** on the Committee's priorities for 2017/18 and **made** recommendations as to their amendment.

Actions

1. Officers to **make** amendments to the 2017/18 priorities as outlined by the Committee.
2. The LGA to **create** a task and finish group around Grenfell Tower with relevant members of other boards.

6 Fire Services Management Committee update paper

Mark Norris introduced this item and asked the Committee to note the report.

Decision

Members **agreed** the report and clarified that they would not accept independent assessment of a police and crime commissioner's (PCCs) business case for a change in fire and rescue service governance by a single person, but that there should be a panel.

Action

Officers to go back to the Home Office with comments including the need for a panel rather than an individual to assess a PCC's business case.

7 Workforce report

Simon Panel (Principal Adviser Employment and Negotiations) introduced the item and outlined issues around the pay claim and the employer offer in response, which would usually be offered at the June NJC meeting. Regional consultations with services across the UK would have taken place by the end of June. Although their feedback had been affected to some extent by Grenfell Tower, the general consensus both before and after that incident was that an increase in pay above that originally budgeted for would be appropriate in the context of the 'broadening the role of the firefighter' negotiation and work undertaken through the NJC 'trials' continuing during this negotiation. The National Employers would meet again shortly to consider the content of the offer:

- A one per cent rise has already been factored in by most employers. Whilst as additional one per cent was feasible, possibly on a non-consolidated basis, it would not be easy for FRAs, but was felt to be appropriate.
- In common with the consultation meetings so far, FSMC members felt that further rises would need the support of government funding and would need to be linked to a permanent NJC deal for the future to broaden the role. In the interim, it was important to continue with work such as that currently being undertaken in many

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services through the NJC 'trials'.

- A pay formula might be a solution for the future, however, they have been criticised in the past as being vulnerable to changes in funding from central government and also have the potential to be unaffordable depending on the metrics used.
- Certainty and long-term planning would be appreciated by employers and employees. Therefore, a mid to long term deal would be sensible.
- The LGA (cross-party) should support representations to central government around funding.

Clair Alcock (Fire Pensions Adviser) updated the Committee that the Scheme Advisory Board has been asked to comment on the valuation which the government are currently doing around, setting the employer contributions, the Milne payments, refund payments and whether these should be included in the employee contributions.

Gill Gittins (Principal Negotiating Officer) highlighted the practical commitment at member level sought in the Inclusive Fire Service Group improvement strategies document to ensure a member lead alongside an officer lead in each FRA.

Decision

Members **noted** the issues set out in the paper and **commented** on its contents.

Action

Officers to continue to work on the fire service industrial relations and pension matters.

8 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes from the previous meeting on 6 March 2017 were **agreed** by the Committee.

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Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Gloucestershire County Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Kerry Smith	Essex County Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Rebecca Knox	Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service
	Cllr David Acton	Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority
Members	Cllr John Bell	Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Nick Chard	Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Mark Healey MBE	Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Peter Jackson	Northumberland Council
	Cllr Simon Spencer	Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Authority
	Ms Fiona Twycross	London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA)
	Cllr Thomas Wright	Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr John Edwards	West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Les Byrom CBE	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority