

## **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 Service Management Committee members are asked to note the report.

### **Action**

Officers to progress as appropriate.

<b>Contact officer:</b>	Lucy Ellender
<b>Position:</b>	Adviser
<b>Phone no:</b>	020 7664 3321
<b>E-mail:</b>	<a href="mailto:lucy.ellender@local.gov.uk">lucy.ellender@local.gov.uk</a>

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### **Independent Assessment of the Business case**

1. The LGA has continued to raise concerns about the independent assessment of the business case where a Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) is seeking to take on the governance of the fire service where there is local opposition. We have consistently opposed the transfer of governance to a PCC without local agreement and have used a number of opportunities to make the Minister aware of our concerns, including in a meeting between the Policing and Fire Minister and Lead Members.
2. Lead Members have also written to the Minister to reiterate our support for a robust assessment process. We outlined that there should be an expectation that the organisation appointed as the assessor for a business case should always draw on a number of organisations to make that assessment.
3. We feel that at minimum expertise should be drawn from fire, police, local government and finance to provide a credible and sufficiently independent assessment of the business case. This is not a requirement of the process currently however we feel it would provide a decision on a business case that was not open to challenge.
4. We will continue to update members.

### **Fire and Rescue National Framework**

5. The LGA has been a part of a working group, alongside the National Fire Chiefs Council and the Home Office, to look at a redrafted Fire and Rescue National Framework.
6. Issues to be considered for inclusion in the National Framework include:
  - 6.1. Identification and Assessment of Risk
  - 6.2. Prevention and Protection (including Health agenda)
  - 6.3. Response
  - 6.4. PCC Governance
  - 6.5. Inspection
  - 6.6. Transparency/Scrutiny/Accountability to communities
  - 6.7. Assurance
  - 6.8. Commercial transformation
  - 6.9. The changing role of firefighters
  - 6.10. Workforce and culture
  - 6.11. Equality and diversity
  - 6.12. Standards
  - 6.13. Fitness Principles
  - 6.14. Re-engagement of senior officers
  - 6.15. Requirements for publication of strategic or operational plans

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7. We expect a new Fire and Rescue Framework will be consulted on with the fire and rescue sector in the coming months. The FSMC will wish to respond to the updated Fire Framework.

#### **LGA Leadership Essentials Programme**

8. The LGA ran its fire leadership essentials programme for leading members of FRAs in October. The programme was well received, and achieved a 100 per cent satisfaction rate. Members heard from a range of speakers on issues such as collaboration, inclusion and diversity, Grenfell and case studies from FRAs.
9. We will be running the programme again on the 20-21 February 2018. Members can book places by emailing [grace.collins@local.gov.uk](mailto:grace.collins@local.gov.uk).

#### **HMICFRS External Reference Group**

10. The HMICFRS external reference group on fire inspection met at the beginning of November. HMICFRS provided feedback from the conference on 10 October and how useful it had been in shaping their thinking. Attendees discussed the importance of the IRMP as a starting point for the inspection as well as the inspection methodology.

#### **Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP)**

11. Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP) will deliver a new communications system for the emergency services, and in part is a replacement to the existing FiRelink communications system, provided by Airwave. The Programme is centrally funded by the sponsoring Government Departments and is run by the Home Office as the lead department and Home Secretary as its sponsoring Minister.
12. The eventual product of ESMCP, the Emergency Services Network (ESN), is intended to be more cost effective than the current provision by Airwave. A full business case (FBC) for the programme was approved in the Autumn of 2015 and demonstrated a sound economic case for the ESN, showing savings of approximately £3 billion over a 15 year period.
13. The programme is now facing delays for implementation and additional assurances have been provided by Ministers that the Airwave service will be available until ESN is ready. The extension of the current Airwave service will have a financial impact which could be felt in FRA's. The costs associated with the delay will be factored into a revised FCB, alongside a number of other areas that have been identified as having an impact financially on the ESMCP. In some areas the cost estimates have been needed to be revised upwards, and in others additional work has been identified to enable or deliver ESN.
14. With the delays to the Programme and higher than anticipated costs of transition the NFCC is working with Government Department to identify the position with regard to funding for ESMCP transition. As it stands it is inevitable that it will be considerably more than currently provided for through the current treasury allocation and concerns are being raised that a lack of clarity exists at this juncture.

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15. The LGA currently has representation on Fire Customer Group (FCG) which was established in 2013 under the chair of the CFOA Operational Communications Board and consists of senior FRS representatives from each English transition region along with representation from the Devolved Administrations, Home Office and specialist areas e.g. finance, ICT. However, we are keen to seek representation on the Programme Board to provide equivalency with other elected stakeholders such as Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) and the London Mayor's Officer for Policing and Crime (MOPAC).
16. The Programme will be subject to a further hearing at the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on Monday 13 November and as part of a review of the FBC the Major Programmes Review Group, a mixture of Cabinet Office and HM Treasury, will scrutinise the Programme in mid-December. Of late there has been an rise in the number of Parliamentary Questions received about the Programme which allied to the aforementioned hearing and review indicates that ESMCP may take greater prominence and play out increasingly in the Public Domain over the coming months.