

11 March 2019

Note of last Fire Services Management Committee meeting

Title: Fire Services Management Committee
Date: Friday 25 January 2019
Venue: Smith Square 3&4, Ground Floor, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

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

| Item | Decisions and actions |
|-------------|------------------------------|
|-------------|------------------------------|

1 Chair's Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and notes the apologies.

2 Tranche 1 Inspection Results

Laura Gibb from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) gave a presentation on the Tranche 1 inspection results. Laura gave an overview of the inspections, highlighting that the inspections cover three main areas:

1. Effectiveness
2. Efficiency
3. People

The key findings from tranche one were:

- Most fire and rescue services are good at keeping people safe from fire and other emergencies
- Emergency response rate is generally good
- Fire protection is not getting sufficient resource
- Six services have been identified as needing to be more efficient
- Most services need to improve the way they look after the staff who work for them
- The general public hold fire and rescue services in high regard
- FRS are only responsible for part of the overall fire safety system which is in the process of being reformed
- Demand for emergency response to fires has declined
- Many services have not modernised what they do or diversified their workforce

Laura detailed the time scales of the next inspections, with Tranche 2 to be published in June 2019 and the field work for Tranche 3 starting May 2019. An update on corporate governance inspection proposals will come to a future Fire Services Management Committee.

Members made the following comments:

- Members asked whether HMICFRS would consider services with commercial arms as part of these inspections
- Why had the report from HMIFRS recommended there should be greater operational independence for chief fire officers, when this could be considered as part of any governance review?
- Support for the on call system needs to be looked at again, by the LGA and stakeholders, with tax incentives and benefits being a way of encouraging employers to release staff and for people to volunteer.
- Future inspections should consider fire and rescue services' internal staff surveys to provide a greater spread of information. Reports on bullying and harassment could inform work on diversity
- Corporate governance needs to be reviewed to ensure it does not impact on elections locally and purdah periods, but could usefully share good practice on inductions and training for members.

Laura Gibb responded

- When the HMICFRS started these inspections, commercial elements of services were included in the methodology and will be looked at.
- HMICFRS had raised the issue of greater operational independence as a result of discussions with chief fire officers, and by looking at the equivalent positions for chief constables, but would be looking at this further before making recommendations.
- It has been recognised that, on call needs support across the sector.
- HMICFRS had looked at a range of information gathered on bullying and harassment, including from staff surveys, but also through conversations with staff. There were confidential avenues for staff to feed in.

Decision

The report was noted.

3 Inspection and Peer Support

Gary Hughes introduced the report which set out the current LGA support offer and suggested ways in which it could be enhanced to support fire and rescue services' response to inspection results. Gary Hughes outlined that the Inspection and Peer Support Offer has three stands

1. Inspection Peer Support
2. Leadership & Governance Peer Support
3. Targeted Peer Support

Charles Loft went through the proposals and the questions that the paper asked members to consider.

Members made the following comments on the proposal and questions

- The sector wants to see improvement and support for areas that are not performing as highly as they should do
- The LGA should seek additional peers and incentivising services to take part in providing peers is important, as its member responsibility to get the support out

there.

- There is a range of ways in which people learn. This needs to be understood when support is rolled out.
- Authorities need to recognise that there is a problem and the sector can help local services be supported better.
- Appointing a member champion to build on support can really make a difference .
- Thought needs to be given to how to make people see diversity as a priority.
- FRAs need to be ensuring that staff survey findings are followed up before inspections.
- The FSMC should write to councils drawing attention for the need to make effective appointments to FRAs and to consider diversity when making appointments.
- Could more be done to ensure effective members induction.
- Police Fire and Crime panels will need support too.
- The difference between FRA and council scrutiny needs to be taken into account.

Decision

That members agreed the proposals in the paper.

Action

Officers to develop a sector support offer based on member comments

4 Home Office Risk and Demand update

Anna Richardson and Emma Lawrence gave a presentation on the work of the Home Office on risk and demand in relation to fire and rescue services. This work was commissioned by the Minister for Police and the Fire Service to better understand demands and risks on fire and rescue services and the financial resilience of the sector.

All 45 FRSs were invited to submit evidence about their current and future risks/demand pressures, finances, opportunities for increasing efficiency and productivity and what the Home Office could do to support this. Key stakeholders were also invited to provide evidence. In addition, the Minister undertook telephone calls with a selection of FRSs, supplemented by calls with officers as requested.

Emma stated that there has also been an assessment of available data and evidence. There are fewer fires year on year and services need to change in the face of that. She asked members to consider any potential future risks the Home Office should be considering.

Members made the following comments

- Severe weather changes are leading to a need for changes to regional and national resilience plans.
- The change in what the fire services do should mean that traditional voluntary schemes still need to be protected.
- There must be an understanding from the Home Office on how the fire service needs both capital and revenue resource.
- The Treasury should consider tax breaks for on call staff and incentives for employers to release them.

Decision

Members noted the presentation.

5 Inclusive Fire Service Group Report

Professor Linda Dickens gave a presentation on the work of the Inclusive Fire Service Group, noting the support the LGA has given the group. Professor Dickens was asked when the Group would begin looking at the impact of the improvement strategies it had produced. She said they hoped to conduct a survey in March. It was hoped that advice on data gathering would be shared in February, but this was dependent on the capacity in the LGA research team.

Decision

Members noted the presentation.

6 LGA Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition date and venue for 2020

Members discussed the potential merits of each venue but deferred the decision to Lead Members once more detail of costs were realised.

Decision

Deferred to next Lead members meeting.

Action

Officers to table paper for next Lead Members meeting with more information of costs related to having the conference in each city.

7 Building Safety Update

Mark Norris updated the committee on the building safety work that the LGA has been doing since the last meeting.

Decision

Members noted the report.

8 Workforce update

Gill Gittens and Clair Alcock gave an updated on the main industrial relations and pension issues at present.

Decision

Members noted the report.

9 Central Programme Office Update

Cllr Stephens asked members to note the report and members were asked to share any comments.

Decision

Members noted this report.

10 Fire Service Management Committee Update paper

Cllr Stephens asked members to note the report and members were asked to share any comments.

Decision

Members noted this report.

11 Minutes of the previous meeting

Members noted the minutes.

Appendix A -Attendance

| Position/Role | Councillor | Authority |
|-----------------|-----------------------|--|
| Chair | Cllr Ian Stephens | Isle of Wight Council |
| Vice-Chair | Ms Fiona Twycross AM | Greater London Authority |
| Deputy-chairman | Cllr Nick Chard | Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority |
| Deputy-chair | Cllr Keith Aspden | North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service |
| Members | Cllr Jason Ablewhite | Huntingdonshire District Council |
| | Cllr Eric Carter | Telford and Wrekin Council |
| | Cllr Mark Healey MBE | Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority |
| | Roger Hirst | Essex County Council |
| | Cllr Rebecca Knox | Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service |
| | Cllr Les Byrom CBE | Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority |
| | Cllr John Edwards | West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority |
| | Cllr Nikki Hennessy | Lancashire County Council |
| | Cllr John Robinson JP | County Durham and Darlington Fire & Rescue Authority |
| Apologies | Cllr Judith Hughes | Kirklees Metropolitan Council |