

Centre of Excellence Update

Recommendation

- 1 This report is for information; members are invited to note its contents**

Centre of Excellence Update

Purpose of Report

1. This paper is intended to update members on progress towards a Centre of Excellence for the FRS.

Background

2. Over the past 18 months Communities and Local Government has been working with the Fire Service College (FSC), the Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA) and the LGA to develop proposals for a Centre of Excellence (CoE) for the FRS in England.
3. On 20th April 2007, the Fire Forum received a presentation by CoE Project Director Gill Newton, who provided an overview of the CoE project and explained the main options which were under discussion at the time.
4. Since then, intensive work with stakeholders has continued, culminating in a workshop on 11th September which brought together LGA, CFOA, CLG and FSC to consider a draft consultation document. This group agreed the principles to be consulted on, and commissioned the production of a final draft which was approved by the CoE Steering Group on 24th September.
5. Publication of the consultation is now planned by 26th October. Consultation will run for 12 weeks, completing in late January 2008.
6. The consultation paper will offer a range of options for the role, functions, status and governance of a Centre, and associated costs and possible funding arrangements. The consultation will help to determine the level of support for these proposals and how they might be taken forward.

Communications

7. The CoE project team is currently drawing up a communications plan to support the consultation. The expectation is that the consultation will be discussed at the Fire Forum on 30th November.

Continued Support of Existing Functions

8. The earliest a CoE is likely to be established is 1 April 2009. This means there will be a gap in the arrangements for delivering and funding some functions currently undertaken by Fire Service College. CLG and LGA are currently discussing how best to take this forward.

Next Steps

9. Current key milestones on the CoE project include:

19 October 2007

Consultation document publication:	26th October 2007
Consultation period:	November 2007 to January 2008
Decision in principle:	Spring 2008
Earliest date for establishment of CoE:	April 2009