

Fire Services Forum 30 November 2007

There will be a meeting of the **Fire Services Forum at 11.00am on Friday, 30 November 2007 in Room 8.1**, Local Government House, Smith Square, London SW1P 3HZ.

10.00am Group Meetings

Labour Group (8.1) (8th Floor)

Conservative Group (7.1 and 7.2) (7th Floor)

Lib Dem Group (8.2) (8th Floor)

Independent Group (7.3) (7th Floor)

Tea and coffee will be provided in Political Group Meetings at 10am.

Lunch will be provided at 12.30pm.

Apologies

Please notify your political group office (see contact telephone numbers below) if you are unable to attend this meeting, so that a substitute can be arranged and catering numbers adjusted, if necessary.

Labour:	Aicha Less:	020 7664 3263	email: aicha.less@lga.gov.uk
Conservative:	Angela Page:	020 7664 3264	email: angela.page@lga.gov.uk
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Independent:	Group Office:	020 7664 3224	email: independent.group@lga.gov.uk

Attendance Sheet

Please ensure that you sign the attendance register, which will be available in the meeting room. It is the only record of your presence at the meeting.

Location

A map showing the location of Local Government House is printed on the back cover.

Contact

Clive Harris (Tel: 020 7664 3207; e-mail: clive.harris@lga.gov.uk).

Hotels: If you wish to stay overnight in London, discounted hotel rates are available through the Local Government Travel Club (consult your own authority for information). Alternatively, accommodation can be booked through Hotelzon, tel 01962 844004, fax 01962 860974.

Agenda

Fire Services Forum

30 November 2007

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1. Update of current issues including FSMC Cllr Les Byrom will provide an oral update on current issues and report back on discussions at the FSMC that took place on Monday 26 November	
2. Flooding The Forum will be addressed by Terry Standing, CFO Gloucestershire Fire Service	
3. Fire and Rescue Service Consultations The Forum will be addressed by Peter Betts, CLG	3
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5. Date of next meeting – 22 February 2008	

30 November 2007

Fire and Rescue Service Consultations

1. Communities and Local Government has recently published three major consultations affecting the future of the Fire and Rescue Service:

- A Centre of Excellence for the Fire and Rescue Service;
- Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008 -11; and
- Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy: 2010

2. The LGA wrote to FRA and RMB Chairs earlier this month to highlight both the publication of the consultations and the opportunity for initial discussions on the key issues at the Fire Services Forum on 30 November.

3. Senior officials from CLG will attend the Forum to provide an overview of the major points in each consultation and answer any queries from members. The Forum provides an early opportunity for members to explore the content of the consultations, seek clarification and raise queries, and provide initial feedback to CLG.

4. The discussions at the Forum will also inform the LGA responses to the consultations. As part of the process for formulating the LGA responses, FRAs will be asked to provide written comments to the LGA.

5. A summary of the key points contained in the three consultations is attached to help inform discussions.

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30 November 2007

A Centre of Excellence for the Fire and Rescue Service

1. The consultation **A Centre of Excellence for the Fire and Rescue Service** was published on 26 October 2007, with a closing date for responses of 31 January 2008. This consultation seeks views on whether FRAs and other stakeholders want a Centre of Excellence for the Fire and Rescue Service in England. It sets out options for the role, functions, status and governance of a Centre of Excellence and associated costs and possible funding arrangements.

2. A Centre of Excellence would be a new national delivery body filling an intermediate role between the Fire and Rescue Service and Communities and Local Government. It will be for FRAs to decide those functions which they wish to fund a Centre of Excellence to undertake on their behalf and the consultation provides an indication of possible costs. If FRAs wish the full range of functions to be carried out, as set out in the consultation document, a financial contribution of some £50,000 per annum would be required from each FRA if costs are shared equally across all 46 FRAs. There are alternative funding options.

3. The consultation makes the case for a Centre of Excellence on the basis that the demands now being made of the Service, alongside the continuing competition for resources and the challenges which the Service faces in the future (demographic and socio-economic change, the political landscape, technology, energy, transport, environmental and ecological changes and security threats), mean that some functions would be more effectively delivered nationally. This may help facilitate greater consistency across the FRS and help drive up standards through the sharing of best practice, deliver economies of scale and reduce duplication of effort and expenditure.

4. The key benefits are stated as:

- allowing the FRS to take much greater responsibility and ownership for managing the present and to take a central role in influencing the future direction of the service as a whole;
- enabling the FRS to respond to new challenges quickly and to the highest standards;
- facilitating collaborative working, dissemination of good practices and interoperability across the FRS;
- helping streamline multiple impacts of the modernisation programme on FRAs;
- helping build capacity and strengthen leadership at all levels; and
- promoting cost effectiveness and efficiency in delivery, and achieving economies of scale, by bringing together some activities currently undertaken in individual FRAs.

5. A Centre of Excellence has the potential to support a wide range of functions focused around the following drivers of FRS improvement:

- **Operational and corporate development**, including organisational development, operational doctrine, equality and diversity, health and safety, fire prevention co-ordination, and technology and research
- **Training delivery**
- **Procurement**
- **Resilience** including operational assurance, national procurement and contract management

6. The consultation offers a number of options ranging from a joint management committee to a Non-Departmental Government Body.

7. The earliest date on which it would be practicable to establish a Centre of Excellence is April 2009.

8. The LGA has been involved throughout the development of the proposals. We and CFOA have sat on the Project Steering Group and the Project Board.

The LGA has publicly said that a Centre of Excellence or national service agency, has the potential to help the Fire and Rescue Service deliver further coordinated improvements and to continue to drive up standards. It could do this by securing economies of scale and removing duplication. We continue to state the case that in order to be successful, a Centre of Excellence will have to deliver real benefits to FRAs and provide value for money.

9. The consultation document can be viewed at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/centreexcellencefire>

30 November 2007

Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008-11

1. The consultation **Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008-11** was published on 14 November 2007, with a closing date for responses of 6 February 2008. The Framework is a strategic plan which outlines the outcomes the Government expects to see delivered by FRAs and Regional Management Boards. For the first time, the Framework has a lifespan of three years to coincide with the Comprehensive Spending Review period.

2. The Fire and Rescue National Framework sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for the Fire and Rescue Service. It does this by making clear the Government's expectations for the Service, what FRAs are expected to do and the support government will provide in helping them achieve these objectives. The Framework bills itself as a foundation on which to build local solutions.

3. Two of the key priorities for FRAs set out in the National Framework are ensuring that public expectation of FRAs are met and ensuring delivery of an enhanced resilience capability. Equality and Diversity is another key priority within the Framework

4. The Framework is divided into four chapters:

- **Chapter 1 – Prevention, Protection and Response** – covers the core business of Fire and Rescue Authorities in analysing risks and taking action to meet and mitigate the effect of those risks.
- **Chapter 2 – Resilience** – covers the delivery of the key resilience programmes and the actions authorities need to take to ensure they are fully equipped to meet the demands of the resilience agenda.
- **Chapter 3 – Diversity and Workforce** – covers the importance of mainstreaming diversity in all levels of the Fire and Rescue Service and workforce development, training and health and safety.
- **Chapter 4 – Governance and Improvement** – covers institutions in place to support the delivery of Fire and Rescue Authority business, the new Local Government White Paper framework including Local Area Agreements, Performance Assessment and Finance.

Consultees are invited to respond to specific questions around the structure and clarity of the document and the policies set out in each chapter.

5. The LGA has been involved in developing the proposals and this version is more focused on results to be delivered rather than specifying the processes to go through. There is a welcome reduction in the number of 'must' and 'should' requirements.

6. The consultation document can be viewed at:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/nf200811consultation>

30 November 2007

Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy: 2010

1. The **Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy: 2010** consultation was published alongside the National Framework consultation on 14 November 2007. It seeks views on whether the sector wants an Equality and Diversity Strategy for the Fire and Rescue Service in England. Its stated vision is to create by 2018 a Service which can demonstrate that it serves all communities equally to the highest standards, building on a closer and more effective relationship with the public and creating a more diverse workforce which better reflects the local working population in each area.

2. The Strategy is a 10 year high level national strategy which sets out the actions required on leadership, service delivery, employment practice, evaluation and dissemination of good practice, and accountability to ensure that diversity and equality are fully integrated into all aspects of the Fire Service.

The underpinning principle is that staff need to better reflect the diversity in the local community and have the skills and knowledge to work effectively in all communities.

3. The objective of the Strategy is to provide Fire and Rescue Services with direction and guidance on improving their performance on equality, diversity and fairness. The Strategy aims to support the Fire and Rescue Service in developing a culture which supports and embraces diversity and ensures equality of treatment and fairness both internally and in the service they provide to all of our communities.

4. It includes provisions to increase diversity within the workforce to become more representative of communities, supporting improvements in community engagement and consequently the reduction of fire deaths and injuries

The Strategy supports delivery of the Government's commitment to promote equality and diversity, tackle disadvantage, and build cohesive and sustainable communities.

5. Equality and diversity is of particular importance to government. It is felt that whilst progress has been made in this area, there is still a long way to go. Most obviously, very small numbers of staff are from minority ethnic backgrounds and very small numbers of women are operational fire-fighters. Fire also continues to disproportionately impact on certain communities.

6. The consultation particularly seeks views on:

i) The level at which the recruitment target for women in operational roles should be set for all Fire and Rescue Authorities, within the range from 12 per cent up to 18 per cent (by 2013); and;

ii) The level at which recruitment targets for minority ethnic staff should be set. Two options are presented. The first option is a target at the same percentage as the minority ethnic representation within the local working population and the second option is a target within the range from the same percentage as the minority ethnic representation within the local working population up to 5 per cent above that level (e.g. for a Fire and Rescue Authority where the

minority ethnic percentage of the local working population is 10 per cent the possible range would be 10 per cent to 15 per cent) (by 2013). If option 2 is preferred, views are invited on the level at which the target should be set.

The draft Strategy also proposes a third target, to reach parity in rates of retention and progression between minority ethnic and white employees, and between men and women, by 2013.

7. The consultation invites views on what guidance would be needed to support the implementation of the strategy, in addition to existing guidance in the Service and across the wider public sector.

8. The National Framework will require Fire and Rescue Authorities to implement the Equality and Diversity Strategy.

9. The consultation document can be viewed at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/frsdiversitystrategy>

Notes of Decisions Taken and Action

FIRE SERVICES FORUM

19 October 2007

Room 8.1 Local Government House at 11.00a.m.

Cllr Les Byrom noted that this would be the last meeting attended by Cllr Audrey Jones. Members thanked Cllr Jones for her work on the Fire Services Forum.

1. Membership of the Fire Services Forum and Office Holders 2007/08

The membership of the forum and its office holders were noted.

2. Update from the Fire Services Management Committee

Cllr Les Byrom told the forum that the following issues were discussed at the FSMC meeting held on September 10th at Local Government House:

- The membership of outside bodies is being finalised. There is a need to co-ordinate the work of groups on resilience.
- The imminent publication of consultations on the Centre of Excellence, the National Framework and the Equality and Diversity Strategy has raised concerns about the capacity of FRAs and FRSs to respond to these in an appropriate and timely manner. These consultations will be the subject of further discussion at the November meeting of the Fire Services Management Committee and Fire Forum.
- Barry Dixon (CFOA) updated the FSMC on business continuity planning and will be providing a further report on this in due course.
- Co-responding - this will be discussed at the Central-Local Partnership meeting on the 8th November. It will be necessary to engage with the ambulance and health service to provide a joined-up response to this.
- Discussions are on-going with regards to New Dimension ownership and funding
- Work is continuing on the Route Map through the Ten Year Vision task group.
- Parmjit Dhanda MP is the new minister with responsibility for fire issues at the Department for Communities and Local Government and he has been invited to address a future meeting of the Fire Services Forum. The date of this meeting is still to be confirmed.
- Since the FSMC meeting, CSR07 has been announced. The implications for FRAs will not be known until the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement in early December. However it is known that the FRS has been set an efficiency target of £110m of savings over the three year period. This equates to approximately 1.6% per FRA.
- The LGA will continue to lobby central government to get the best possible financial settlement for FRAs and the issues will be discussed at the November CLP meeting.
- In discussion members expressed some concerns about Firebuy.

Cllr Fred Walker told the forum that Greater Manchester FRS had undertaken some work on carbon footprinting within the fire and rescue service. This and other environmental issues affecting the service would be discussed in greater detail at the fire conference in March 2008.

Cllr Walker stressed that this was a high profile issue and could be an opportunity to secure additional funding for FRSs.

3. Sprinklers and fire suppression systems

Cllr Michael Murphy, chair of the Fire Suppression and Sustainable Buildings task group addressed the forum. He explained that the task group was established to progress work in three stages:

1. *Fire suppression in schools* – to seize the opportunity offered by the capital investment in new and refurbished schools through the Building Schools for the Future programme to address the current serious situation where the direct cost of school fires is almost £100million a year;
2. *Fire suppression in other buildings where vulnerable people are likely to be accommodated*. Houses in Multiple Occupation, social housing in deprived areas, and sheltered housing/residential care homes are likely candidates for this work;
3. *Fire safety and sustainable buildings more broadly* – considering, for example, any trade-off between the use of environmentally sustainable building materials and the risk and impact of fire.

The group has already been successful in lobbying the government on sprinklers in schools and is now in a position to add significant value to the campaign for the wider application of fire suppression systems. This work could be based on the development and application of a robust risk assessment tool similar to that developed for sprinklers in schools.

Cllr Les Byrom welcomed the cross-cutting work of the task group which linked strategic local planning, sustainability and environmental protection, and local Fire and Rescue Service's Integrated Risk Management plans.

Alan Brinson (British and European Fire Sprinkler Network) addressed the Forum. He told members that sprinklers and fire suppression systems were being seen increasingly as a form of fire prevention rather than a means of extinguishing a fire.

The LGA was praised for the work it has carried out in promoting the use of sprinklers, but it was noted that England and Wales still lagged behind other European countries where sprinklers were used in a greater number of buildings.

The debate needs to be refocused on sprinklers protecting property as well as people's lives and highlighting the economic impact of fires would help to reinforce this point. The importance of sustainable buildings for sustainable communities also needs to be highlighted.

Members asked whether the industry standard for domestic sprinkler systems was too high to allow for more general use and whether there were any plans for this to be moderated. It was also asked whether major infrastructure such as road tunnels would be sprinklered in the future.

Alan Brinson responded by saying that the standard for domestic sprinkler systems was due to be reviewed. New technologies have made these systems cheaper to install and the building industry needs to adjust to these new technologies. There is a great deal of interest across Europe with regards to sprinklering road tunnels. In England and Wales fire safety in tunnels has

in the past been determined by civil engineers, but now fire safety officers are also becoming involved in the planning process.

Cllr Michael Cartwright told the forum that Hampshire County Council had introduced a policy which saw a fire safety officer involved in the planning of all new and significantly refurbished council buildings. It was hoped that this good practice could be taken up by other local authorities.

4. Pensions

Cllr Fred Walker told the forum that there were two issues of interest:

- The change in pension rules has resulted in chief and other senior officers considering taking the lump sum payment after thirty years service and then remaining in post. FRAs were encouraged to share their experiences on this subject.
- The situation regarding ill-health retirement and redeployment is also causing concern. There are an increasing number of firefighters on 'light' duties but there may be a finite number of jobs they can undertake. There is recognition that this is a problem for all FRAs and will require further discussion.

5. Centre of Excellence update

Cllr Les Byrom reported that CLG was continuing to work on proposals for a Centre of Excellence in conjunction with the LGA and CFOA and that the consultation paper will be launched on 26 October.

The consultation paper will offer a range of options for the role, functions, status and governance of the Centre of Excellence.

Members noted that all FRAs are faced with a challenging financial situation and that there are concerns that need addressing. Detailed discussion on the consultation will take place at the next Forum meeting on 30 November.

6. FiReControl update

Madeleine Rudd (CLG) provided an update on the FiReControl project, which covered a number of key issues, particularly:

Finance

CLG was aware that questions had been raised regarding the business case. As part of the engagement strategy a number of events had been held across the country - jointly with the FRAs and/or RMBs - and a number had covered the business case. Madeleine Rudd emphasised that the project team was keen to keep up the positive engagement, and made the offer that CLG would welcome any discussions/event requests to discuss the business case (or, indeed, any other FiReControl matters).

CLG reiterated its position that it would meet the net cost of the FiReControl project through New Burdens funding. There would also be greater funding stability through the three year settlement process, and the funding system would need to retain some flexibility to be able to meet the actual costs of the FRAs particularly in the initial tranche, although no final decisions have yet been made on how this mechanism would work.

A consultation on regional cost apportionment is due to be undertaken by CLG before the end of 2007.

Infrastructure Services

EADS have reported some slippage of dates, but were working with CLG to produce a clear plan for the initial requirements by the end of October - this was to enable the FRAs to plan for implementation.

Buildings

Three RCCs have been completed so far and five more will be built by the end of 2008. It has been announced that the London RCC will be situated in the London Borough of Merton.

Engagement

CLG were keen to meet directly with FRAs and RMBs to continue discussions on emerging issues if that would be helpful. CLG was keen to maintain, and build on, good communications - it was recognised that these will be crucial to the successful implementation of the FiReControl project.

LGA Involvement

During the Q&A session Cllr Jerry Willmott explained that he was the LGA representative on the FiReControl project board, sounding board and HR working group and he encouraged members to contact him directly or through Emma Varley (Senior Policy Consultant) if they had any concerns regarding the project or issues they would like raised at any of these meetings.

7. Feedback from the NJC

Cllr Les Byrom reported that the revised joint constitution had been agreed and all parties were content. The mechanism for minority trade union recognition is now in place. FOA currently has one member of the Employees' Side. It was noted that the Joint Working Party on Pay 2008 will commence discussions shortly.

8. Future meeting dates

Member noted the meeting dates for the remainder of the 2007/08 meeting cycle.

9. Note of the previous meeting

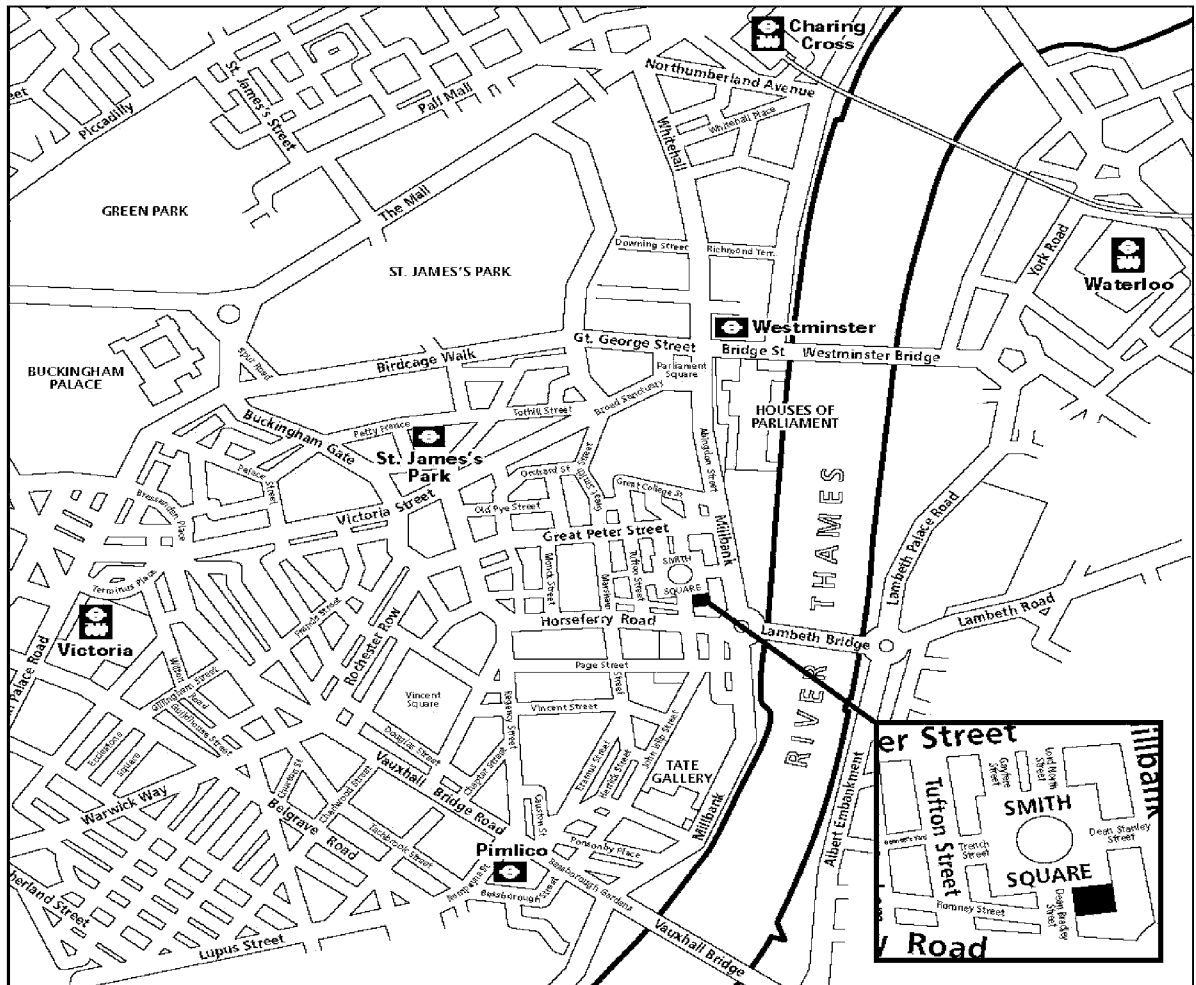
The note of the previous meeting was agreed.

10. AOB

It was asked whether any consideration had been given to the role of FRAs with regards to security and safety arrangements being made in advance of the 2012 Olympics. Cllr Les Byrom suggested that interested FRAs should meet under the auspices of the LGA to discuss these.

Next Meeting

The next meeting would be held on **Friday 30 November 2007** at Local Government House.



Local Government Association

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 (Formerly known as Transport House),
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Bus route – Millbank

- 87** Wandsworth - Aldwych
- 3** Crystal Palace - Brixton - Oxford Circus

Bus routes - Horseferry Road

- 507** Waterloo - Victoria
- C10** Canada Water - Pimlico - Victoria
- 88** Camden Town - Whitehall - Westminster - Pimlico - Clapham Common

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