

# Notes of Decisions Taken and Action

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## FIRE SERVICES FORUM

11 April 2008

Room 8.1 Local Government House at 11.00a.m.

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### 1. Update of current issues including FSMC

Cllr Les Byrom updated the forum on the main topics of discussion at the Fire Services Management Committee meeting on Monday 10 March:

CLG is undertaking work on Integrated Risk Management Planning based on four themed areas; 'good practice' guidance; research to underpin and drive forward the evidence base for IRMP; adequacy and impact of IRMP research and CLG 'healthcheck' of IRMP policy implementation. Mott MacDonald have been commissioned to undertake research on the impact and adequacy of IRMP on a national basis.

West Midlands FRA were thanked for their help in organising the LGA's annual fire conference in Coventry on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> March. The plenary and workshop sessions were very successful although the accommodation was not of an acceptable standard. The 2009 conference will be held in Bristol with the theme to be decided in due course.

The equality and diversity conference and awards ceremony is taking place on the 28<sup>th</sup> May. A meeting is also being arranged to discuss the role of elected members in leading the LGA's work on equality and diversity in the fire and rescue service.

A letter had been received from Sir Ken Knight explaining that he was unavailable to attend this meeting of the Fire Services Forum but that he hoped to attend on the 27<sup>th</sup> June where he would discuss both his and Sir Michael Pitt's reports on the flooding of summer 2007. Sir Ken also expressed his thanks for being able to attend the recent elected member's leadership event at the Fire Services College.

Cllr Fred Walker attended a meeting of the Central-Local Partnership on the 31<sup>st</sup> March. Issues discussed included:

- FiReControl – the minister said the Business Case will be published in June 2008 following the completion of the assumptions review. He committed to having a detailed discussion with lead members at either the next CLP or a special meeting prior to publication.
- New Dimensions where the focus was asset transfer. The LGA again raised the issue of lack of information about the precise levels of funding that FRAs can expect post transfer of assets. Minister will be writing to FRAs with details of funding imminently.
- The National Framework document is not likely to change much from the consultation version and is broadly positive for FRAs.

- There have been varied responses to the Centre of Excellence consultation and as yet no clarity as to how this project should move forward as a result.
- Contingency planning
- On the issues of co-responding, CLG officials will try to arrange a separate meeting to include colleagues from the Department of Health prior to the next CLP meeting.

It was recommended that the CAA process be added to the agenda for the next CLP meeting.

The chairman and members thanked Cllr Anthony Duggan for his all his hard work on the recent leadership development weekend for elected members.

## **2. Fire and Rescue Performance Assessment**

Andy Hughes of the Audit Commission explained that the 2007 Fire and Rescue Performance Assessment focused on direction of travel, use of resources and service assessment. All fire services have improved the safety of local communities since the last assessment but there is more to be done. The 2007 report highlighted the innovative work being undertaken by some FRSs and it was necessary to disseminate this.

It was noted that in one-third of FRSs, the pace of improvement has slowed, mainly due to weaknesses in internal systems. Whilst there was a commitment to deliver imaginative campaigns to improve community safety, these have not been matched by rigorous evaluation of these schemes.

Many FRSs have embraced partnership working as a means of adding capacity and also allowing for the fire and rescue service to contribute to wider community safety programmes. Internal business processes are also improving and this does have a positive effect on the provision of external services. A greater balance between local and national demands has also been achieved through developing IRMPs and consulting neighbourhoods.

There has been little improvement in the use of resources in the fire and rescue service but 80% of FRSs were performing well in this area anyway and 83% achieved the same score as the previous year.

The lack of diversity within FRSs is a restraint as it significantly reduces the service's ability to reach, serve and educate different communities about the risks from fire. No fire authorities are currently demonstrating good practice. Elected members could lead in this area and learn from the good practice developed in other areas of the public sector. Andy Hughes agreed that this is an emotive issue but that there was a need for FRSs to understand and reach the most vulnerable communities.

The Chair noted that it was important for FRSs to continue to improve, but also that the majority of them were already performing well, especially when compared to the performance of some parts of the public sector.

Andy Hughes reiterated that, whilst the service is performing well, there is always scope for further improvement. The Audit Commission has also improved in assessing the performance of FRSs and now employs firefighters to assist with this.

The Chairman thanked Andy Hughes for his presentation

### **3. FiReControl update**

Cllr Jerry Willmott noted that Richard How (CLG) had been due to provide an update. However, Richard had withdrawn on CLG advice as the meeting had fallen within election purdah.

Cllr Willmott reported that:

Four regional control centres have been completed – in the East Midlands, West Midlands, North East and South West and construction at the remaining sites is progressing well. Construction on the London RCC is scheduled to start later in 2008.

A preferred facilities management supplier (Flagship) has been selected by CLG. Meetings have been scheduled for FM presentations to the LACCs and LFEPA where CLG will explain the detail of the contract and answer any questions.

CLG is continuing to work closely with EADS on technology issues. The Data Capture and Migration Toolkit is being delivered in a number of phases. The first phase deals with the capture of land and property information (gazetteer information) and installation for early adopters is due to commence in May.

RCC directors have been appointed in five regions whilst the recruitment process is on-going for the remainder. CLG has developed a widely-accepted staffing model and this has been shared with all but one region. The South-West is the first region to make a decision on staffing numbers; they have announced their staffing numbers as 63.

The business case is still on target to be published in June and will include regional perspectives that will include details of financial savings. The assumptions review group met for the first time on the 1<sup>st</sup> April and will continue to review the business case as it is finalised.

The Chairman told members that Paul Sinclair (Director of the East Midlands RCC) would be invited to provide an update on the FiReControl project at a future meeting of the Fire Services Forum.

### **4. London Olympic Planning**

Jim Monks (LFEPA) provided an overview of the planning that has been undertaken by LFEPA in advance of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic games. Planning commenced in March 2006 with the aim of co-ordinating both the London-based and national aspects of the work with the aim of ensuring that; the games are safe for participants and spectators; contingency plans are in place and that the Olympic park is fit for purpose in the legacy phase. To this end, LFEPA officers have been working at the centre of the design and planning teams as well as the security directorate to ensure that they are at the hub of the planning and decision-making processes.

This has been influenced by the approach taken at the Sydney Olympics and the Commonwealth Games in Manchester where it was quickly discovered that it was never too early to start the planning process. The scale of the 2012 Olympics is much greater, however, with the event attracting between two and four million additional people to the country over a sixty day period.

All participating agencies have submitted funding bids through their relevant government departments, meaning that FRS funding for additional work (Olympic 'additionality') will need to be agreed by CLG. The Welsh and Scottish assemblies will make decisions on additional funding for the South Wales and Strathclyde bids. LFEPA has been awarded an additional £1.1million whilst bids from Dorset, Essex, Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Greater Manchester, the West Midlands and Tyne & Wear have been refused, with the caveat that CLG is prepared to hold additional discussions on these.

Currently, 9 fulltime LFEPA officers are working on the project and this number is scheduled to increase as the opening ceremony gets closer.

The Chairman thanked Jim Monks for his presentation and noted that all FRSs are running at capacity and that they will need additional funding to provide additional services at the Olympic and Paralympic games.

## **5. Project Fireguard**

Cllr Fred Walker provided an update on the Fireguard project. CFOA is going out to tender to ascertain the cost of providing cover in the event of a major pandemic or incident of a similar scale.. Project Fireguard was discussed with the Minister at the CLP meeting on the 31<sup>st</sup> March and discussions are continuing as to whether this can be classed as a New Burden.

## **6. Pensions update**

Cllr Fred Walker told members that the pensions working group had now agreed a set of recommendations that will be presented to the Minister for his approval. Ill-health retirement must only be used as a last resort and if an employee cannot return to a substantive role or if a suitable alternative role cannot be found.

## **7. NJC report**

The Chairman reported that FOA now has one seat at the Middle Managers Negotiating Body. Discussions within the joint working party on pay for the 2008 pay round are continuing.

## **8. Note of the previous meetings**

On the minutes of the ministerial meeting, members noted that number of fire deaths should be 1.25 per ten thousand not per one thousand.

The Chair noted that as Steve McGuirk's term as CFOA President will end shortly this will be the final Fire Services Forum meeting he will attend in that capacity. Steve was thanked for his contribution.

**Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on **Friday 27 June 2008** at Local Government House.