

## **Update from Fire Services Management Committee - 19 January 2009**

1. The Fire Services Management Committee met on 19 January 2009 at Local Government House where the following issues were discussed:

### **Update on current issues**

2. The Chair reported that he had spoken at an LGA/CFOA **Equality and Diversity** Conference on 25 November, where he launched the LGA' s Equality and Diversity Charter for FRA Members. Over 200 members have signed up to the charter to date. All members who have not already done so are encouraged to sign up to the charter.
3. CLG has agreed to underwrite the risk for the Fire Services College to host the **Fire Gateway** for the 2009/10 financial year and contracts will be extended accordingly. All FRAs will be asked to pay a subscription of c. £6000 to the running of the Gateway for 2009/10 and CLG will make a financial contribution to reflect their use of the facility. A survey of FRAs will be conducted to establish the ongoing value of Fire Gateway to the sector and subject to the results of this, the LGA, CFOA and CLG will be working towards the development of a sustainable funding model and governance arrangements for 2010/11 onwards.
4. CLG will be undertaking a second consultation with FRAs at the end of January on **New Dimensions** which will include a revised version of the Transfer of Ownership Agreement and their response to the comments received as part of the first consultation. These documents have been issued to the LGA in advance for comment by 26 January.

### **Audit Commission national study report on the Fire and Rescue Service 'Rising to the Challenge – improving fire service efficiency'**

5. Members discussed the key findings of the Audit Commission National Study report and how the LGA could support FRAs to improve efficiency and performance in line with the recommendations in the report. Members agreed that the report should be discussed at the Fire Services Forum to raise awareness and help identify good practice that could be disseminated across FRAs. There is a financial imperative to ensure efficiencies are made during a testing economic situation. Members agreed that more needed to be done to ensure that FRA members have a stronger understanding of strategic issues.
6. Members observed that the data tool published by the Audit Commission alongside the report is useful as it helps FRAs to identify where they are placed the comparative charts. However, it is complicated to use so there is a role for

the LGA to develop a simplified version for members. It was noted that Greater Manchester FRA has carried out an initial analysis of where it is placed in the comparative charts. Members agreed that the data tool should be publicised to FRAs,

## **Sector-led improvement for Fire and Rescue**

7. Members discussed a report setting out proposals for sector-led support for fire and rescue. They noted that previous Audit Commission reports have highlighted the growing gap between the strongest and weakest performers. All evidence suggests that improvement works best when it is led by the sector itself and the proposals in the report complement the broader approach to local government improvement.
8. Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships (RIEPs) are member-led partnerships that act as a regional 'hub' providing a central point of contact to enable authorities to access the right support at the right time. It was noted that it is not widely known amongst FRA members that RIEPs are the first point of contact for improvement support and members felt that the LGA should continue to raise awareness amongst FRA members. Nick Collins (CFOA) told members that CFOA will be creating a specific directorate to coordinate its operations in assisting FRAs that will complement the work of the IDeA.
9. In future, there will be a much more structured approach to sharing good practice within the sector by making available the skills of the best performers to drive overall improvement.

## **The role of Local Government Employers**

10. Due to unforeseen circumstances this item would be deferred until the May FSMC meeting. Instead the Chairman reported that Local Government Employers (LGE) had received a letter from ACAS offering to facilitate discussions between FRAs and trade unions concerning employment issues associated with the creation of Local Authority Controlled Companies. The FSMC was asked to consider whether to take up the offer of joint sessions between FRAs and trade unions.
11. Following discussion, members decided not to take up the offer at the current time because of the stage of development of LACCs.

## **NJC Update**

12. The Chairman reported that pay negotiations for the main NJC are continuing through the Joint Secretaries and the Joint Working Party. Pay negotiations for the NJC for Brigade Managers have begun.

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**Date of next meeting**

13. The next meeting of the Fire Services Management Committee will take place on **Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2009 at 2pm at the offices of Bristol City Council.**