

Update from Fire Services Management Committee - 9 March 2009

1. The Fire Services Management Committee met on 9 March 2009 at the offices of Bristol City Council where the following issues were discussed:

Update on current issues

2. The Chair reported that FRAs will have received a letter from CLG regarding the **Fire Gateway** which asks for a contribution of £6,000 per FRA for the 2009/10 financial year to ensure the portal remains in operation. A survey of FRAs is being conducted to establish the ongoing value of Fire Gateway to the sector before developing future plans.
3. The **Audit Commission's latest performance assessment** results for FRAs were published on 12th February. The report finds that fire services in England continue to improve, but the gap between the best and worst services is widening. It also concludes that all fire services have the potential to improve further.
4. The Audit Commission and partner inspectorates have published the **final framework for CAA** which will come into effect from 1 April 2009, taking over from the system of Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). Several members welcomed the opportunities that CAA will provide for FRAs to achieve greater recognition for their work within local partnerships. However, there were some concerns about the implication that poor performance of other partners could have, particularly in those areas where an FRA covered several districts.
5. Cllr Jeremy Hilton updated members on the **New Dimension Programme**. Members noted that, depending on the final details of the transfer, this could be rejected by certain authorities. There has been some delay in this process, but a circular setting out revised terms is due to be published by CLG shortly.
6. CLG, CFOA, LGE and the LGA are working together to quantify the implications of the loss of the opt-out of the **working time directive**. It was reported that a briefing had been sent to FRA Chairs on 6th March to inform them of the lobbying activity that the LGA was carrying out on these issues on their behalf. The LGA will request that this is discussed at the Central-Local Partnership meeting with the Fire Minister on 1st April.

Equality and Diversity in the Fire and Rescue Service

7. Emma Varley highlighted progress with sign-up to the charter and with developing a member champions network. It was noted that Cllr Duggan represents the LGA on the National Equality and Diversity Partnership and will bring an update on the partnership to a future meeting of the committee.

FiReControl – LGA position

8. Dave Webb (CFO Leicestershire) updated the committee on the FiReControl project. He informed members that work on performance standards is ongoing but, once finalised, will be sent out for formal consultation to all stakeholders. There are some concerns that funding for the continuity of existing systems will not be included in 'new burdens' payments, but the details are not yet clear. LGA has been asked to nominate representatives to two boards that have been created following a restructure of the project governance arrangements. Cllr Jerry Willmott informed members that the Business Assumptions Review Group is expected to meet again before the final business case is published on 30th April. Dave Webb explained that despite considerable confusion, it is possible for FRAs to sub-let the RCC buildings, but they may wish to take their own legal advice first.

NJC Update

9. The Chair updated members on the following:
 - Annual Survey - The NJC's Annual Survey which will provide vital information in order to inform future negotiations is currently underway. All authorities are encouraged to ensure the survey is completed and returned.
 - Advisory Forum - the LGA's most recent nomination to the Advisory Forum, Steve McGuirk (CFO Cheshire), has been accepted by members of the Employers' Side of the NJC.

Date of next meeting

10. The next meeting of the Fire Services Management Committee will take place on **Monday 11th May 2009 at 11am at Local Government House.**