

Note of Decisions Taken and Action

FIRE SERVICES FORUM

Friday 26 June 2009

Local Government House, Smith Square, London

Cllr Fred Walker told members that, as Vice Chair of the Fire Services Management Committee, he would be chairing the meeting since the FSMC Chair, Cllr Anthony Duggan, had lost his seat as a result of local government reorganisation in Bedfordshire.

1. Update from the Fire Services Management Committee

The Chair, Cllr Fred Walker, updated Members on issues discussed at the Fire Services Management Committee on 11 May, and highlighted the following:

- Sign-up of Member Authorities to the Equality and Diversity Charter was at around 65%, which was still short of the Committee's target of 75%.
- Updated guidance over pensions and ill-health retirement for Fire and Rescue Service Officers would soon be published.
- A presentation had been given at the Committee detailing the work of Local Government Employers (LGE). The presentation was praised by FSMC Members present, and it was suggested that LGE present at a future Forum meeting.
- The Committee had reviewed its position on the FiReControl and had agreed to continue to provide support to CLG while adopting a more challenging approach. A copy of the resolution was circulated to Forum members. It was noted by certain Forum Members that, as the Committee membership was to change, the matter would need to be re-examined by the Fire Services Management Committee.
- Members were pleased with the recent LGA Fire Services Conference, and it was noted that the 2010 Conference would be held in Manchester
- There was currently a difference in offers between the NJC employees' and employers' side regarding salary increases, and that this matter was being progressed.

Decisions

- Local Government Employers to outline their work at a future Forum meeting.
- The Forum asked that the Fire Services Management Committee reconsider its position on the FiReControl scheme at its meeting in September.

2. FiReControl

The Chair noted that this item was a late addition to the agenda.

Roger Hargreaves, Department for Communities and Local Government gave members an update on the current status of the project. It was noted that following the recent Cabinet reshuffle, there were new Ministers in post at CLG who were, though enthusiastic about the FiReControl project, keen that the costs and benefits of the scheme be fully evaluated. Ministers had also asked that all possibilities be explored regarding the scheme, including potential contingencies.

There had been difficulties with the project and an announcement would be made before the summer recess to allow for the most informed decision to be made.

It was noted that CLG had developed a communications strategy to ensure information reached the relevant individuals within FRAs and FRSs in a timely manner; the successful delivery of FiReControl depended on cooperation and communication with partners at the local level.

Following the presentation, the Forum commented as follows:

- Several Members noted that they held significant concerns over the ongoing delays in the project and how any new timescales could be believed following previous delays.
- Members asked whether discussions were ongoing between CLG and Fire and Rescue Services regarding upcoming local and national events, notably the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Roger confirmed that such discussions were taking place regularly.
- It was explained that CLG were also investigating a range of contingency plans should the project face further delays.

3. Protective Security

The Forum heard a presentation from Peter Usher and Chris Arculeo, Communities and Local Government, regarding an integrated protective security strategy for FRAs as part of the Critical Infrastructure of the country. The strategy drivers, as well as the project plan, were outlined within the presentation (presentation attached).

4. Summary of activity to support Fire and Rescue Services

Councillor Walker noted that, as the speaker on this item had given his apologies, this item could be considered at a future Forum meeting.



5. Fire and Rescue Service Equality Framework (FRSEF) consultation

Sara Williams, Strategic Adviser at the Improvement and Development Agency, introduced the consultation to the Forum, noting that the FRSEF was largely based on the FRS Equality and Diversity Strategy, and that the Framework would offer background and guidance. It was proposed that the FRSEF be piloted with nice Fire and Rescue Services, with the final framework being shaped and implemented thereafter. Members were encouraged to ensure their authorities respond to the consultation before it closes on the 21st August 2009.

6. Note of the previous meeting.

The note of the Forum meeting held on 3 April 2009 was agreed.

7. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Friday 16 October 2009.