

18 June 2010

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## **Update from Fire Services Management Committee - 24 May 2010**

1. The Fire Services Management Committee met on 24 May 2010 at Local Government House where the following issues were discussed:

### **FiReControl**

2. The Committee received a presentation from Robin Southwell, Chief Executive, EADS UK and Roger Hargreaves, FiReControl Project Director at the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG), outlining the scheme's progress.
3. Robin Southwell acknowledged that there had been problems to date with the project, but remained confident in its functionality and that EADS would be able to deliver to the agreed standard and timetable. Robin also said that there was more work to do in engaging with Fire and Rescue Authorities, and that the project suppliers would hope to do that in the near future.
4. Roger noted that CLG had recently finished the process of elaborating requirements from the fire and rescue service, and that individual requirements had been taken into account. The testing process for the whole system was to shortly commence, and an Assurance Board had recently been set up to discuss technical details of the project. Progress had also been made in further rolling out of station end equipment and mobile data terminals, and Fire and Rescue Services had responded positively to the equipment that they had received. The legal contracts between CLG, LACCs and FRAs were at final draft stage. CLG were also to shortly issue payments to help regional teams with their work on delivering the project.
5. Members raised a number of queries over the future of the project in light of the new Government, and whether Fire and Rescue services would fully engage with the project once completed.
6. Members agreed by majority the following motion:

"This committee reiterates the LGA's position on FiReControl and urges the new Minister to bear in mind the views of the LGA and the Communities and Local Government Select Committee.

We further urge the Minister to listen to fire authorities and Members' calls for freedom and flexibility when deciding future Government policy in this regard."

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## **Future of National Functions**

7. The Committee noted proposals put forward that would see the LGA Group take ownership of a number of national fire functions currently undertaken by the Department for Communities and Local Government. Members went on to express some reservations about the transfer of these functions, and agreed that further discussions be held on this at the Committee meeting in July.

## **Sector Led Improvement**

8. The Committee heard an update on the Operational Assessment (OpA) peer review programme. The programme looks at sharing best practice across Fire and Rescue Authorities and driving up performance in authorities, and officers noted that feedback received following the first year of the programme was largely positive. This was emphasised by those Committee Members who had taken part in the programme, who said they had found it to be very worthwhile.

## **Industrial relations update**

9. Members agreed that the Committee formally recommend to the LGA members on the NJC a zero per cent increase in pay for all fire service staff for 2010 / 11.

## **Other business**

10. Members agreed to look at a new strand of work for the Committee on the challenges facing the retained duty system. Officers will take this forward with Cllr Kay Hammond, who is leading on this piece of work.
11. Cllr Walker updated the Committee on the firefighters' pension scheme, noting that the Firefighters Pensions Committee had recently met to discuss the viability of the scheme in the long term.
12. Cllr Walker also noted that the scheme's current rules meant that some Chief Fire Officers were not able to retire before the age of 55 years. The Committee supported Cllr Walker's position that Chief Fire Officers should be required to work the full term of their role as it was part of the contractual agreement with the Fire Authority when they took on the job.

## **Date of next meeting**

13. The next meeting of the Fire Services Management Committee will take place on **Monday 19 July 2010 at 11am in Local Government House.**