

Notes of Discussion and Actions Required

Fire Services Forum

11.00, 12 February 2010

Local Government House, London

1. Report from the Fire Services Management Committee

In the absence of the Chairman, the Committee Vice-Chair, Cllr Fred Walker, set out the discussions from the January meeting of the Fire Services Management Committee.

Cllr Walker informed the Forum that the NJC had received replies from 21 Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) to their letter that asked FRAs to "establish their position on application of NJC agreed pay awards for Gold Book Staff, the desire of Fire Authorities to stick with current arrangements and on future negotiating aspirations should the decision be taken to continue to current arrangements", and asked those authorities who had not yet responded to do so at their earliest convenience.

Cllr Walker updated the Forum on Firefighters' pension schemes, noting that there was a shortfall on the older pension schemes, and that Government was looking at means of addressing this. Members agreed this issue should be taken forward as soon as possible.

2. FiReControl update

Roger Hargreaves, Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG), updated the Forum on progress with the FiReControl project, noting that both EADS and the new sub-contractor, Intergraph, had begun to hit key milestones in the delivery of the project. Roger stated that the Government held continued confidence in the project, and that service users were also better engaged with the project than previously.

Roger detailed discussions held at the recent CLG Select Committee on FiReControl.

Members reiterated concerns over the viability of the project, as well as the low confidence shared by Fire and Rescue Authorities in the successful delivery of the project. Members expressed similar concern over the quality of information available on the project and project milestones. Roger stated that the most recent iteration of the project plan when published would be made available to

FSMC Members, and Cllr Walker asked that this plan be circulated to Members of the Forum when available.

Members stressed the need for rigorous testing of the scheme to be undertaken prior to any implementation.

Members stated that uncertainties over implementation of the project were proving detrimental to local planning assumptions and staff morale. Roger acknowledged that the improvements seen by CLG in project delivery needed to be visible, and to produce something tangible, at the local level.

Members praised the written submission by the LGA to the Select Committee, noting that it accurately reflected the concerns held by member Fire and Rescue Authorities.

Action

Officers to circulate information over a future visit to the EADS site in Newport.

Officers to circulate the most recent iteration of the FiReControl project plan to Forum Members.

3. Emerging Findings from the Camberwell Fire and National Co-ordination

The Forum received a presentation from Sir Ken Knight, the Government's Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, on the emerging issues arising from the fire at Lakanal House, and workstreams arising from those emerging issues

Members discussed the 2007 Atherstone on Stour fire, with Sir Ken outlining the agreed process for investigation following such incidents.

The Forum also received a presentation from Sir Ken on national coordination efforts in preparing for catastrophic disasters in the UK, which he commenced by stating the importance of the FiReControl project to National Resilience.

Action

Officers to distribute slides of Sir Ken's presentation to Forum Members.

4. The role of the Fire Services College

The Forum received a presentation from Sally Sheen, Fire Services College, on the role of the College and the services offered by the College to Fire and Rescue Authorities.

Members praised the work of the Fire Services College, stating that the courses provided were of real use to both Members and officers and emphasising the unique role played by the College.

Action

Officers to circulate the list of courses provided by the College to Forum Members.

5. *Freedom to Lead, Trust to Deliver* consultation

The Forum received a presentation from Sara Williams, IDeA, on the Freedom to Lead, Trust to Deliver consultation.

Members stated that the principle behind Freedom to Lead was sound. Members stated that Fire and Rescue Authorities wanted less regulatory burden, but the opportunity for comparison with other authorities through a national standard was useful.

6. *Note of the last meeting*

The note of the Fire Services Forum held on 16 October 2009 was agreed.

Provisional date of next meeting: 11.00, 16 April 2010, Local Government House