

## Notes of Discussion and Actions Required

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### Fire Services Forum

11.00, 18 June 2010

Local Government House, London

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#### 1. Report from the Fire Services Management Committee

The Chairman informed Members that Robin Southwell, Chief Executive of EADS and Roger Hargreaves, CLG, had attended the Fire Services Management Committee (FSMC) in May to update the Committee on progress with the FiReControl project.

Cllr Maurice Heaster, Chairman of the Employers' Side of the National Joint Council (NJC) updated the Forum on fire service pay negotiations.

The Chairman said that the ownership of certain national functions could be shortly transferred away from CLG, and noted that the Committee had agreed that many of these functions could either be undertaken by individual Fire and Rescue Authorities or could be scrapped altogether. The FSMC would reconsider this issue.

The Chairman added that Cllr Kay Hammond was leading on a piece of work examining the Retained Duty System.

#### Decision

Forum Members agreed to advise the Fire Services Management Committee and the NJC that they would endorse a zero per cent increase in pay for all fire services staff for 2010 / 11.

#### 2. FiReControl update

Roger Hargreaves, Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) updated the Forum on progress with the FiReControl project, noting that the new Fire Minister was currently liaising with a number of partners to take their views on the future of the project and assessing its viability in going forward. The Minister was very keen in his decision-making to consider the impacts on both fire and rescue services and the tax-payer, and the complexity of the project might mean that a final decision would not be made imminently.

Roger added that EADS had yet to provide evidence to the FiReControl

Assurance Board of its ability to achieve key project milestones, but reiterated that EADS had provided positive assurances about its ability to deliver to deadlines.

Members said that the continuing uncertainty over the future of the project was impacting negatively on frontline fire and rescue services staff. Roger responded that the Minister was very keen in his decision-making to take into account the impact on frontline staff.

Members referred to the aim in the coalition Government's programme to "stop plans to force the regionalisation of the fire service". Roger responded that this aim might not necessarily impact on FiReControl.

Members asked about compensation due to EADS in the event of cancelling the project and whether any exit strategy would consider the burden placed on FRAs, many of whom had control centres that were in need of upgrading. Roger responded that any compensation would be subject to circumstances and complex legal interpretation, and that any burden on FRAs formed part of the decision making process for the Minister.

Members asked whether the FiReControl project was flexible enough to meet changing expectations from the fire and rescue service. Roger said that the contract was sufficiently flexible to deliver to varying local expectations.

Members thanked Roger for his presentation.

### **3. Sprinklers in all newly built homes – the position in Wales**

The Forum received a presentation from Ann Jones AM, National Assembly for Wales, on the Legislative Competence Order (LCO) which makes the installation of fire sprinkler systems mandatory in all newly built homes.

Ann outlined the background to the LCO, the passage of the LCO into law in Wales and stated that the Order had enjoyed the support of a wide range of partners throughout. Ann said that a range of evidence supported the installation of sprinkler systems, and said that no lives had been lost in the UK due to fire in buildings fitted with domestic sprinkler systems. The cost of such systems when compared to the cost of fire was minimal.

Ann supported the Private Members' Bill recently tabled by Lord Harrison, and encouraged Forum Members to support the Bill.

Members thanked Ann for her presentation, and welcomed the work that she had done in securing this legislation in Wales.

#### **Decision**

Members agreed that the Fire Services Forum Chairman write to Lord Harrison to express the Forum's support for the Building Regulations (Review) Bill (HL).

Members agreed that FRAs lobby in support of the Bill.

## **Action**

Officers to circulate a draft letter template to FRAs for use in lobbying activity supporting Lord Harrison's Bill.

### **4. Striking the balance between operational and health and safety duties in the Fire and Rescue Service**

The Forum received a presentation from Sue Parkyn, Head of the Police, Fire and Prisons Unit, Health and Safety Executive (HSE), which outlined the newly published statement from HSE that intends to clarify how the Fire and Rescue Service should comply with health and safety at work duties within their operational work.

A copy of the presentation is available to view via:

<http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pageld=11899734>

Members welcomed the statement, stating that any measure that would help prevent the loss of life was welcome.

### **5. Account management for Fire and Rescue Authorities**

Members noted the report.

### **6. Note of the last meeting**

The note of the Fire Services Forum held on 12 February 2010 was agreed.

## **Action**

Officers to circulate the outcomes of the NJC's recent letter to FRAs on FRA application of NJC agreed pay awards (as detailed in paragraph 2, item 1 of the 12 February 2010 note.)

### **7. Any other business**

Members asked that Fire Services Forum dates for 2011 be re-examined in view of a potential clash with local government elections. Members agreed that the next Fire Services Forum meeting be held on 15 October 2010.

## **Action**

Officers to re-examine dates for the 2011 Fire Services Forum meetings.

**Date of next meeting: 11.00, Friday 15 October 2010, Local Government House**