

Sprinklers' campaign working group update

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

The sprinklers' campaign working group have now met three times. The group, chaired by Councillor John Edwards, will be presenting a full set of recommendations to the Fire Services Management Committee in July. Cllr Edwards will, however, present to Fire Commission a summary of the progress to date, the outline proposals and will take any comments back to the group's next meeting which is directly after the Commission meeting.

Recommendation

Members are invited to comment on the contents of the report.

Action

Officers to progress as directed.

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Sprinklers' campaign working group update

Background

1. To date, the sprinklers' campaign working group have met three times and have established proposals for a 'grass-roots' campaign toolkit. A prototype is currently being developed and will be presented in full to the Fire Services Management Committee in July.
2. One of the major unique selling points of this toolkit is that it will consist of several joined-up but discrete sections which campaigners can use all together or separately, adapting to local strategies and priorities. All the information will be under "one roof". All the material is already in the public domain but this is arguably the first time that there will be one comprehensive pack to help FRAs and local campaigners conduct their own grassroots campaigns. We will build a dedicated web platform hosted by the LGA which will be updated by LGA and CFOA with new case studies and emerging research outcomes and evidence so any of our members can just access the latest information to use in their local campaigns at the click of a button.
3. This toolkit is set to be a credible and authoritative product with major parts of it being sector-led and localist. It will be marketed as a potential benchmark for FRAs who may not have had much or any experience in campaigning on sprinklers and may need some prompts. More experienced FRAs will share their experience of local successes and engagement techniques through this toolkit. It is not intended to be a prescriptive model for sprinkler campaigning and it will be made clear that the most useful elements of the toolkit can be adapted. The other strength of this toolkit proposal is that we will promote "one voice" on the issue by working to obtain buy-in from all English FRAs.
4. The toolkit, as stated in previous updates, will be focusing on campaigns lobbying with the ultimate goal of the installation of sprinklers in premises where the most vulnerable groups reside in or frequent. This includes schools, care homes, hospitals, homes of multiple occupation, social housing and so on. The working group from the outset made clear their intention to work incrementally rather than aim for the grand target of legislative change. This agreed approach will stimulate local debate and bottom-up campaigning.

Sprinklers' campaign toolkit – content

5. The proposed toolkit is a culmination of discussions and work progressed by the working group members, CFOA and LGA with support from the London Fire Brigade. It has been designed to consist of the following sections:

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- 5.1 **Why sprinklers? The background** – a short glossy booklet with the key facts and statistics expounding the benefits of sprinklers. This background information will be useful for campaigners to use to convince sceptics that sprinklers can effectively save money and lives.
- 5.2 **The evidence base** – a collection of case studies from all over the UK demonstrating the effectiveness of sprinklers in preventing the spread and acceleration of fire. Also, case studies of local campaigns run by FRSs will be included as well as success stories of local authorities installing sprinklers in buildings they own/run.
- 5.3 **Myth-busting** – this section will seek to identify and dispel common myths surrounding the costs, effectiveness and practicalities of sprinkler systems.
- 5.4 **Parliamentary lobbying** – this part will contain a potted history of sprinkler issues raised in parliament including details on Lord Harrison’s Bill. It will also briefly look at the success in Wales and identify key success factors. Finally, template letters will be included for individuals, campaign groups and FRAs to use to ask their local politicians to raise awareness and to ask them to support the cause in parliament.
- 5.5 **Communications** – this section will outline real examples of communication strategies used by FRAs around the country which will include draft releases; tips on how to engage local and national media; and how to start and maintain viral campaign through the use of social media tools.
- 5.6 **Mobilising stakeholders** – this section will provide advice and suggestions on thinking about the wide range of stakeholders campaigners can engage with locally. For example, working to garner support from ‘unlikely’ groups who may not obviously be supporters of sprinklers but have an interest in protecting vulnerable people. Securing the support of political, ‘celebrity’ and other champions to bolster campaigns will also be discussed.

Supporting partners

6. Through the concerted efforts of the working group members, LGA, CFOA and Ronnie King a number of achievements have been realised, including securing a ‘celebrity champion’ to support the launch of the toolkit, Nick Ross, presenter of BBC Crimewatch.
7. The LGA Environment and Housing Board, chaired by Cllr David Parsons, received a paper and presentation at their last board meeting on 16 May. The outcome was very positive with the Board agreeing to support the working group’s

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proposals and work within the LGA and local authorities to disseminate its messages to their colleagues and authorities.

8. They also proposed to write to Greg Clark MP, the Minister for Planning to urge him to consider the case for reforming building regulations to mandate automatic sprinkler systems in new buildings through secondary legislation.

Launching the toolkit

9. The launch of the toolkit will be led by a strong communications strategy which includes the LGA:
 - 9.1 securing the support of a national newspaper;
 - 9.2 securing coverage in national and local press (helped by FRAs around the country);
 - 9.3 launching a viral campaign;
 - 9.4 promoting the toolkit at various LGA and fire sector events, where appropriate. We will also work with FRAs to promote and disseminate the toolkit locally and nationally; and
 - 9.5 launching and hosting a continually updated website which will be home to the toolkit.
10. The working group will be considering a formal launch at next year's Fire Conference.

Conclusion and next steps

11. The toolkit will be reviewed and developed further by the working group, LGA and CFOA officers during the next month. The product will be 'user tested' with a small group of FRAs over the summer period to temperature-check the practicality and usability of the toolkit. A final product should be ready for October 2012, pending agreement from the Fire Services Management Committee.