

Fire Commission update paper

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

The report outlines issues of interest to the Commission not covered under the other items on the agenda.

Recommendation

Members to note the update.

Action

Officers to progress as appropriate.

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Fire Commission update paper

Fire Settlement

1. The local government settlement, including the settlement for fire authorities was announced on the 19 December. The settlement set out funding for 2013/14 and indicative funding for 2014/15. The overall budget reductions were broadly as expected. Overall the reductions in funding are around 21 per cent for the spending review period.
2. As part of the settlement the Government provided some flexibility for eight fire authorities in the level of council tax increase allowed before a local referendum is required. The eight fire authorities selected for this flexibility were those whose council tax is in the 2012/13 lower quartile. There is some degree of arbitrariness in this selection as some of the factors determining council tax levels, particularly for CFAs are historic and not politically determined.
3. The Government also announced the allocation of the capital grant. Although subject to a competitive bidding round, in practice 2/3 of the grant has been allocated on a formula basis.
4. The prospect is that the Government will operate on the principle that departmental resource budgets will continue on the same trajectory in 2015-16 as over the period of the Spending Review 2010. This implies a further reduction of around -6 per cent.

Appointment of Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor

5. Peter Holland CBE, the former Chief Fire Officer, was appointed as the new CFRA on 22nd January. Peter will provide professional advice to both civil servants and the fire minister, Brandon Lewis MP. Councillor Kay Hammond has written on behalf of the FSMC and the Fire Commission to congratulate Peter on his appointment.

CLG's Operational Efficiencies Review

6. On 14 December 2012, Minister for Fire, Brandon Lewis announced that Sir Ken Knight, the outgoing Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, would lead a short review into the operational efficiency of the services delivered by fire and rescue authorities in England.
7. The review will seek to identify the ways in which fire and rescue authorities may deliver further efficiencies and operational improvements without reducing the quality of front line services to the public. The review will examine options for savings both within and beyond the current Spending Review period.
8. Sir Ken has already embarked on a series of discussions with key organisations in the fire sector, including the LGA, the Chief Fire Officers Association, the Fire Brigades Union, the Fire Sector Federation, individual fire and rescue authorities and other relevant partners. All fire and rescue authorities have been invited to have input and

put forward their views. Should you wish to input you can send your views to the dedicated email account: firereview@communities.gsi.gov.uk

9. In addition Sir Ken will undertake a number of visits to a representative range of fire and rescue authorities. These are: Cleveland, Cornwall, Cumbria, Devon and Somerset, Essex, Manchester, Hampshire, Humberside, London, Merseyside, Oxfordshire, Shropshire, Bedfordshire, Suffolk, Surrey, West Yorkshire.) Sir Ken will be attending the March meeting of the Fire Services Management Committee in Brighton to discuss his emerging findings.

Fire Capital Bidding Outcome 2013 - 2015

10. The Minister for Fire, Brandon Lewis, approved the method of distribution of £140million fire capital funding for the next two years. This was announced along with the local government finance settlement on 19 December 2012.
11. The bidding process for fire capital funding closed on 2 July 2012. In all, the Department is allocating £38 million to fire and rescue authorities as part of the bidding exercise across the next two financial years and the remaining £102 million will be distributed to all fire and rescue authorities using a population formula. The LGA lobbied strongly for the distribution of this funding via a population formula and although this is largely delivered, FRAs did compile extensive bids cases which in the end, were unnecessary.
12. A letter was issued to all chief fire officers on 19th December 2012 setting out the allocation of funding for their authority over the next two years. The headline amounts by area can be found here:
<http://www.local.communities.gov.uk/finance/1314/settle.htm#Settle>

Control Centre buildings update

13. Following the termination of the FiReControl project progress has been made to find emergency service tenants for four of the nine regional control centres that were built. In order to find tenants for the remaining control centres the Department for Communities and Local Government is currently conducting a marketing campaign. Further information about the buildings can be found here:
<http://www.zenithcontrol.co.uk/>
14. The London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority are already using the Merton centre as their control room. North West Fire Control Ltd will use the Warrington building as a shared control room. The Maritime and Coastguard Agency will use the building in Fareham as their operations centre and County Durham and Darlington will use the Durham building as their headquarters. The remaining five control centres are those in Cambridge (Waterbeach), Taunton, Castle Donington, Wolverhampton and Wakefield.
15. In addition to the marketing campaign CLG is continuing to take action to reduce the running costs of the empty control centres. Last year the facilities management costs

were reduced by 25% and the utilities costs by 35%. CLG are currently piloting a further reduction in the utilities costs and are undertaking a further exercise to reduce facilities management costs again from April 2013.

Protective Security Strategy - Framework and Toolkit

16. Fire and Rescue Circular 64/2009 outlined a strategy for implementing protective security within fire and rescue authorities, developed and agreed between the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser and the Chief Fire Officers Association, to align the sector with the security policies of the Government's Security Policy Framework. This is principally about the physical security of documents, personnel and IT.
17. The new strategy is available on the Inside Government website at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-and-rescue-protective-security-strategy-2012>

Fire conference – 12-13 March 2012

18. Planning continues for the LGA's Annual Fire Conference which is taking place in Brighton on the 12th and 13th March 2012. All English FRAs are now registered. The current programme and booking instructions can be found on the LGA website:
http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/events/-/journal_content/56/10171/3700831/EVENT-TEMPLATE

Update on the SSCB/FSMC Working Group on PCCs

19. The task and finish group met for the first time on the 1 February to agree its work programme and next steps. Members and officers are now seeking to identify how FRAs are engaging with Police and Crime Commissioners and are keen to get as much feedback as possible. Examples of emerging good practice can be sent to clive.harris@local.gov.uk

Communications Data Bill

20. We continue to lobby for councils and FRAs to retain these powers. Early indications are that Ministers are persuaded by the business case for FRAs to retain these powers, in common with the police. Councillor Joanna Spicer will be meeting James Brokenshire on 26 February to press the case for councils.

Firemark

21. Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service have developed an interactive education package targeted at, but not exclusive to landlords in the private rented sector. The education package named 'Firemark' will provide fire and rescue services and their partners with information to support engagement through a short interactive training session for landlords held within their communities. The materials for the session are dynamic and interactive yet simple enough to enable delivery by any suitable organisation.

22. The CFOA Social Housing Group has developed a programme for regional seminar to launch the project. These seminars will incorporate relevant content for the full range of stakeholders involved in the private rented sector.

Operational Assessment & Fire Peer Challenge

23. As of January 2013 all Fire & Rescue Authorities are engaged in the Local Government Association and Chief Fire Officers Association Operational Assessment and Fire Peer Challenge programme.
- 23.1 12 FRAs have undertaken Operational Assessment and had a sector led fire peer challenge.
- 23.2 4 more FRAs are scheduled until the end of March 2013.
- 23.3 A further 19 are planned in 2013 and the remainder in 2014.
24. To support the development of a comprehensive peer pool, the LGA and CFOA delivered 13 Officer and Member Peer training events in 2012.
25. The learning, the emerging themes and the notable practice from the first tranche of peer challenges is being collated and assessed and will be shared with FSMC and the sector.

National Operational Guidance

26. The National Operational Guidance Programme (NOGP) is seeking to create, review and renew the catalogue of National Operational Guidance (Guidance) for the Fire and Rescue Service (the Service). In doing so, the Programme aims to:
- 26.1 define the parameters of Guidance; and
- 26.2 address common criticisms of previous Guidance.
27. In order to define the parameters of Guidance, the Programme developed a 'concept' of National Operational Guidance, which was discussed at the CFOA National Operations Committee and in CFOA Circular 2012 - 033. To support that work, and to define the parameters of this Programme and its products more precisely, the Programme has led the development of the Service's first operational policy framework, and is now seeking the Service's view of that framework.
28. The Operational Guidance Strategic Board comprises of DLCCG, CFOA, LGA and LFB and provides strategic oversight of the efficient production, authorisation and publication of operational guidance. Below this Board, there is an Operational Guidance Group made up of representatives from the Fire Service College, union representatives and other relevant stakeholders such as the Health and Safety Executive and industry bodies.

29. In order to address the common criticisms of previous guidance - that guidance has been very long, had a tendency to duplicate information and was variable in scope - the programme is proposing to structure the actual library of guidance differently. The National Operational Guidance Programme Boards met in December 2012 to discuss the Service's first definitive library of National Operational Guidance and proposals for the first phase of new guidance projects, and is now seeking the Service's view of that proposed structure.