

## **Priorities for 2013/14**

### **Purpose of the Report**

For discussion and direction.

### **Summary**

This report provides a set of priorities and a programme of work of FSMC and the Fire Commission in the year to July 2014. The draft priorities reflect the on-going work of both bodies, informal conversations with member authorities, and the responses to the letter from Cllr Kay Hammond, Chairman of FSMC, to all Fire and Rescue Authority Chairmen and portfolio holders in county fire and rescue services. A draft set of priorities was considered by FSMC on 19 September and this paper has taken account of that discussion.

A draft forward programme for the year to July 2014 is set out in **Appendix A**.

### **Recommendation**

To discuss the draft priorities.

### **Action**

Officers to take account of amendments/additions.

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## **Priorities**

### **Background**

1. At its meeting on 19 September FSMC discussed priorities for the year to July 2014. The agreed priorities are set out below. FSMC's discussion took place within the context of the broader LGA priorities and the ambitious programme of public sector reform set out in Rewiring Public Services which was launched at the LGA Annual Conference in July 2013.
2. As with last year, Cllr Kay Hammond wrote to the Chairmen of all Fire and Rescue Authorities on 13 August inviting them to propose priorities for the work of the FSMC in the coming year. To date we have received responses from:
  - 2.1 Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes FRA
  - 2.2 Dorset FRA
  - 2.3 Durham and Darlington FRA
  - 2.4 Norfolk FRA
  - 2.5 Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire FRA
  - 2.6 Suffolk FRA
  - 2.7 Surrey FRA
  - 2.8 West Yorkshire FRA
  - 2.9 Kent and Medway FRA.

### **Priorities**

3. At its meeting on the 19 September FSMC agreed the following priorities:

#### **Future funding and vision**

4. Future funding of the fire service remains a key area of concern for all Fire and Rescue Authorities. As we move towards the next full comprehensive spending review which is expected to be after the next general election, the sector will need to have marshalled arguments for a positive settlement that recognises the value of the service not just in terms of fighting fires and reducing fire deaths, but also in terms of the broader preventative and community safety work it does to contribute to economic and social outcomes. Over the coming year, FSMC with the Fire Commission and the wider sector will have a role in developing the vision for the fire and rescue service for the next 10 years.

#### **Reform**

5. The Knight Review challenged the fire and rescue service to embrace reform as a necessity to dealing with reductions in public sector funding. The debate which has followed the publication of the review indicates that there is not a single view on the structural reform of the sector. However, there does seem to be a consensus on the value of a sector led approach to reform rather than one which is top down and imposed from central Government. These issues, which feed into the wider LGA focus on public sector reform, are ones where FSMC has a key role to play in convening discussions on reform through the Fire Commission and more generally within the fire sector.

### **Futuring**

6. There are other environmental and societal changes which will impact on the delivery of local services including the effects of climate change, changing demographics and the impact of demand management in other service areas such as adult social care. FSMC has a role in drawing out good practice and sharing it more widely through the Fire Commission and the Fire Bulletin.

### **Planning for risk: what does good look like?**

7. The Knight Review has raised a question about what good looks like and what is the definition of effective and efficient service. The fire service is recognised as being different from other services in that it plans on the basis of risk rather than demand. Fire authorities have asked for better comparative data and a better understanding of what good looks like in terms of response times and also staff safety. There is a role for FSMC in generating a debate through the Fire Commission and among Fire and Rescue Authority members on the information they need to assess risk and the financial implications of an appropriate response.

### **Blue light Interoperability**

8. Fire and Rescue Authorities are exploring closer working with the police and ambulance services. However, a longer term vision for interoperability and greater collaboration is still to be crafted. FSMC can lead this debate from a fire sector perspective working closely with the Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA) and the government. It is also in a position to broaden the debate to include Police and Crime Commissioners and NHS trusts. The Fire Commission will be an important forum for airing issues and sharing good practice.

### **Sprinklers**

9. Sprinklers has been a high priority for fire authorities and this is reflected in the work that the FSMC Working Group, led by Councillor John Edwards, did last year to raise the profile of this issue. This remains a priority and FSMC has already committed to supporting fire authorities in their use of the toolkit that has been developed.

### **Retained firefighter pensions**

10. FSMC has been lobbying government on the issue of the allocation of the non-employee costs associated with providing retrospective access to the pension scheme to retained firefighters. We have recently responded to the consultation on the settlement between the government and Fire Brigade Union again setting out the concerns of the sector.

### **Sector response to Coroners' recommendations arising from incidents in high rise blocks of flats**

11. The tragic fires at Lakanal House in Southwark and Shirley Towers in Southampton led Coroners to make a number of recommendations in Rule 43 letters to government, Fire and Rescue Authorities and Local Authorities. FSMC has already discussed its potential role in supporting the wider sector in implementing these recommendations.

**Forward Plan**

12. A draft forward programme for the year to July 2014 is set out in **Appendix A**. This follows the steer from last year for more information in advance about items to be discussed, and more presentation style items.

**Conclusion and next steps**

13. Following discussion at the Fire Commission and any amendments arising from that discussion, officers will take forward the action plan.