

## Notes of Meeting

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### Fire Services Management Committee

12 May 2008

Local Government House, Smith Square, London

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#### Present

<b>Chair:</b>	Cllr Les Byrom CBE (Merseyside FRA) (Conservative)
<b>Vice Chair:</b>	Cllr Fred Walker (Greater Manchester FRA) (Labour)
<b>Deputy Chair:</b>	Cllr Jeremy Hilton (Gloucestershire CC) (Liberal Democrat); Cllr Watts Stelling (Durham CC) (Independent).
<b>Conservative:</b>	Cllr Anthony Duggan (Bedfordshire & Luton CFA); Cllr Jerry Willmott (Wiltshire & Swindon FRA); Cllr Mac McGuire (Cambridgeshire); Brian Coleman (LFEPA)
<b>Labour:</b>	Cllr Tony Hooton (Cheshire FA)
<b>Liberal Democrat:</b>	David Goddard (Stockport)
<b>In attendance</b>	Teresa Clay, CLG, Anthony Maude, CLG, Barry Dixon, GMFRS (for item 2)
<b>Apologies</b>	Cllr Philip Box (Shropshire CC); Val Shawcross (LFEPA)

#### 1. Update on current issues (oral)

The Chair welcomed colleagues from other authorities and CLG.

Members received an update on current issues as follows:

##### **National Leadership Programme event for members**

The Chair reported that the event was successful and well attended. Cllr Duggan informed members that he had written a report on the event for the Fire Bulletin. A copy of the report is included with the minutes. Cllr Duggan added that they were looking at the possibility of running another seminar in October/November. The Chair on behalf of members, thanked Cllr Duggan for arranging the event.

##### **CFAs and Civil Contingency Act Funding**

The Chair raised the issue of funding for Combined Fire Authorities for the Civil Contingencies Act having received a note from Des Prichard, CFO East Sussex on behalf of CFAs. Some authorities were given funding for the implications of the Act but some were not. Those authorities who did not receive funding are continuing to lobby government on this issue. This issue was raised recently at the CFA meeting at the

Fire Conference in Coventry. To take this matter forward, the Chair **proposed** that this item be put on the agenda for the Central Local Partnership meeting in June.

**Action:** Officers to request that this item is on the agenda for the next CLP and to produce a paper for the meeting.

#### **National Functions Working Group**

The Chair informed members that on 6 May the minister announced that a Centre of Excellence will not be established at the current time because the responses to the consultation were not conclusive. A National Functions Working Group has been established to look at the number of functions which need to be carried out on a national or collective basis to support operational delivery by FRSs. This Group has a considerable amount of work to do. Teresa Clay said that this is not a body that will oversee the delivery of functions.

The Chair recommended that a report be prepared by CLG to be presented at the Fire Services Forum meeting in October so that colleagues could see what is being proposed.

#### **Flooding Review Update**

Sir Ken Knight's review into the fire service's response to last summer's floods ***Facing the Challenge*** was published in March. It praises the fire service's response but said more can be done to make it even more effective, especially in dealing with emergency calls. Sir Ken's report will inform the overall report into the 2007 floods being carried out by Sir Michael Pitt which is due to report in the summer. CFRAU and LGA have similar views. CLG has been told that if fire authorities take on any more functions, they will need funding. The LGA is inputting into the final Pitt Review report which looks at wider flood management issues.

#### **CLG Review of Procurement and Firebuy**

Cllr Les Byrom told members that the CLG Review of Procurement and Firebuy has been helpful, bearing in mind fire authorities' concerns about Firebuy. He said that there is a need for some national procurement but this does not need to be an independent

operation. Previously the function was carried out in London. Individual fire authorities had made contributions to the Review and were waiting to see the outcome of the Consultant's report. Teresa Clay, CLG, added that the contributions made by LGA were highly appreciated and that it is not yet known when the Review would be published.

#### **CLG Review of IRMP**

The Chair advised that members had been invited to a workshop on the IRMP Review to be held in June, in Manchester. Members requested a copy of the Select Committee report looking into the adequacy and impact of IRMP before the June workshop to help inform their input. **Action:** CLG officials to provide members with the information.

#### **CLG Announcement of Support for Equality and Diversity**

Teresa Clay, CLG updated member on the CLG Announcement of Support for Equality and Diversity. She reported that the Minister in April, announced £3m, for equality and diversity including a graduate/high potential development scheme for the fire and rescue service. Any scheme will be voluntary. There is a scoping document and the model is yet to be agreed. A working group comprising CFRAU, CLG and LGA would consider the issue. The Chair suggested that a member of the FSMC be identified to take a lead on this work and this item should be included on the Agenda for the future FSMC meeting.

## **2. Fireguard Project Update (Confidential)**

Barry Dixon provided a progress report on the Fireguard Project. Members were referred in particular to outstanding issues

- The need for discussion at political level on new burdens on participating authorities
- A further stakeholders' event taking place on 10/11 July

Barry requested that the Chair encourage members to attend the seminar for stakeholders taking place on 10/11 July. The Chair suggested that once the contract

was returned and evaluated, it would be helpful to have a further presentation on the project at a future Fire Forum.

### **3. The Audit Commission - Transition from CPA to CAA**

Nick Easton, LGA Senior Policy Consultant presented this item on behalf of Stephen Frank, Acting Fire & Rescue Service National Policy Lead, Audit Commission who was unable to attend due to illness. Nick Easton gave a presentation on the transition from Comprehensive Performance Assessment to the Comprehensive Area Assessment. Nick explained how CAA is different from CPA and said this was still not widely understood. CAA was intended to be introduced in April 2009 and CPA will be abolished. Nick outlined LGA ambitions for CAA which include: focused on areas and outcomes; partnership working; putting the views of the public at the centre of the framework and involve a reduction in the overall burden of assessment.

Emma Varley, LGA Senior Policy Consultant explained the fire Service element of CAA. A fire CAA Steering Group had been established to take forward specific points. A self assessment tool is being developed. There are only two fire specific indicators out of the 198, but fire and rescue can make a contribution to many more. CFOA is looking at other targets that fire and rescue can contribute to within LAA partnerships. Emma concluded that there was still a lot of work to be done. Members were advised that any specific questions they have on this issue will be forwarded to Stephen Frank. A copy of the presentation slides can be accessed at:-

<http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pageld=21401>

Members made the following comments:-

- There was concern that the system was continuously changing.
- What were the LGA views on how LAAs were working in individual areas
- There is a need for fire authorities to get involved and contribute and a need to disseminate ideas, share information on CAA
- Each authority should look at the amount of money they are spending outside their core duties

- There is a need to involve elected members in LAAs and the development of CAA
- Duplication still exists in certain areas where authorities are doing similar work

**Action:** Circulate the top ten indicators in LAAs to members (Emma Varley)

#### **4. FiReControl Update**

Cllr Jerry Willmott drew members' attention to the proposals for publishing the FiReControl business case at the end of June 2008. He made reference to the Business Case Assumptions Review Group set up to ensure that business case is robust and includes stakeholder contributions. Cllr Willmott who had chaired this group, praised the comprehensiveness in dealing with issues arising from the FiReControl project. There was concern about how to present the business case, the regional cost apportionment and savings issues to fire authorities. Once the business case has been received, Fire Authorities will need to discuss it. CLG need to consider how it will respond. It was also suggested that the LGA should consider the implications for Fire Authorities and its lobbying position once the detail of the business case is known.

Members made the following comments:-

- Some authorities felt that the business case is irrelevant and that CLG is not concerned whether or not it is accepted by authorities
- LGA should represent, collectively, the interest of all fire authorities

The Chair suggested that the business case should first be received and considered by fire authorities and then fire authorities will be asked for their views/input. The FSMC will consider any views expressed at the meeting on 14 July and the option of holding an extra Fire Forum will be considered if there is an appetite to do so.

#### **5. Operational Doctrine**

The Chairman provided an update on operational doctrine, saying that it was a major issue. Responsibility for this function has been inherited by the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser's Unit.

Cllr Byrom explained that, at the Practitioners' Forum meeting, he pointed out that the

term 'operational doctrine' for the Fire and Rescue Services is inadequate and not easily understood. This was also supported by Sir Ken Knight. It was acknowledged that Individual Fire Authorities as the employers should have ownership of operational doctrine documents as they have the legal responsibility for health and safety. The Chairman said that it was important to be involved at the early stages of the production of the documents.

## **6. Pensions Update**

Cllr Fred Walker provided an update on the most recent meeting of the Firefighters' Pension Committee. He also informed members on the good progress being made on the issue of ill-health retirements by the review group that has been established to look at the issue of reducing levels of ill-health retirements. The target is achieving 3 ill-health retirement cases for every 1,000 fire-fighters on full time-staff.

It was reported that the Fire Minister has given a commitment that no fire-fighter who is genuinely ill would be prevented from getting an ill-health pension.

The Chair thanked Cllr Walker on behalf of the Committee for all his efforts.

## **7. NJC Update**

Cllr Byrom reported that both the NJC and the Middle Managers Negotiating Body met most recently on 13 March. At the meeting:

- the outcome of the MMNB recognition audit (conducted independently) was noted - FOA attained one seat on the MMNB.
- agreement was reached on the arrangements for those still on protected pay points as a result of the pay assimilation process in 2003

Since the NJC meeting, a fifth meeting of the Joint Working Party on Pay has taken place and we are still on course to reach an agreement at the June NJC meeting. It was noted that the next meeting in June would be held in Belfast.

## **8. Note of previous meeting**

The Notes of the FSMC meeting on 10 March were agreed.

**9. Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next Fire Services Management Committee is 14 July at 2pm and will be held at the London Fire Brigade HQ, following a tour of the building in the morning. Members have agreed that from September, SCB and FSMC would meet on different days. Members expressed a preference for FSMC meetings to start at 11.30am from September.

**Action:** 2008/09 dates for the FSMC will be circulated to members when available.