
Fire Services Management Committee

14 July 2008

at Local Government House, Smith Square, London

Present

- Chair:** Cllr Fred Walker (Greater Manchester FRA) (Labour)
- Deputy Chair:** Cllr Jeremy Hilton (Gloucestershire CC) (Liberal Democrat); Cllr Watts Stelling (Durham CC) (Independent).
- Conservative:** Cllr Richard Hobbs (Warwickshire CC) (RMB Member); Cllr Anthony Duggan (Bedfordshire & Luton CFA); Cllr Jerry Willmott (Wiltshire & Swindon FRA); Cllr Mac McGuire (Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CFA).
- Labour:** Cllr Mehboob Khan (West Yorkshire FCDA).
- Liberal Democrat:** Cllr Dave Goddard (Stockport)
- Substitutes:** Cllr Phil Box (Shropshire) (Labour); Cllr Paul Shannon (Greater Manchester FRA) (Liberal Democrat).
- Apologies:** Cllr Tony Hooton (Cheshire) (Labour); Navin Shah (LFEPA) (Labour); Cllr Eddie Clein (Liverpool) (Liberal Democrat).

1. Update on Current Issues

The Chairman updated members on current issues within the Management Committee's remit.

The LGA raised two issues with the minister at the CLP meeting on behalf of Combined Fire Authorities. On the lack of power of well-being, CLG requested specific examples from CFAs of issues that needed addressing and where these powers would be necessary. CFAs are requested to pass examples on to the LGA so that they can be used in discussions with CLG. CLG agreed to look into the issue of funding for CFAs in relation to the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

Members received an oral update on Fireguard and were told that it was launched on Friday the 11th July.

FRAs who have not yet agreed to sign up to the scheme would need to make a final decision by the middle of October. The initial start up cost of the programme was estimated to be in the region of £9.5m and a request will be made to CLG to meet the start-up costs.

Members were reminded that the LGA's Annual Fire Conference would be taking place in Bristol on the 10th and 11th March 2009. The Fire Services Management

Committee would be meeting in Bristol on the 9th March; venue to be confirmed in due course.

The Chair encouraged members to ensure that FRAs are engaged in the LAA process; a joint LGA/CFOA paper on this was being produced and would be discussed at a future FSMC meeting. Members agreed that there was a need to raise awareness amongst local authorities to the broad role of FRAs in meeting local priorities.

Shona Dunn had been appointed Director of Resilience at CLG and she would be commencing this role on the 26th August.

Cllr Anthony Duggan noted that the feedback on the Executive Leadership programme at Warwick University had been positive. The course will run again in 2009 due to the high level of interest from the fire and rescue service.

New Dimension Transition Project

Cllr Jeremy Hilton told members that the transfer of ownership of New Dimension equipment would take place on the 1st October. The 16 year maintenance contract had been awarded to Vosper Thornycroft Critical Services 8th July.

The Assurance function is currently managed through a Transition Board (due to become a National Resilience Board post transfer), chaired by Terry Standing, CFO Gloucestershire and CFOA lead on the New Dimension Long Term Capability Management, with Jon Hall, ACFO Hereford and Worcester as Vice Chair. The membership of the Board includes Cllr Jeremy Hilton as Lead Member providing LGA oversight and providing a direct link to the FSMC.

Action

- Members agreed that this should be discussed at the next committee meeting and that Terry Standing and Jon Hall be invited to attend.

Update on the development of CAA

Cllr Mehboob Khan reported that he had met with Zoë Billingham (Audit Commission) and at this meeting he was invited to represent the FSMC on a CAA steering group.

Cllr Khan noted that he and Emma Varley (Senior Policy Consultant) were leading on the FSMC's response to the Audit Commission CAA consultation, expected at the end of July, and it was agreed that this would be discussed at the next meeting of the Fire Services Management Committee.

Emma Varley noted that the LGA was discussing holding a joint event with CFOA on CAA in the autumn. The FSMC would be kept abreast of any developments.

Decision

- The Fire Services Management Committee agreed that Cllr Mehboob Khan be appointed the representative on this steering group.
- The development of CAA would be discussed at the FSMC meeting on the 5th September and then at the October 10th meeting of the Fire Services Forum.

2. Role of the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser's Unit

Sir Ken Knight gave a brief overview of his role and that of the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser's Unit (CFRAU).

CFRAU has replaced the fire inspectorate following recommendations made in the Bain report, with the main function being to act in an advisory role and to re-shape the relationship between FRAs, FRSs and the government.

Other responsibilities include:

- Fire safety in all crown premises
- Co-ordination of responses to catastrophic events
- Acting as a critical friend on proposed changes in policy
- Maintaining contact with key partner groups including the LGA

Sir Ken noted that CFRAU was staffed predominantly by secondees who brought experience from FRSs and would also take experience of working in central government back to their brigades.

Sir Ken then moved on to discuss operational doctrine. Historically this had been the responsibility of the Home Office and the fire inspectorate but whilst CLG now had legal responsibility for this there were two preferred options for how it could be developed in future:

- Outsource all guidance work and appoint a contract manager within CFRAU
- Creation of a Publication Board and Scoping Group

It was hoped that stakeholders could also provide guidance as to how to take this forward.

CFRAU was also providing advice on process that included the formalisation of the investigation of major incidents and fatalities.

3. Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) 2009

Bill Wilkinson noted that as yet no decision had been made by the government on whether there would be a spending review, but an announcement is expected in the autumn. He advised that FRAs should assume that a spending review would be carried out in 2009 and that FRAs (and all local authorities) should start gathering evidence to support their case accordingly. Questionnaires would be distributed to fire and rescue authorities in support of this evidence gathering.

There were three issues that all FRAs needed to consider:

- a realistic approach on both sides was necessary
- there should be an acknowledgement that weak areas need addressing
- the most should be made of strengths

FRAs need to respond positively to both the Audit Commission's review and the government's priorities for SR09. Members were invited to comment on and endorse this approach.

Two other issues needed exploring in due course; firstly whether the FSMC should engage in lobbying work with relevant MPs and Peers; and whether research could be commissioned or sponsored to highlight the social and economic benefits of a strong fire and rescue service.

Members agreed that this issue should be discussed at a future meeting of the Fire Services Forum. At this Members would be asked to provide examples of where FRAs have added value and also where they have made financial savings for other parts of local government.

Actions

- Bill Wilkinson will send out a survey to look at the current financial picture and investigate where FRAs could make further financial savings
- Members will provide examples of efficiency savings and partnership working to Bill Wilkinson

4. FiReControl Business Case

Richard How told members that part 1 – the regional part of the Business Case had been published on the 8th July. CLG had received new information at a late stage that had delayed the publication of the full Business Case. Part 2, the national case will be published in late summer.

Richard How said that the regional annexes detail the costs, savings, benefits and functionality of the new RCCs and also provide a robust picture of the running costs. In some regions the cost of running FiReControl will be greater than the existing system. In these instances CLG will make up the shortfall with a resilience payment, to be reviewed after 3 years.

Richard How agreed to distribute the regional annexes to RMB Chairs.

5. NJC Update

The Chair noted that the pay award for 2008 had been agreed at 2.45%. It is hoped that a two-year pay settlement will be agreed to cover 2009 and 2010.

Role maps were an on-going issue and Des Prichard would be invited to attend a future FSMC meeting to discuss this further.

6. Note of previous meeting

It was noted that Cllr Richard Hobbs had given his apologies for the meeting of the 12th May but that this had not been included in the minute.

The note was otherwise agreed.

7. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Fire Services Management Committee will take place on **Friday 5th September at the new time of 11am at Local Government House.**