

Notes of Decisions Taken and Actions Required

Fire Services Management Committee

5 September 2008

at Local Government House, Smith Square, London

Present

Chair:	Cllr Anthony Duggan (Bedfordshire & Luton CFA)
Vice Chair:	Cllr Fred Walker (Greater Manchester FCDA)
Deputy Chair:	Cllr Jeremy Hilton (Gloucestershire CC) (Liberal Democrat); Cllr Watts Stelling (Durham CC) (Independent).
Conservative:	Cllr Richard Hobbs (Warwickshire CC) (RMB Member); Cllr Peter Roffey (Leicestershire CC)
Labour:	Cllr Mehboob Khan (West Yorkshire FCDA).
Liberal Democrat:	Cllr Dave Goddard (Stockport); Cllr Eddie Clein (Liverpool)
Substitutes:	Cllr Mac McGuire (Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CFA). Cllr Phil Box (Shropshire) (Labour)
Apologies:	Cllr Jerry Willmott (Wiltshire & Swindon CFA) (Conservative); Cllr Joanna Spicer (Suffolk CC) (Conservative); Cllr Michael Cartwright (Hampshire CC) (Conservative); Cllr Tony Hooton (Cheshire) (Labour); Cllr Navin Shah AM (LFEPA) (Labour); Cllr Sharon Sullivan (Merseyside FCDA) (Labour)

1. Membership and office holders of the FSMC and outside bodies

The Chairman welcomed the new members; Cllr Peter Roffey, Cllr Joanna Spicer, Cllr Sharon Sullivan and Cllr Navin Shah AM and paid tribute to the outgoing members; Cllr Val Shawcross and Cllr Mac McGuire, although the latter would remain on the FSMC as a conservative substitute.

Cllr Duggan received cross party congratulations on his appointment as Chairman.

Clive Harris referred to appendix 3 and the four outside body vacancies. Expressions of interest to fill these vacancies should be provided to Clive who would provide terms of reference upon request. It was agreed that substitutes could put their names forward.

Decision

- The Board noted its membership and terms of reference.

Actions

- Expressions of interest to fill the vacancies should be provided to Clive Harris clive.haris@lga.gov.uk by 26 September;
- Members should provide details of any additional outside bodies that had been omitted.

2. Work programme for 2008/09

Before inviting Emma Varley to introduce the item the Chairman said that members needed to be clear that they were content with the priorities and realistic about what could be achieved within the yearly meeting cycle. Emma explained that the work programme concentrated on areas where the FSMC should either be leading the debate or making a valuable contribution to wider work. The following three key priorities were highlighted:

- Comprehensive Spending Review settlement;
- The development of CAA and the role of fire and rescue in LAAs;
- Equality and diversity.

Members agreed that the work programme broadly covered the right areas. Concern was expressed that the emphasis of the work programme was reactive and there should be more focus on 'reducing the risk'. A discussion developed on major issues that had not been included but might arise. It was agreed that flooding and specifically the follow up to the Pitt report, should be included in the work programme. Members were asked to suggest any proactive areas of work for the FSMC in 2008/09, especially area of work that make links with the work of the Safer Communities Board.

Decision

- Members agreed the content of the work programme, and that other key issues should be considered for discussion as and when they arose.

Actions

- The work programme should be taken forward by officers and amended to include flooding;
- Members to provide Emma Varley with any other issues for consideration in the 2008/09 work programme.

3. Update on current issues

The Chairman updated members on the current issues within the FSMC's remit including:

CLG had issued a consultation on the **draft** National Procurement Strategy for the Fire and Rescue Service in England 2008–11 which closes on 14 November. The LGA would be seeking views from its membership before submitting a response and the FSMC were encouraged to submit their comments via Clive Harris.

Booking forms were now available for the LGA **Fire Conference** to be held at the Marriot Hotel in Bristol on 10/11 March 2009. Members were asked to provide comments to Clive on what they would like to see included on the programme as well as a theme that would capture the interest of the fire and rescue authorities.

It was reported that some fire and rescue authorities had not paid a contribution for 2008/09 for the **Fire Gateway**. Reminders had been sent but without these contributions the future of the Fire Gateway could be in doubt.

Cllr Fred Walker was invited to update the FSMC on **pensions** and **Project Fireguard**.

Cllr Walker explained that due to revised pension commutations the lump sum on retirement had increased which was having an effect on the numbers leaving. The date that this came into effect, 31 October 2007, was being challenged by the union who thought it should be earlier. The FBU were also appealing against the government's decision on ill health retirement and whilst this appeal was ongoing the CLG guidance, which had been agreed, would not be issued. The appeal was due to be heard in January.

Two papers (National Business Continuity Event Arrangements and Financing New Burdens) were tabled on Project Fireguard and Nick Muir, Project Manager, was available to take questions. The main issue discussed was the level of training and the use of retained fire fighters. It was explained that the training standards had been developed by professional officers in fire and rescue authorities, and had gone through a validation exercise.

Anthony Maude, CLG, referred to the new Director of Fire and Resilience, Shona Dunn, who was keen to engage with fire and rescue authorities and planned to undertake fortnightly visits. He also referred to the recent CFOA Fire Conference at which Hazel Blears had given the keynote speech. Good news was reported in that fires nationally had reduced by 5%. The National Audit Office had undertaken a review of the New Dimension programme and procurement issues and would be reporting shortly. The Audit Commission was undertaking a national study on the fire and rescue service due to report in the late autumn.

Actions

- Members to provide comments on the draft national procurement strategy consultation to Clive Harris by 30 October;
- Members to provide Clive Harris with ideas for the 2009 Fire Conference agenda by 26 September.

4a. Comprehensive Area Assessment and Fire and Rescue Authorities

Emma Varley introduced the paper on Comprehensive Area Assessment and tabled the proposed model for fire assessment, explaining how it would operate as set out in the Audit Commission consultation. Nick Easton was then invited to outline the proposals for CAA more generally. He explained that the Inspectorates had published their second consultation paper and officers were working closely with the 10 sites that are trialling CAA as well as talking extensively with the sector on their views on the proposals in the CAA consultation.

Cllr Mehboob Khan highlighted the key messages that the LGA should be giving in their response and asked the FSMC to endorse the next steps in paragraphs 14-16 and 17 in the report.

In the ensuing discussion members were in agreement with the proposals for peer review and thought Fire and Rescue Authorities needed to prepare and understand CAA. The LGA Fire Conference in 2009 would be an important mechanism for promoting understanding of CAA and the role of fire and rescue in Local Area Agreements.

Decisions

- The FSMC agreed that the LGA should submit a single formal response;
- Emma Varley to develop the response based on paragraphs 14-17 of the report;
- Cllr Khan and Emma Varley to represent the FSMC in discussions with the Audit Commission.

Action

- Officers to take forward in light of member's comments.

4b. Sector led improvement for Fire and Rescue Authorities.

Emma Varley introduced the proposals for an approach to sector led improvement for FRAs as set out in the paper and explained that the LGA needed to be proactive on this important issue. The FSMC was invited to consider the approach outlined in the report, particularly the four essential criteria (see paragraph 16) for progressing the plans. In discussion it was noted that the fire and rescue sector itself must develop an approach to driving sustained improvement across FRAs and the LGA should lead on the development of this.

Decision

Members agreed the four essential criteria and asked to be kept informed of progress.

Action

- Officers to progress the proposed approach.

5. New Dimension Long Term Capability Management

Terry Standing, CFO Gloucestershire FRS, updated members on New Dimension programme and explained that of the four strands, two of them, assurance and transfer of assets, were still to be completed. He then referred to £3.83m/£3.92m/£4.01m for the three CSR years that had been proposed for support for the Assurance Body and the National Team, as well as the support for short term refresh which had been given £1.5m for each full year.

Decision

- Members noted the update.

6. Note of previous meeting

The note was agreed as a true record.

7. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Fire Services Management Committee will take place on **Monday 24th November at 11am at Local Government House.**