

Fire Gateway – Future Arrangements

Summary

This paper provides Members with an update on the conclusions reached by the Fire Gateway steering group when it met on the 19th June 2009.

Decision

Members are asked to:

1. Agree the LGA position on the future of the Fire Gateway.

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Overall

1. This paper informs the Fire Services Management Committee of the decision reached by the Fire Gateway steering group (LGA, CFOA, FSC and CLG) and outlines the future arrangements for the Gateway. This decision was informed by the results of a survey commissioned by the steering group of FRS usage of the site which can also be found below. Members are asked to endorse this decision.

Background

2. The Fire Gateway is an internet portal that provides online access to services, applications and information for all fire stakeholders (including the FRS, members of the public, teachers, etc). The Gateway is funded by subscription from Fire and Rescue Authorities and is currently hosted by the Fire Services College.
3. The Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) view is taken from the responses to the questionnaire sent on 10th March 2009. The survey was completed and submitted by only 23 out of 45 English Fire and Rescue Services. The majority of responses were submitted in the name of FRS Heads of ICT.
4. An analysis of the responses submitted indicates that:
 - Although most FRSs had small numbers of referrals for home fire safety tests, etc, and indicated that the impact of not getting referrals through the Fire Gateway would be minor, those FRSs (3) that had received about 1,000 or more referrals through the Fire Gateway indicated that the impact would be significant
 - Most FRSs that responded have ICT support delivered in-house (75%)
 - Most FRSs that responded have their own dedicated websites (75%)
 - A quarter of FRSs that responded still have no web-link to the Fire Gateway
 - Only 3 out of 23 FRSs ever use the protected area for secure and/or private collaboration with, and document publication to other FRSs (such as New Dimension guidance), and some FRSs (3) indicated that they were unaware of the functionality
 - Almost a third of FRSs (7) indicated that their own website didn't support on-line transactions for use by citizens or business.
 - Only 7 FRSs indicated that their website currently supported on-line transactions for both citizens and business.
 - 2 FRSs ever use the XML Form integration to provide all transactional capability through an FRS website, and 3 indicated they were unaware of the functionality. In fact neither of these respondents use this capability.
 - None of the FRSs that responded indicated that they intended to upgrade their connection level within the next 12 months, although nearly half (11) already had a Platinum connection

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- Nearly 50% of respondents (11 FRSs) indicated that they were unaware of the Service Level Agreement in place between their FRS and the Portal Operations Team Support Desk.
 - Of those FRSs that were aware of the SLA, half (6) described the support received by the support desk as 'moderate'; with 3 each describing the support as 'Good' or 'Poor'.
5. Following discussions, the steering group agreed to arrange the orderly closure of the site and withdraw all functionality by March 2010. The static website content would need to be reviewed and where necessary transferred to a different site. The transactional content (forms) would be terminated. The options for hosting the transactional content elsewhere would include:
- Direct Gov – for information for the citizen
 - Business Link – for information for businesses
 - CLG
 - CFOA
 - Individual FRS sites
6. The cost of the Gateway to stakeholders would be saved. However, those FRSs that rely heavily upon the Gateway's transactional capabilities to engage with their citizens and businesses would need to develop replacement capabilities or change their engagement strategy. Those stakeholders that require secure collaboration facilities for information development, exchange and publishing (likely to be all FRSs given the launch of the new Government Security Framework and attendant protective marking scheme) would need to develop a new solution/s to meet this requirement. There are other Government solutions in development, such as the National Resilience Extranet, that might support this function.
7. The steering group agreed that all stakeholders would work with all FRSs to ensure they would not be negatively affected by the closure of the Gateway. A project plan for the closure is being populated by the Fire Services College.

Financial Implications

8. Closure of the Gateway will result in English and Welsh FRAs no longer having to pay an annual subscription fee.

Implications for Wales

9. There are no additional implications for Welsh FRAs.

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