

Notes of Decisions Taken and Actions Required

Fire Services Management Committee

18 September 2009

at Local Government House, London

Present

- Chairman:** Cllr Brian Coleman (LFEPA / LB Barnet)
Vice Chair: Cllr Fred Walker (Greater Manchester FRA)
Deputy Chair: Cllr Paul Shannon (Greater Manchester FRA); Cllr Christopher Newbury (Wiltshire Fire Authority)
- Conservative:** Cllr Richard Hobbs (Warwickshire CC); Cllr Tony Arbour (LFEPA / LB Richmond); Cllr Bertha Joseph (LFEPA / LB Brent); Cllr Paul Bryant (Royal Berkshire CFA); Cllr Kay Hammond (Surrey CC); Cllr Tony Ward (West Midlands FRA)
- Labour:** Cllr Mehboob Khan (West Yorkshire FCDA); Cllr Navin Shah (London FEPA); Cllr Brenda Forster (Cleveland FRA)
- Liberal Democrat:** Cllr Jeremy Hilton (Gloucestershire FRS)
- Apologies:** Cllr James Pearson (Greater Manchester FRA); Cllr Roger Price (Hampshire FRA)
- In attendance:** Dave Webb (CFO Leicestershire); Helen Murray, Trish O'Flynn, Clive Harris and Paul Johnston (LGA); Caroline Bosdet (IDeA)

1. Fire Services Management Committee membership and terms of reference

The Committee noted its Membership and its terms of reference.

2. Work Programme for 2009 / 2010

Trish O'Flynn introduced the report by outlining the positive outcomes that the LGA had secured for its Members over the last year.

Discussions were held by the Committee over the work programme outlined, with particular focus centred on the issues of co-responding and of industrial relations. It was noted that a number of Fire Authorities were experiencing difficulties relating to industrial relations, and the Committee accordingly agreed that an industrial relations update be presented to a future Committee.

With regard to co-responding schemes, Members stated that such schemes had been proposed for a significant period of time. Though some Members felt

that it was appropriate for the Committee to consider this area as it was a national scheme, other Members of the Committee felt that it was a matter for Authorities to make an individual choice as to whether progress such a scheme within their area, and that the LGA's remit within the area should concentrate on sharing with Authorities examples of best practice.

Decisions

- Members agreed the programme, subject to future changes at the central government level;
- The Committee agreed that a standing report updating Members on industrial relations be provided at future meetings.

Actions

- Officers to prepare a report on industrial relations for the next Committee meeting (LGE)
- IDeA to look to prepare examples of best practice for Fire Authorities on co-responding schemes

3. FiReControl update

The Committee noted that it had been asked to reconsider its opinion on the FiReControl scheme as a result of it having been referred back to the Committee by Members on the Fire Services Forum.

The Chairman circulated to Committee Members a proposed, amended position on the scheme. Discussions were held over the proposed position, with Members stating that they were keen for officers to produce a report on alternative options in the event of project failure. Some Members expressed particular concern that a significant sum of money had already been spent on the scheme, and that a number of Authorities were in need of more modern equipment. Concerns were also raised over the wording of the position, and that the position was not in the spirit of the Association.

Decision

The Committee voted 10 to 4 in favour of the drafted Committee position as follows:

“The Fire Services Management Committee is against the principle of the implementation of Regional Control Centres however will continue to engage with CLG to ensure FRAs are properly resourced, will afford effective oversight and review the programme regularly on behalf of the Fire and Rescue Authorities and will continue to promote good industrial relations where applicable and asks LGA officers to develop alternative options in the event of project failure, to be brought back to the Fire Services Management Committee at a future date.”

Action

Officers to prepare a report on alternative options in the event of project failure

for a future Committee meeting. (LGA)

4. In service management – draft consultation response

The Committee noted the draft response

It was agreed by the Committee that, in response to some Members' suggestions about some of the wording, that a final draft response would be circulated to the Committee's Office Holders for their agreement. It was also agreed by the Committee that this response would strongly express the agreed need to ensure voluntary collaboration in procurement between FRAs rather than imposed national procurement processes.

Action

Officers to circulate a final draft response to FSMC Office Holders before the consultation closes on 5 October.

5. Appointments to Outside Bodies 2009 / 2010

The Committee agreed the Member appointments to the outside bodies associated with the Fire Services Management Committee.

Action

Officers to draft confirmation letters to Members appointed on outside bodies, setting out details of the appointment. (LGA)

6. NJC Update

The update report was noted.

The Committee noted that the following Members had been nominated by the LGA to sit on the National Joint Council: Cllr Brian Coleman; Cllr Richard Hobbs; Cllr Fred Walker; Cllr Paul Shannon.

7. FRS Operational Assessment Peer Review Programme – First Phase

The report was noted, with Members stating that the programme was a positive piece of work.

Caroline Bosdet, IDeA, noted that the programme was looking to assist Members in their work, and added that concerns expressed by the Committee that advice that emerged from the programme needed to be directed toward Members were equally held by the IDeA. Caroline stressed that there was an acknowledged need to work on Members engagement with the process.

8. Note of the last meeting

The note of the last meeting was agreed.

9. Any Other Business

The Chairman informed the Committee that CFO Steve McGuirk (Cheshire), the Committee's Principal Fire Adviser, was stepping down from the role. Members expressed their gratitude for the work that Steve has done for the Committee and agreed that the Chairman would write to him to that effect. The process for appointing to the post was thereafter discussed and agreed.

The Chairman also outlined the programme for the Fire Conference 9-10 March 2010 in Manchester, with Members noting the work undertaken to date.

Members agreed that the meeting scheduled for 8 March would also take place in Manchester

Action

A letter be sent on behalf of the Chairman to Steve McGuirk to thank him for his work on the Committee.