

18 January 2010

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## **LGA Membership**

### **Summary**

This paper seeks to highlight to members the benefits of LGA membership, following the decision to freeze or lower LGA subscriptions for all member authorities, including Fire and Rescue Authorities. The Fire Services Management Committee is asked to discuss how it can assist with communicating the value of LGA membership to Fire and Rescue Authorities.

### **Recommendations**

Members are asked to note the contents of the report and consider the role of the Fire Services Management Committee in communicating the value of LGA membership to Fire and Rescue Authorities.

### **Action**

LGA officers to action as necessary

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## **LGA Membership**

### **Background**

1. All local authorities are facing considerable challenges in continuing to provide frontline services in the context of shrinking budgets. In this time of financial uncertainty local authorities will have to look at all areas of spending and identify where savings can be made and this could include continuing to pay LGA subscriptions.
2. The Resources Panel has been reviewing the LGA subscription structure and, whilst the need for this review was recognised some time ago, it has been given added impetus by the desire to offer a significant reduction in membership subscriptions as part of an improved membership offer.
3. It was announced in November 2009 that LGA member councils will see their subscriptions cut or frozen for the 2010/11 financial year. Leaders and Chief Executives of all member authorities have received a letter advising them of the proposals.

### **The LGA 'offer'**

4. The LGA provides a wide variety of services and support to all local authorities in membership, including specific support to Fire and Rescue Authorities, with the principle bodies being the Fire Services Management Committee, Fire Services Forum as well as direct access to the Fire Minister through the Central-Local Partnership.
5. This year our fire policy priorities are around helping the service deal with the effects of the recession; establishing long term funding and governance for national functions; support for Fire and Rescue Authorities with the national Equality and Diversity strategy; leading on the development of a sector-led improvement programme (with CFOA) and maintaining close scrutiny and challenge of the Fire Control project. These priorities have all been developed through consultation with the FSMC and Fire Services Forum.
6. This active lobbying and robust stakeholder activity has achieved a number of successes over the past year: the work to develop the sector-led operational assessment is a genuine step forward and helps the fire service realise its ambition in continuous improvement; long term funding for New Dimensions assets; no extra costs to FRAs around delays in the FiReControl project; providing context and content to the Audit Commission's 'Rising to the Challenge' report and valuable stakeholder input to the Fire Services College which has resulted in the College becoming a viable national asset.

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7. The IDeA is able to offer a wide variety of bespoke support, consultancy and training work. The support work utilises accredited fire and rescue authority (FRA) members, current officer peers and other specialists. In addition, there are IDeA consultants experienced in working with fire and rescue services (FRS).
8. The LGA's Annual Fire Conference is taking place this year on 9 and 10 March in Manchester. This two day residential conference provides an excellent opportunity for elected members and officers from across fire and rescue authorities and wider local government, as well as partner organizations to come together to discuss current challenges and opportunities and how to ensure their work has the most positive impact on the people they serve. Topics of discussion will include:
  - the role of Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor's Unit
  - understanding what Comprehensive Area Assessment and Local Area Agreements mean for FRAs
  - the elected member contribution to driving improvement in performance
  - the wider role of fire and rescue in creating safer communities and improving the quality of people's lives
  - the future of operational leadership in the fire and rescue service.
9. The LGA seeks to keep elected members aware of developments through our e-bulletin that is sent out to every FRA member in the country following FSMC meetings. The bulletin is also an opportunity for FRAs to raise awareness of and showcase work that they have undertaken which will be of interest to other FRAs. Additional communications tools include the induction pack for FRA members which was dispatched in August
10. All Fire and Rescue Authorities have a named Account Manager at the LGA. Account Managers are members of the Corporate Management Team or other experienced LGA officers nominated by them. In each region, a senior LGA manager has responsibility for acting as the first point of contact with the appropriate regional or sub-regional grouping of councils and FRAs where they exist. Account Managers play a key role in maintaining appropriate relationships with FRAs based on a jointly agreed approach by:
  - a. Visiting the authority to meet key staff to understand issues and challenges and to offer support as appropriate
  - b. Taking action as a result of initial discussions, including establishing an ongoing process for maintaining in an ongoing relationship
  - c. Liaising with other parts of the LGA Group and signposting FRAs appropriately to them
  - d. Feeding back to the FRA the outcomes of any actions taken

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- e. Recording outcomes on appropriate LGA Group knowledge management systems to ensure that LGA staff are fully informed on relevant issues.
11. So far LGA officers have visited Durham and Darlington, West Yorkshire, West Midlands, Cheshire, Northumberland and London and have also attended a meeting of the Association of Metropolitan Fire and Rescue Authorities. Officers are available to visit other FRAs as required.

## **The role of the Fire Services Management Committee**

12. The strength of the LGA is derived from the fact that all local authorities (with the exception of 2) are in membership and this includes all 46 Fire and Rescue Authorities.
13. Fire Services Management Committee members have an important role in promoting the benefits of LGA membership to all FRA members and helping to ensure that all Fire and Rescue Authorities remain in membership of the LGA.

## **Financial Implications**

14. There are no additional financial implications to those that have been outlined above.

## **Implications for Wales**

15. There are no implications for Wales.

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