

Notes of Decisions Taken and Actions Required

Fire Services Management Committee

8 March 2010

in Manchester Town Hall, Manchester

Present

- Chairman:** Cllr Brian Coleman (LFEPA/LB Barnet) (Conservative)
Vice Chair: Cllr Fred Walker (Greater Manchester FRA) (Labour)
Deputy Chair: Cllr Paul Shannon (Greater Manchester FRA) (Liberal Democrat)
- Conservative:** Cllr Richard Hobbs (Warwickshire CC); Cllr Bertha Joseph (LFEPA/LB Brent); Cllr James Pearson (Greater Manchester FRA); 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 John Joyce (Cheshire FRA); Cllr Brenda Forster (Cleveland FRA)
- Liberal Democrat:** Cllr Jeremy Hilton (Gloucestershire FRS); Cllr Roger Price (Hampshire FRA)
- In attendance:** Commissioner Ron Dobson (LFEPA); Dave Webb (CFO Leicestershire); Trish O'Flynn, Clive Harris and Paul Johnston (LGA)
- Apologies:** Cllr Christopher Newbury (Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority) (Independent Group)

1. Influencing a new Government – key lobbying priorities for the Fire Services Management Committee

Members discussed the Committee's key lobbying priorities, which included FiReControl, a reduction in the number of quangos within the fire sector, reducing the burden of assessment and inspection on Fire and Rescue Authorities and moving forward with the sector led approach to improvement.

Decision

The Committee noted the report.

2. Total Place

The Committee welcomed Nicky De Beer, Leadership Centre for Local Government and Roger Britton, Worcestershire County Council, to the meeting.

The Committee received a presentation from Nicky De Beer regarding the Total Place programme, the aims of the programme, the locations of the pilot, and the themes and lessons emerging from those pilots.

The Committee received a presentation from Roger Britton relating to the experience of the Worcestershire Partnership, which was one of the pilot areas. Roger outlined the themes of the pilot, and stated that all partners, including the fire and rescue service, played a key role in addressing these themes. Roger added that Total Place represents an opportunity for partners to re-examine partnerships, and identify how goals can best be achieved.

Members thanked Nicky and Roger for their presentations. Members stated that one key finding of the Total Place programme to date was the relatively low spend under local control, and expressed concern that many organisations would be unwilling to relinquish their influence or resources, particularly in an increasingly stark economic climate. Roger responded on this point that Total Place represents an opportunity for organisations to re-examine partnerships, and identify how goals can best be achieved at best value. Members also suggested that the contribution of fire authorities to local priorities is often underestimated.

Decision

The Committee noted the report.

3. FiReControl

The Chairman and Cllr Pearson updated the Committee on the CLG Select Committee in early February that considered the FiReControl project to date.

Commissioner Dobson, and CFO Dave Webb, stated there was likely to be a further delay to the project of possibly three months. Commissioner Dobson stated that these recent developments meant that LFEPA were now not likely to cut over to FiReControl prior to the 2012 Games.

Members expressed significant concern over new delays to the project, given assurances previously made, including at the Select Committee, by the project contractors over their ability to adhere to all future deadlines. Members suggested that this was likely to result in a further decline in Fire and Rescue Authorities' confidence in the project and said that the cost of updating legacy systems must be met by Government.

Some Members stated that a further delay, though unfortunate, should not result in Authorities seeking to abandon the project, which would provide numerous benefits to Fire and Rescue Services.

Decision

Members agreed that FiReControl be discussed at the next Committee.

Members asked that the LGA seek assurances from CLG that Fire and Rescue Authorities would not be liable for any further expenses as a result of any additional delays to the FiReControl project.

4. Other business update

Officers provided additional information relating to current industrial relations disputes within FRAs.

Members noted the report.

5. Note of the last meeting

The note of the last meeting was agreed as a correct record.

Date of next meeting: 24 May 2010, Local Government House, London