

## Note of decisions taken and actions required

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<b>Title:</b>	Fire Services Management Committee
<b>Date and time:</b>	Monday 16 May, 1.30pm
<b>Venue:</b>	Bevin Hall (Ground floor)

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### Attendance

Position	Councillor	Council
Chairman	Cllr Brian Coleman	London FEPA / Barnet LB
Vice chair	Cllr Fred Walker	Greater Manchester FRA
Deputy chair	Cllr Paul Shannon	Greater Manchester FRA
Deputy chair	Cllr Christopher Newbury	Wiltshire FA
Members	Cllr Richard Hobbs	Warwickshire CC
	Cllr Kay Hammond	Surrey CC
	Cllr Maurice Heaster OBE	London FEPA / Wandsworth LB
	Cllr John Bell	Greater Manchester FRA
	Cllr Ann Holland	Essex FRS
	Cllr David Topping	Cheshire FA
	Cllr Brenda Forster	Cleveland FA
	Cllr Sian Timoney	Bedfordshire & Luton FRA
	Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Gloucestershire FRS
	Cllr Roger Price	Hampshire FRA
Substitutes	Cllr Paul Bryant	West Berkshire Council
	Cllr Les Byrom CBE	Merseyside FRA
Apologies	Cllr John Joyce	Cheshire FA
Officers:	Helen Murray, Caroline Green, Clive Harris, Stephen Service, Gill Gittins Paul Johnston (all LG Group); Commissioner Ron Dobson (LFEPA); CFO Graeme Smith (Warwickshire FRS)	

Item	Decisions and actions	Action by
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**1 Improvement and performance support in the Fire and Rescue Service**

Members said that they supported the peer challenge model and approved the sector-led approach detailed in the paper as the best way forward. Clarification was given around the LG Group offer of a peer challenge for each FRA every three years.

Members approved the principle of a working party but queried how this would work.

Officers said this would involve 3 nominated committee members meeting to develop and promote the new offer.

***Decision***

*Members supported the proposal to establish a working group to develop the Peer challenge process for the fire sector. Councillors Hammond, Byrom and Shannon were nominated and approved to be part of the working party.*

**Action**

Officers to take forward arrangements for the Working Group.

**LG Group officers**

**2 Fire Service College Working Group: progress report**

Members discussed progress to date, including the proposed open day on 18 May, key pressures on the College, including the lack of capital investment and competition from fire authorities in terms of training facilities provision. Members also thanked Members of the working group for devoting time and energy to this project.

The Chairman said that the Fire Commission would have the chance to review the Working Group's final report at least a week in advance of the Fire Commission in June and urged Members to discuss and contribute at the Commission meeting.

***Decision***

*Members noted progress to date.*

**Action**

Chair and Members of the working group to take account of comments and to reflect appropriately in final report.

**3 Atherstone-on-Stour fire, Warwickshire**

With advice from Commissioner Dobson, and CFO Graeme Smith, Members discussed the strategic issues which could emerge from the criminal cases currently ongoing following the Atherstone-on-Stour fire. This included the need to ensure consistency of approach across all areas of the country and engaging with CFOA to develop national guidance.

Members also discussed the issues of building regulations and the authority receiving an “adequate” operational insurance inspection before to the fire.

Members said that there were a number of potential implications of the case to operational practice within the fire and rescue service, but did not feel that it was appropriate at this juncture to issue a public statement. However, with suitable caveats recognising the sub judice nature of the issue, a statement along the following lines is now agreed should it be needed...  
“As the case is sub-judice, it would be inappropriate to comment in detail at this stage, but we are watching developments closely, and once due process is completed, we are sure the sector will fully reflect any lessons that may emerge.”

***Decision***

*Members agreed that the LG Group monitor developments and return to discuss this issue in due course.*

**4 Pensions update**

Officers said that this item was intended to be an early opportunity for Members to steer the LG Group response to a CLG consultation, which would shortly commence, on potential changes to the firefighters pensions scheme.

Members debated the three issues highlighted in the paper.

**Decision**

*Members agreed that the group should support the position that the fire pension scheme be required to yield £33 million savings rather than the £37 million that would be required to protect low paid workers across all public service pensions.*

*There was no consensus view on the other issues set out within the report (role based vs. salary bandings for tiered contributions and differential treatment of the NFPS and the FPS). Members agreed that these issues should be revisited once the CLG consultation is published and further information is available.*

## **5 Fire Futures**

Members received a presentation from Bob Neill MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, CLG. The key messages from the Minister were as follows:

CLG were currently consulting with the sector on the best way forward regarding the FiReControl issue. This would not be an imposed solution, but left to the sector. The Minister added that CLG were looking at means of supporting Authorities in developing future resilience options.

The Minister thanked those who had contributed for their response to Fire Futures. Comments would now be considered, and in many instances taken forward.

Tough decisions on pensions would need to be made and the Minister was open to the sector's views on this.

The Minister reminded the committee that it is the Fire Authority's responsibility to ensure business continuity arrangements are in place when facing the possibility of strike action.

The Minister updated members on the Local Government resources review to find an appropriate model where authorities can keep the business rate they collect. Progress on this was well advanced, but CLG were mindful of considering authorities that do not take on business rates. The Minister welcomed proposals on this in July.

The Minister said that the Fire College was recognised as a national and international resource and remained on the department's agenda. Some good work had already been done,

but there is still room for improvement.

Regarding the General Power in the Localism Bill, the Minister said that it was not intended that domestic dwelling alarm maintenance will be charged for, but the sector needs to recover costs from the private sector.

In response to a question on the community's right to challenge, the Minister said that failsafes would need to be carried out to ensure that risk management was covered.

The issue of funding reductions was raised. The Minister explained the objective of the Local Government Resource Review and assured Members that he would consider the position of FRAs. In response to a direct request for funding from Northamptonshire Fire for a new control centre, the minister said that consideration could be given to this once the consultation is over, but an envelope would exist regarding any more money to be made available.

The Minister said that an EU directive on self-extinguishing cigarettes was to come shortly into UK legislation later this year, and was expected to have significant safety benefits.

On proposals to make the installation of sprinklers mandatory in all new-build properties, the Minister said that the Department would look to take an evidence based view on this.

In response to a question whether the Fire Futures exercise could be repeated shortly, the Minister responded that the dialogue which had emerged to date represented a useful starting point. The Minister agreed with a comment from the floor that social enterprise is not seen as much in the Fire sector as elsewhere, and expressed hope that the work of Francis Maude would encourage this further.

A representative of the CFOA board asked about employer contributions in the pension scheme. The Minister emphasised the need for a system which is sustainable and affordable, and said that there would be no time for employer contribution testing.

## **6 FSMC update paper**

Items were noted.

Members discussed the findings of the 7/7 inquest commission. Commissioner Dobson said that there were no specific requirements highlighted for London Fire Authority and he was pleased that the inquest had noted individual acts of bravery.

Some members commented on the cost of the inquest, the pressure placed on some individual officers during the process, and the decision not to call some senior officers.

Members agreed that an update on the implications for the wider fire and rescue service of the inquest would be useful.

### ***Decision***

*Members agreed that next year's LG Group Annual Fire Conference will take place on 20 and 21 March in Bournemouth.*

### **Action**

Officers to organise a presentation on 7/7 inquest recommendations and lessons for the June Fire Commission meeting. Officers were also charged with developing a workshop on major incidents for the LG Group Annual Conference, which might consider a wider audience.

**Commissioner  
Ron Dobson**

## **7 Notes of the last meeting**

Members agreed the notes of the last meeting as a correct record.

**Date of next meeting: Monday 18 July 2011, Local Government House**