

FSMC update paper

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

The report outlines issues of interest to the Committee not covered under the other items on the agenda.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note the update.

Action

Officers to progress as appropriate.

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FSMC update paper

7/7 inquest workshop at LG Group conference

1. The FSMC Chairman chaired a lunchtime fringe meeting on 7/7 inquest recommendations and implications for the Fire and Rescue Service at the Local Government Group Conference in Birmingham. Commissioner Ron Dobson, London Fire Brigade and London Deputy Mayor Richard Barnes AM, set out respectively the 7/7 recommendations and implications for Fire and Rescue Services and the role of Councils and elected members in planning for future events. The meeting was well attended and the presentations were well received.

Fire and Rescue Control Services

2. The Fire Minister Bob Neill MP announced on 5 July that £81 million would be made available to the sector for improving resilience, efficiency and technology in control services. The announcement was made in conjunction with the publication of the summary of responses to the department's consultation on the future of fire and rescue control services
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/fire/pdf/1815528.pdf>
3. The money is to be given to individual FRAs and this means that each FRA can expect to receive around £1.8m. FRAs will need to submit plans for how they will use the money and these are due by 4 November 2011.
4. A further £1.8m in total will be made available to the sector as a whole to develop initiatives of national benefit. This is a key opportunity for the LG Group and CFOA to make a joint bid.

NAO report on FiReControl

5. The National Audit Office (NAO) published its report *The failure of the FiReControl project* on 1 July
http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/1012/failure_of_firecontrol.aspx
6. The review found that FiReControl failed because:
 - The project did not have the support from its main users, Fire and Recue Services (FRSs). This is due to DCLG not clearly communicating the benefits of the project to FRSs;
 - FRSs were not adequately incentivised to use the facilities that would be created by FiReControl in lieu of their local centres;

- The complexity and costs of the project were underestimated significantly whilst the benefits were overstated;
 - The projected costs and efficiency savings were unrealistic. The estimated cost was £120m and £250m had already been spent up to March 2011. The minimum that will be wasted as a result of the failure to deliver is estimated by the NAO at £469m. The DCLG had estimated an overall net saving of £86m;
 - The DCLG failed to provide adequate leadership and management to steer the project. The project suffered from a lack of direction and a high turnover of staff and a dependence on poorly managed consultants;
 - Poor management and co-operation with contractor (EADS) on the development of IT systems. This was in part due to the inadequate contract design;
 - The DCLG was justified in cancelling the project because continuing would mean a further cost of £390m;
 - As a result of the failure of this project, there are empty regional control centres which cost to maintain;
 - The report concluded that this project was an example of bad value for money, wasting a minimum of £469m.
7. The NAO went on to make a series of recommendations focusing on DCLG's processes around measuring outcomes, assessing performance and demonstrating value for money based on robust and realistic data; the management of long term contracts; change management processes; stakeholder engagement and risk management within the Department. DCLG has accepted these recommendations in full.

National framework

8. The government has now established a working group to review the National Framework. The membership is an officer group consisting of CLG officials, CFOA, LG Group, Fire Brigade Union, and the Fire Sector Partnership. The first meeting of the Group took place on 7th July. The New Framework will be published by March 2012. An additional sub-group has been established to consider National Resilience in the context of the National Framework. This issue will be brought to the FSMC for discussion at an appropriate time.

Peer support update

9. The first meeting of the FSMC Working Group on the Fire and Rescue Peer Challenge took place in Birmingham on 28 June. Cllr K Hammond, Cllr P Shannon, Cllr D Rowland and Cllr L Byrom attended the meeting. The Working group nominated Cllr Hammond as Chair.

10. Members agreed the terms of reference as:
- To discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the current peer challenge process for the fire sector.
 - To discuss the positioning of the new offer (and agree what to call this) in the context of sector led improvement and the LG Group self regulation offer.
 - To advise on the improvements needed to the peer challenge offer focusing specifically on peer training, peer competency framework and quality assurance of peers and the peer review process.
 - To advise on the promotion and communication of outcomes from fire sector peer challenge in light of the local accountability of performance to citizens.
11. The Working Group propose to prepare an interim report for the FSMC's September meeting and a final report for the FSMC's November meeting.
12. The Working Group will liaise with and take into account the work of CFOA's Performance and Improvement Board which has established a task and finish group to review Op A Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs) and to refresh the toolkit.
13. The Working Group will meet again on 28 July 2011.

National Joint Council

14. Authorities have been advised that a pay claim for 2011 has been received from the Employees' Side seeking an increase on all pay points equivalent to the Retail Prices Index figures announced in June. That figure was announced on 14 June as 5.2%. The claim was considered at the meetings of the National Joint Council, including the Middle Managers Negotiating Body, on the same day. Employers' Side members decided upon the following response:

"Affordability and sustainability remain key issues for the Employers. You will be aware of the severe financial pressures facing authorities, the expectation of public sector pay restraint, and that expenditure must reduce.

Members of the Employers' Side have carefully considered the claim for a pay award this year in that context and have concluded they are not in a position to be able to make an offer.

As I have said, this decision has been taken in the light of the extremely serious financial position authorities have to deal with.

Whilst these circumstances are likely to continue for some time yet we also recognise that the current economic climate is placing pressure on the living standards of fire service employees and that this would be the second year without application of a national pay award.

With all this in mind the Employers' Side believes it would be helpful and constructive to undertake discussion at Joint Secretary level to see if it could be possible to justify a different position in 2012."

15. Authorities were advised of the full response on the same day.
16. Following on from a consultation of fire authorities, work is progressing on the matter of putting in place compensation arrangements that would permit fire authorities, should they so wish, to enhance redundancy payments e.g. to base calculations on actual salary rather than the statutory maximum figure of £400 and provide a general power to pay up to 104 weeks. This approach would not commit authorities to a position where they must pay enhanced redundancy payments to Grey Book staff. It would however replicate a flexibility that authorities already have for control staff and those employed on NJC for Local Government Services (Green Book) terms and conditions.
17. At national level industrial relations are good at present, although the matter of a pay award for 2011 may impact upon that and increase the potential for industrial action of some description. This is most likely to be the case if changes being discussed elsewhere in respect of pensions do not result in a mutually acceptable outcome. Whilst debates on both at the recent FBU Conference reached similar conclusions, suggesting that its members prepare for industrial action if necessary, it is understood that pensions is most likely to be the main trigger.
18. Work continues to implement the settlement agreements reached with both the FBU and RFU on behalf of all but two FRAs to facilitate the withdrawal of the many thousands of Employment Tribunal cases they have supported under the Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations. The excluded FRAs do not have retained personnel. Unfortunately the quality of data provided by a substantial number of FRAs continues to slow the process. However, it

is hoped offer letters will be issued to employees within the next few weeks (the original timetable was 19th April).

Retained Duty System – Ministerial roundtable meeting

19. Councillor Kay Hammond, supported by Eamon Lally, attended the Ministerial roundtable meeting on the retained duty system on 5 July. The meeting was chaired by Bob Neill. The meeting considered the findings of the Government's Retained Duty System survey which was published earlier this year. It was generally acknowledged that the meeting was useful. It was agreed that the sector would draw up an action plan, which pulls together the substantial amount of work that is taking place to address the survey's key issues. A further meeting with the Minister on this issue will be scheduled to take place in six months time.