

Note of decisions taken and actions required

Title: Fire Services Management Committee
Date and time: Friday 16 September, 11.00am
Venue: Smith Square Room 3 & 4 (Ground floor)

Attendance

Position	Councillor	Council
Chairman	Cllr Brian Coleman	London FEPA / Barnet LB
Vice chair	Cllr Sian Timoney	Bedfordshire & Luton FRA
Deputy chair	Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Gloucestershire FRS
Deputy chair	Cllr Christopher Newbury	Wiltshire FA
Members	Cllr Mark Healey	Devon & Somerset FRS
	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 Navin Shah	London FEPA
	Cllr John Joyce	Cheshire FA
	Cllr Julie Young	Essex FRS
Substitutes	Cllr Les Byrom CBE	Merseyside FRA
	Cllr Terry Stacy	London FEPA
Apologies	Cllr Keith Aspden	York City
Officers:	Helen Murray; Eamon Lally; Gill Gittins; Stephen Service; Commissioner Ron Dobson (LFEPA)	

Item	Decisions and actions	Action by
	<p>Chairman Coleman welcomed new appointments to the board and thanked outgoing Members. He paid tribute to the work of departing Vice Chair Cllr Fred Walker for his expertise and leadership of the Committee on a number of fire issues. Cllr Timoney echoed Cllr Coleman's comments as the incoming Vice chair for the Labour group. The Chairman said he would write to Councillor Walker to express his gratitude.</p>	
1	<p>FSMC terms of reference and outside bodies</p> <p>Members agreed the Terms of Reference for the FSMC.</p> <p>Members agreed the following appointments to outside bodies for 2011/12:</p> <p>CLP sub Group for Fire (5 seats) – Cllr Brian Coleman, Cllr Sian Timoney, Cllr Jeremy Hilton, Cllr Christopher Newbury</p> <p>Firefighters' Pension committee – Cllr Maurice Heaster</p> <p>National Resilience Board – Cllr Jeremy Hilton</p> <p>Fire Service College – Cllr John Joyce</p> <p>CFOA, RDS and Operational training working group – Cllr Kay Hammond</p>	
	Action	
	Officers to inform outside bodies of representatives for 2011/12	LGA Officers
	Officers to prepare letter of thanks for Cllr Walker's service to the Board, to be signed by Cllr Coleman.	LGA Officers
	Officers to confirm appointments directly to members and via a paper at the next appropriate committee meeting.	LGA Officers

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2 Civil Disturbances: The Fire and Rescue Service response

Helen Murray, Head of Programmes at LGA introduced this item. She requested that Members commend the work of brigades during the riots.

Helen said that at the LGA Executive on 15 September, Members had felt there were different causes in different areas and that careful analysis and learning was needed before taking action.

Cllr Coleman said that he had attended a CFOA dinner the previous evening, where tributes had been paid to FRSs in light of the job they had done in difficult circumstances.

Members praised the work of FRSs, including the West Midlands, where 16 pumps were operating at one time without recourse to outside help.

In Greater Manchester, Members reported that the co-operation between emergency services and the sense of community following the riots were "exceptional" with the Manchester Evening News leading an "I love Manchester" campaign.

Members noted the recovery grant scheme. On the list of FAs eligible to apply for funding, some Members questioned the criteria of eligibility for authorities to put in a claim. Chairman Coleman responded that any authorities who had received a letter regarding issues such as overtime payments and damage to vehicles might be entitled to funding.

On FRS's relationship with the police, Commissioner Ron Dobson said that generally, this was exceptional, however some work on Command and control with regards to differentiation of roles might be necessary.

Members expressed concern over the reported attacks on Fire engines and crews. Some asked if a press release from the FSMC supporting firefighters at this time would be appropriate.

Chairman Coleman informed Members that a Victims and Communities Panel had been set up by government to look at the impact of the riots. He advocated that Members engage quickly with the panel if invited by them as the timescale for their

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initial report was November 2011.

Action

Officers to take account of Members comments.

Helen Murray

Press release in support of Firefighters

**Press release
sent 10 August
2011 attached
as Appendix A**

3 Local Government Resource Review

Eamon Lally, Senior Advisor for LGA summarised the work of the LGA on this item to date.

Members commented that it was unlikely that a common view on retained Business rates across FRSs would be established. However, some Councillors felt consensus might be built on business rates being retained locally.

Some Members argued that the Ministerial assurance that “no FAs would suffer” should be central to the LGA’s position on this issue.

Others felt that despite these assurances, there was a “winners and losers” reality to the proposals. They said that until the detail is clarified, Members could not predict what the impact of the proposals will be in future discussions.

Members expressed concern over the mechanisms around business rates and how much FRSs could retain, warning that they need to be able to retain enough to provide an incentive for boosting local economies.

Chairman Coleman concluded this item by saying that the closing date for consultation submissions was 24 October 2011. He asked LGA Officers to prepare a position for the FSMC to present to the next Fire Commission on this date.

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Action

Officers to prepare LGA position on the LG Resource Review for the FSMC to take to the next Fire Commission.

**Helen Murray /
Eamon Lally**

4 Firefighters' Pension Schemes

James Dalglish, Head of HR at London FEPA introduced this item to Members. He said that the LGA proposed writing to FAs to get their views on the Government's proposals, in order to give government an informed decision on what the LGA position is to be. The intention is to bring the results of this information-gathering exercise back to the FSMC.

Mr Dalglish said that the closing date of CLG's consultation was 2 December 2011.

Chairman Coleman then referred to the current consultation which is due to complete on 26 October.

Mr Dalglish said there was a commutation issue in the proposal to give FAs discretion regarding retirement after 25-30 years service. He suggested that the proposal to extend access to full commutation for staff who retire with less than 30 years service could potentially encourage people to leave earlier which could be very expensive.

Cllr Coleman responded that London was against this part of the plans and there was wide support amongst other Members of the FSMC for this position.

Action

Officers to write to FAs asking for information to inform Members' views on Employee contributions

LGA Officers

Officers to complete response to the current consultation of commutation based on the discussion that took place at FSMC.

**James
Dalglish /
LGA Officers**

5 Peer Challenge

Cllr Kay Hammond set out the interim conclusions of the FRS working group. She said that there was still an issue over the

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competency of some peers going into authorities and a lack of clarity regarding the training provision for Members and Officers. The paper recommended reconsidering what peer competencies should exist and the best way to provide quality assurance to councils. Cllr Hammond invited comments on these issues from the Committee.

On the frequency of Peer challenges being offered, Eamon Lally said that the LGA planned to offer each FA one peer challenge between now and 2014.

On quality assurance and Peer experience, Members agreed that assessors need to have the right kind of background to work in FAs and be sensitive to their needs. Members cited the example of a Cllr who may have served only briefly on a FA many years previously and stressed that in such cases, their lack of experience would make them inappropriate to be used as a Peer. Members asked if the LGA planned to use a separate group of assessors for Fire challenges.

Cllr Hammond responded that more work needs to be done on finding out the experience of assessors on LGA lists, but that in the current system, the authority can approve or reject as unsuitable the profiles of teams put forward to them in advance.

On poor performance and areas that peers need to develop, Cllr Hammond said that weaknesses need to be consistently fed back to the peer concerned.

Members advocated putting Lead Member Peers under greater pressure to deliver quality assessors. Cllr Hammond said that the working group would meet with the leads to discuss their findings and consider next steps.

Eamon Lally said that Members' concerns had been reflected elsewhere via the Improvement Board.

Cllr Hammond concluded by saying that this item would be brought to the Fire Commission on 14 October to update Members on progress.

Action

Final report to be presented to FSMC at its meeting on 17

Cllr Hammond

November 2011.

/ LGA Officers

6 FSMC Industrial Relations report

Gill Gittins provided an update to Members on the latest developments in industrial relations. Gill said that the costings of pensions would be released later this month and would be a key date for gauging the sector's reaction to changes. The current message from Unions is that industrial action is still not inevitable.

Chairman Coleman drew Members attention to his recent letter to Fire Chairs reminding them of their responsibilities for having adequate contingency arrangements in place.

Cllr Coleman raised an issue about the future viability of the UK-wide NJC, given changes in Scotland to governance arrangements.

7 FSMC update paper

Helen Murray presented this item.

On the Localism Bill, Helen said that we were hoping that the Fire Minister would broaden authorities' powers regarding Fire Alarm malfunction. Any extension of the powers will represent progress for the LGA after sustained lobbying on the issue.

On the Fire College, Cllr Coleman and David Cartwright are set to meet Ministers to discuss next steps. Members advocated a proactive line from the LGA which would not allow the issue to drift.

On the forthcoming Fire Conference in March, Chairman Coleman encouraged Members to attend and said there would be a meeting of the FSMC there.

On the Maritime Incident Response Group, Members urged the LGA to lobby strongly against the MCA's proposals. Cllr Coleman asked Officers to prepare a letter to the Department of Transport setting out the FSMC's views.

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Action

Officers to write to the Department of Transport opposing the MCA's recommendations on the Maritime Incident Response Group.

**Attached as
Appendix B**

Notes of the last meeting

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

Date of next meeting: Thursday 17 November 2011, Local Government House

Press Release 10 August 2011

COUNCILS LEAD POST-RIOT CLEAN-UP AND HELP BRING THUGS TO JUSTICE

Councils are leading the post riots clean-up effort and vowing to work with police to ensure those responsible for devastating communities up and down the country are brought to justice.

As neighbourhoods across England continue to be blighted by vandals and looters, councillors and town hall staff have been out in the streets alongside their residents clearing rubble and litter, finding homes for those in need and offering support to ransacked businesses.

Councils are also determined to ensure the rioters are caught and punished, sharing CCTV and other intelligence with police and pursuing any council tenants who are proved guilty of being involved in criminal activity by seeking evictions where appropriate.

Sir Merrick Cockell, Chairman of the Local Government Association, said:

"The scenes of violent thuggery, looting and vandalism are appalling and totally inexcusable. Councils are working closely with the police to ensure those responsible are brought to justice.

"Councillors and town hall staff are being inundated with heart-wrenching stories, from residents who lost treasured possessions as their homes were set alight, to local traders who put years of hard work into building up their businesses only to see everything they strived for destroyed in one night.

"However, out of the ashes we're seeing the amazing spirit and solidarity which we know is at the heart of our communities - residents, shop owners, council staff and a myriad of others standing shoulder to shoulder in the clean up effort. It's this inspiring attitude which will be essential in defeating the mindless minority who seek to hijack our proud neighbourhoods and which we must keep at the heart of all we do as we repair both the superficial and the deeper-rooted damage done to our communities.

"Neighbourhoods and the authorities which serve them now need to send out two strong messages – we will stand together and not be bowed by mindless thugs, and we will do everything in our powers to make sure the callous perpetrators are brought to justice.

"Obviously some council services have faced disruption, but across the country local authorities are working to ensure any affected services are re-located and are open to residents."

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Fire authorities across the country have also been working round the clock tackling blazes in homes, businesses and vehicles. In some areas fire engines and firefighters have been attacked by rioters.

Cllr Brian Coleman, Chairman of the Local Government Association's Fire Services Management Committee, said:

"It's outrageous that firefighters are having their lives put on the line at the hands of mindless jobs. However, they have been doing a fantastic job in fighting blazes across the country, particularly in London where the severity and number of fires was unprecedented in recent times.

"That fire engines and firefighters themselves have been attacked while they fought to keep people safe and save burning businesses is an absolute disgrace. We will be working with police to make sure the cowardly perpetrators of these disgusting acts are caught, and they should be shown no leniency in the courts."

Council case studies:

Ealing Council's CCTV team worked throughout Monday night to support police operations and collect evidence for use later. Its environment and highways teams were mobilised by midnight so that although order wasn't restored until 4am yesterday, its streets were clear of debris and relatively normal by 6.45am. Burned out cars had been removed and roads resurfaced by 11am, and staff visited 800 properties, with all affected businesses getting a personal visit from a council officer by 1pm.

Hammersmith and Fulham Council is sharing CCTV and other intelligence with police. It is also pursuing any council tenants who are proved guilty of being involved in criminal activity by seeking evictions where appropriate.

Greenwich Council's clean-up teams were on standby from 5am on Tuesday and were mobilised to help businesses and residents as soon as police gave the all-clear. It is also planning to publish the images of those caught on its CCTV cameras in its weekly newspaper and will seek the eviction of anyone living in council property if they are found to have been engaged in criminal acts.

Street cleaning teams in Gloucester removed the majority of debris in the early hours of this morning. Community leaders from both Gloucester City Council and Gloucestershire County Council will be visiting affected areas today to reassure people and help allay fears.

Sandwell Council staff and councillors were out on the streets today helping to clear up wherever needed. It is also linking from its website to a police website where CCTV images of rioters will be published, and it has uploaded safety guidance to residents and advice on where to find out the latest information.

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Salford City Council's environmental services team were joined by members of the public and councillors this morning to clean up the mess vandals caused around Salford Precinct. It was back to normal before 10am, and officers from its business support team are now speaking to the affected businesses to see what they can do to help.

Manchester City Council's street cleaning crews were out all night last night and it has been overwhelmed by offers of support from residents to help clear up remaining debris. A public clean-up has been organised for Piccadilly Gardens.

Leicester City Council staff have been cleaning up debris and are having regular meetings with police and other agencies to both debrief on the attacks last night and to plan for any possible further disturbances. It is also supporting local businesses through its city centre director.

Islington Council offered to send staff to neighbouring authorities affected by riots to help them clear up.

Fire authority case studies:

The London Fire Brigade's 999 control centre answered 2,169 calls between 6pm on Monday night and 7.19am on Tuesday. This is around 15 times the normal rate of calls the Brigade would expect on an average day. Fire crews dealt with serious fires in Barking and Dagenham, Brixton, Clapham Junction, Croydon, Ealing, Edmonton, Enfield, Greenwich, Newham, Merton and Southwark. Incidents included fires to commercial and residential buildings, cars and rubbish bins. Three fire engines were damaged in the violence from Brixton, Edmonton and West Norwood. No firefighters were injured in the disturbances. Whilst the London Fire Brigade remained fully prepared last night, there were no significant fires. However, the number of calls taken by the Control Centre remained high. Between 00.01 and 23.59 yesterday, 1,823 calls were received.

Two firefighters were injured and six fire appliances damaged as Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service responded to emergency calls overnight. Crews responded to 101 incidents between 6pm and 7am this morning, linked to civil unrest – 18 vehicle fires, 11 property fires and 72 secondary fires such as wheelie bins and skips.

More than 100 firefighters and 16 fire engines tackled fires in Gloucester city centre following last night disturbances.

An increased number of calls to Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service's Control Centre followed sporadic and isolated pockets of civil disturbance last night. Incidents focused mainly in Salford and Manchester City Centre. One fire engine suffered minor damage.

ENDS



**Fire Services
Management Committee**
17 November 2011

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Dear Minister,

Maritime Incident Response Group Funding

The Fire Services Management Committee (FSMC) of the Local Government Group are given to understand that your Department has announced the disbanding of the Maritime Incident Response Group (MIRG) by removing the central funding stream and have chosen to implement a strategy for public safety based on cost rather than risk.

The FSMC feels that this course of action would be extremely short sighted and we strongly urge you to ensure that the funding for MIRG is reinstated. Local Fire and Rescue Authorities should not be left to maintain and fund this key element of the UK's national resilience capability.

Over the last 12 months a significant amount of evidence has been developed that supports the requirement and benefit of having professionally trained UK firefighters able to deploy to vessels at sea. This has included an independent Review carried out in 2010, at some considerable cost to the Maritime & Coastguard Agency (MCA), which identified a very high risk of a significant incident involving fire occurring at sea (with the potential for the loss of 10 or more lives). The Review identified MIRG as the most effective and efficient response to these incidents and predicted 2-3 would occur each year which is in line with current MIRG activity.

The Transport Select Committee also recognised the significant impact MIRG has had at incidents since it was introduced in 2006 and recommended that it be maintained and funded centrally to ensure national resilience.

The FSMC are concerned at the way the MCA have arrived at this decision which cuts across the credible evidence and relies on a commercial capability that is not yet available and will not achieve the same response standards as the UK Fire and Rescue Service.

UK Fire and Rescue Authorities have no statutory duty to respond to incidents at sea and were acting in support of the MCA who have a duty to initiate a response to a fire on a vessel when requested by the Master. The reassurance provided to Masters, crew and passengers by MIRG over the last 5 years has been invaluable and its loss, on the grounds of cost (£380,000 per annum) and against all of the credible evidence is inconceivable, especially in light of the increased threat of terrorist activity and the risk surrounding the London 2012 Olympics.

It is of interest to note that on the same day that your Department announced the cut in funding for MIRG, a serious fire on a cruise ship off the coast of Norway resulted in the

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loss of two lives and left a number of passengers seriously injured. The scenario of a vessel on fire at sea in UK coastal waters without any national capability to respond, resulting in a loss of life or serious injuries is surely one which would cause major embarrassment to the Government and which should be avoided.

I would welcome your comments on the above points and look forward to receiving your reply as a matter of urgency, as Fire and Rescue Authorities have now received correspondence detailing the formal three month notice period to end MIRG with effect from December.