

Note of decisions taken and actions required

Title: Fire Services Management Committee
Date and time: Thursday 17 November, 11.00am
Venue: The Millbank Room 8.2 (8th 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
	Cllr Keith Aspden	York City
	Cllr Nick Forbes	Tyne & Wear FA
Substitutes	Cllr Les Byrom CBE	Merseyside FRA
	Cllr Tony Arbour	London FEPA
	Cllr Paul Bryant	Royal Berkshire FRA

Cllr David Rowlands also attended
as an observer

Apologies Cllr Ann Holland Essex FRS

Officers: Commissioner Ron Dobson, David Cartwright (LFEPA); CFO Roy Wilsher (Herts FRS); Max Hood (West Sussex FRS); (Helen Murray, Eamon Lally, Gill Gittins, Stephen Service (all LGA).

Item	Decisions and actions	Action by
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Chairman Coleman welcomed Members and Officers to the meeting. He asked Officers to correct the attendance record from the last meeting.

1 National Functions

Helen Murray, LGA Head of Programmes and David Cartwright from London FEPA updated Members on the Fire Service College.

Cllrs agreed that a huge amount of work was still ongoing but praised the close working of CFOA with the LGA so far.

On the Fire Service College, Mr Cartwright said that CLG have now completed their pre-market engagement consultation. He noted that Ministers favour the sale of the college outright, but are keen to see a covenant which will protect fire service training on the site. While this position was seen as helpful to the sector, Mr Cartwright cautioned that any covenant should be broad and avoid being too prescriptive, with FAs given the right of first refusal in the event of failure.

Ministers favour the idea of a Trust being set up so that 10% of the ownership goes to FRAs. This would provide an opportunity for FRAs to influence the running of the College and to take any profits in the longer term. There would be no liability. However, there are still many details to be worked out and CLG lawyers

were still considering this as an option.

Members cautioned against being too controlling over the running of the College going forward as it had already suffered from the “dead hand” of the public sector and lack of investment. Members questioned advocating the college board system, which some saw as a reason for the college’s failure and the proposal to apportion land for training purposes. Not all Members felt that there was a necessity for land to be protected.

Cllrs questioned the relevancy of the land retainment proposal remaining in the report if Ministers were keen to sell the College outright. Helen Murray stressed that this had been part of earlier discussions in the event that a covenant needed to be formalised and was superseded by the development of a Trust. The Fire Commission on 9 December will have a more detailed discussion about the latest position on the College.

Members cited Governance as the key issue for politicians and the importance of Member involvement from London and non-London authorities in arrangements, particularly on resilience.

Members questioned why London Fire Brigade were supporting new arrangements for operational guidance with an investment of up to £2m rather than this funding coming from central Government. Cllr Coleman said that the Government supported the new delivery model but had no spare money to invest. LFEPA would be considering this issue and making a decision on Thursday 24 November.

Members requested more information about the EU arrangements. Officers agreed to provide Members with a paper at the next FSMC in January.

Action

Officers to schedule an agenda item on the EU/FRS for the next FSMC on 23 January 2012.

LGA Officers

2 FSMC Peer Challenge Working Group

Cllr Kay Hammond and CFO Roy Wilsher from Hertfordshire FRS introduced this item. Cllr Hammond commended work done so far on developing a new peer challenge and said that Pilot versions of the challenge offer would run between January

and June 2012. She distinguished the new assessment approach from inspection models as a tool that would help FAs and train Officers. CFO Wilsher added that this was not about league tables, but self improvement.

Members thanked Cllr Hammond and the Working Group for an excellent product. They expressed strong support for the new challenge, saying that FAs had been requesting the opportunity to take control of their own improvement for years.

Members asked about the rationale for scaling back the challenge from 5 to 3 days. Cllr Hammond responded that the 3 day challenges would be time intensive but as a result of the self assessment FAs will know specifically which areas they want to focus on. Timescales for specific challenges would always be subject to review, to ensure sufficient time was allowed for challenges to be completed.

Members said that anyone who puts their name forward to be a peer should be properly trained. Cllr Hammond agreed that it was vital the sector has faith in the selection process and that peers have the qualities needed. There is close engagement in setting up a review and each FA has the final say on peers offered to them.

Decision

Members agreed the recommendations within the report and approved the peer challenge offer for piloting. The FSMC agreed to review progress in 12 months time.

Action

Officers to take forward Members' comments in developing the approach to peer challenge and Operational Assessment toolkit.

LGA Officers

3 FRS Training and Development: Skills for Justice future funding

Max Hood, Chief Fire Officer at West Sussex FRS gave Members a brief overview of the work of Skills for Justice with the Fire Service and the case for continued funding.

Mr Hood said that SfJ was part of the Sector Skills Council. Many Members were unfamiliar with SfJ's role, and felt that without some more background information, it was difficult to

take a view on the continuation and implications of the funding.

While Members recognised that the amount of money being requested was modest, they felt someone from LG networks should be represented at board level if FAs were to take over the contribution for the training.

In response to a question on why central funding was being stopped, Mr Hood responded that DCLG's opposition to putting up the money was purely due to lack of funds and they fully supported the work of SfJ.

While Members fully advocated training and development, the Committee did not feel it was in a position to take the issue forward at this stage. Members agreed to refer the matter for a more detailed discussion at the December meeting of the Fire Commission.

Decision

Members agreed that Skills for Justice future funding should be included as an item at the next Fire Commission on 9 December, with Max Hood to attend.

Action

Officers to prepare a revised paper on Skills for Justice for the 9 December Fire Commission.

**Helen Murray /
Eamon Lally**

4 Firefighters' Pension Schemes

Cllr Maurice Heaster and LGA Senior Advisor Eamon Lally updated Members on this item. Cllr Heaster said that discussions continued to be constructive. For employee contributions, the paper recommends backloading contributions at 20/40/40 over a 3 year period so that the service can have a better understanding of the impact on the workforce. The closing date for CLG's consultation on the scheme was 2 December 2011.

Members highlighted opt out rates as a substantial risk, asking whether expectations were realistic and whether more work needed to be done. Eamon responded that broad research had been done but was limited in scope to FAs rather than individuals. Rates in this area were shown to be difficult to quantify accurately.

Cllr Heaster said that given the amount of risk involved, recommending that the scheme be backloaded was sensible.

Members agreed that a LGA response to the consultation should be sent along these lines, cleared by lead Members in the usual manner.

Action

Officers to prepare response to consultation and clear with Lead Members. **LGA Officers**

5 Emerging Terrorist Threats (Confidential Item)

This item was not minuted at the request of the Chairman.

6 FSMC Industrial Relations report

Gill Gittins provided an update to Members on the latest developments in industrial relations.

Gill said that joint secretaries can provide a conciliation service to authorities if required. These have had a good success rate in previous cases.

7 FSMC update paper

Helen Murray presented this item.

On the **FRS response to M5 Road Traffic Accident**, Cllr Coleman congratulated Cllr Healey and his authority for a job well done. Cllr Healey informed the Committee that he had received a huge response to the tragedy from across the world, including a letter from the Queen. He said that the incident demonstrated the amount of training that firefighters require.

On **FiReControl**, Cllr Hammond reported that the company in the South East is now being wound up.

While recognising that budgets are tight, Cllr Coleman reminded Members that the **Fire Conference** would be taking place in March 2012 and urged them to attend if at all possible.

Cllr Healey was asked to consider attending the **All party**



**Fire Services
Management Committee**

group parliamentary seminar on Sprinklers on 6 February on behalf of the Committee.

Date of next meeting: Monday 23 January 2012, Local Government House