

Note of decisions taken and actions required

Title: Fire Services Management Committee

Date and time: Monday 14 May 2012, 11.00am

Venue: Smith Square Rooms 1 and 2

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 John Joyce	Cheshire FA
	Cllr Julie Young	Essex FRS
	Cllr Navin Shah	London FEPA
	Cllr Keith Aspden	York City
Substitutes	Cllr Les Byrom CBE	Merseyside FRA
	Cllrs Paul Bryant and Leslie Christie also attended as observers	
Apologies	Cllr Nick Forbes	Tyne & Wear FA

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Officers: Commissioner Ron Dobson, David Cartwright (LFEPA); Helen Murray, Eamon Lally, Gill Gittins, Jane Marcroft, Stephen Service (all LGA).

Item	Decisions and actions	Action by
	Chairman Coleman welcomed Members and Officers to the meeting.	
1	Appointments to the Fire and Rescue Strategic Resilience Board Cllr Coleman said that the 2 FSMC representative places gained on the Resilience Board represented a victory for LGA lobbying. On the appointments, Cllr Timoney cautioned that while the work of the board was likely to continue beyond this summer, Membership of the FSMC is likely to change from September. Cllr Coleman invited Members to cast 2 votes as their nominations for the 2 places available. The following 3 Members were nominated: Cllr Byrom, Cllr Healey and Cllr Hilton. Decision <i>Members appointed Cllrs Healey and Hilton as the FSMC's representatives on the Board.</i> Action Officers to take forward as directed by the Committee.	LGA Officers
2	LGA Fire Conference and Exhibition 2013 Cllr Coleman and the Committee thanked Jane Marcroft, the LGA Events Manager and her team for their work on the 2012	

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conference. They commended Dorset FRS as hosts.

On the 2013 conference, Helen Murray, LGA Head of Programme said that the shortlist of possible venues for 2013 had been narrowed to three: Brighton, Bournemouth and Bristol, with pros and cons affecting each of these options.

Members expressed a preference for Brighton as it had not been used as a venue previously.

Cllr Coleman asked Cllr Livings if his Authority would be prepared to host the event and he agreed.

Cllr Livings warned Members planning to travel by car to the event that parking in Brighton is now quite expensive in the city centre, so if possible, taking alternative forms of transport would be recommended.

Action

Officers to liaise with Cllr Livings on hosting the 2013 conference in Brighton

**LGA Officers /
Cllr Livings**

3 Fire Service College – update on sale process

Helen Murray said that CLG have agreed for one member from the LGA to be part of the Fire College bid evaluation process. However, any Member nominated would need to be available on 30 May 2012. LGA advice would need to be focused on the bidders' vision and ability to support ongoing college business, and their credibility as a provider of fire training.

Cllr Heaster welcomed the opportunity for LGA input and nominated Cllr Coleman as the representative, saying that he had driven the college agenda from the outset.

Cllr Coleman asked Cllr Timoney to take the Chair while he considered. He responded that while his intention was to step down from the FSMC in the summer, the fact that he was currently not sitting on a Fire Authority fulfilled the stipulation in the conditions which stated that the Member must not be on an FRA which has a relationship with any of the bidders.

Some Members felt that there was potential for the position to

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extend beyond the July bidding process and questioned whether Cllr Coleman would be available to feedback to the FSMC given his decision to step down. However, others argued that the responsibility was short term and the FSMC would continue to monitor progress beyond this stage.

Cllr Timoney also nominated Cllr Joyce. She asked Members to vote on the appointment from the two nominations offered.

Decision

Members appointed Cllr Coleman as the FSMC's representatives on the Board.

Action

Officers to inform CLG/ the Fire College of Cllr Coleman's appointment to the Bid Evaluation Board.

LGA Officers

4 Retained Fire fighters' Pensions

Eamon Lally, LGA Senior Advisor summarised progress to date on this issue. He reported that an order from Government is expected to be in place by 2013. The scale of risk for the pensions is very large and could have a variable impact as some FRSs have used retained staff more than others.

The LGA is seeking legal advice to test its position that the government is liable for the balance of scheme liability and on its exclusion of employers from the settlement agreement. It is also looking at means of mitigating the financial risks. Possible ways of reducing these could include capitalisation or future evaluation.

Cllr Heaster said that the cost of the pensions was likely to be unfairly shunted onto the LGA by the Government, which had introduced the scheme in the first instance. On that basis, he recommended that the LGA go directly to the Minister to establish the government's position and contest any expectation that FAs will foot the bill. Cllr Heaster said that at this stage, compromise should be minimal.

Cllr Coleman agreed, adding that it was important that FAs were united in their message to Government that these costs cannot

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be afforded by FAs as a whole, rather than speculating as to whether costs should be loaded onto Met authorities.

Members endorsed these comments and advocated implementing the plan of action outlined at the earliest opportunity.

The Committee asked what the RFU position was on the issue. Gill Gittins, LGA Principle Negotiating Officer responded that while the RFU do have an interest, the Government had only consulted with the NFU to date. The LGA would hope that the RFU will also be approached as part of the process.

Members questioned the need for this report to be confidential, given the direct implications it could have for FAs. The committee agreed that Members can share the report with their authorities.

Action

Officers to arrange for all party group to see the Minister.	Helen Murray / Eamon Lally
Matter to be escalated at LGA senior political level.	Eamon Lally
Item to be included on 15 June Fire Commission agenda.	Stephen Service
Legal opinion to be circulated to FSMC.	Eamon Lally
Formal report on position to be prepared for 16 July FSMC or earlier.	Eamon Lally

5 Industrial relations

Gill Gittins gave an oral update on the latest developments in industrial relations.

6 FSMC update paper

On the **Marine Incident Response Group**, Members agreed that the cost based decision to cease its funding could put lives at risk. They commented that the Government need to identify

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how firefighting at sea is going to be organised under the commercial salvor proposals.

Cllr Coleman urged Members to write to their MPs to put pressure on the Shipping Minister, Mike Penning. He asked that the LGA write to Mr Penning to express disappointment over the Minister's decision not to meet with Members on the issue and that it remain on the agenda for forthcoming Fire meetings.

Commissioner Ron Dobson, LFEPA provided an update on **National Operational Guidance**. While CLG published 2 interim documents on operational guidance in March, there will need to be consultation with CLG on the way guidance is provided beyond the next 3 years. One option is that the Fire College could be responsible for producing the guidance.

Some Councillors expressed concern over the Government's proposal to transfer funding for the guidance preparation, arguing that FAs risk being made to pick up an increasingly large proportion of the bill.

Cllr Coleman responded that he was surprised this was a discussion point, given that the Government have made plain that there is no money available for them to fund guidance. He argued that Members had already been warned that this was an issue where FRSs needs to take ownership.

Helen Murray said that discussion had largely taken place in the context of national functions, but an update could be provided for the Fire Commission in June explaining what is happening in greater depth. Members agreed that as there will be long term implications, a stand alone paper for discussion would be appropriate.

Eamon Lally reported that the **Sprinklers Working Group** has now met twice and is currently building coalitions with other Boards within the LGA. While the group recognises that the debate needs to be taken beyond the fire sector, they were realistic about the likelihood of quick legislative change. They therefore proposed to engage with LAs on the issue rather than attempting to persuade CLG directly.

Cllr Coleman emphasised that a report on progress to date should come back to the Committee in July. He reminded

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Members that the focus must be on the campaign, not the issue of sprinklers itself.

Action

Officers to prepare follow up letter to Mike Penning MP on fires and incidents at sea for Cllr Coleman to sign.

**Cllr Coleman /
LGA Officers**

Fires and incidents at sea to remain an item on next FSMC agenda (update: this has gone on the agenda of the next Strategic Resilience Board).

LGA Officers

National operational guidance to be added as an item to Fire Commission agenda for June.

**Helen Murray /
LGA Officers**

Sprinklers Working Group report to go to July FSMC.

LGA Officers

7 Notes of the last meeting

Members approved the minutes of the previous meeting.

Date of next meeting: Monday 14 May 2012, Local Government House