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Fire Services Management Committee Peer Challenge

Purpose of report

For update, discussion and approval.

Summary

1. At the 17 November 2011 FSMC meeting, Members approved the work of the FSMC Peer Challenge Working Group and agreed to pilot the new offer for Operational Assessment (OpA) and Fire Peer Challenge in the following Fire & Rescue Authorities:
 - 1.1 Surrey – County FRA
 - 1.2 Leicestershire – Combined FRA
 - 1.3 West Yorkshire – Metropolitan FRA
2. This paper provides information on the evaluation from the pilot OpA & Fire Peer Challenges, an update on Fire Peer Challenge Programme and details of take up of the offer.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

1. comment and endorse the work of the FSMC Peer Challenge Working Group;
2. consider the evaluation of the pilot peer challenges and note the progress made in developing the new approach to OpA and Fire Peer Challenge;
3. note the extremely positive take up of OpA and Fire Peer Challenge with 41 FRA's having registered;
4. support the ongoing development of both officer and member peers to sustain the programme going forward;
5. support the development of a Chief Fire Officer sounding board to be held in December to review progress and evaluate learning; and
6. agree to officers commissioning an externally conducted impact evaluation in 2013/14 to assess the outcomes of undertaking OpA self assessment and Fire Peer Challenge.

Action

Officers to progress work programme subject to Members' comments.

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**Fire Services Management Committee Peer Challenge
Working Group**

Background

1. Following presentation and agreement of the *Improvement and performance support in the Fire & Rescue Service* paper on 16 May 2011, members of the FSMC agreed to establish a member led joint LGA/CFOA working group to develop the Fire & Rescue Sector peer challenge offer.
2. The following Members led the FSMC Peer Challenge Working Group.
 - 2.1 Cllr Kay Hammond (Chair) – Surrey
 - 2.2 Cllr Les Byrom - Merseyside
 - 2.3 Cllr Paul Shannon – Greater Manchester (part)
 - 2.4 Cllr Jeremy Hilton – Gloucestershire (part)
 - 2.5 Cllr David Rowlands – Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes
3. The Working Group was supported by officers from the LGA and CFOA.
4. In November 2011 FSMC agreed to pilot the new offer for Fire Peer Challenge in the following Fire & Rescue Authorities:
 - 4.1 Surrey – County FRA
 - 4.2 Leicestershire – Combined FRA
 - 4.3 West Yorkshire - Metropolitan FRA

Learning from the Pilots

5. The pilot Fire Peer Challenges were carried out in:
 - 5.1 Surrey – County FRA – 17 to 19 January 2012**
Lead Officer Peer – Des Tidbury, Chief Fire Officer and Director of Community Safety and Protection Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service
Member Peer – Cllr Stuart West, Shropshire County Council and FRA
 - 5.2 Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland – Combined FRA – 7 to 9 February 2012**
Lead Officer Peer – Susan Johnson, Chief Executive County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service
Member Peer – Cllr Peter Abraham, Bristol City Council and Avon FRA

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5.3 West Yorkshire - Metropolitan FRA – 7 to 9 February 2012

Lead Officer Peer – Roy Wilsher, Director of Community Protection & Chief Fire Officer, Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

Member Peer – Cllr Mary Baldwin - Member Peer, Lead Member Diversity & Equality - Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes FRA

6. A comprehensive evaluation of the peer challenges was undertaken by officers from CFOA and the LGA which included the following:
 - 6.1 Chief Fire Officer Evaluation
 - 6.2 Operational Assessment Evaluation
 - 6.3 Chief Executive and Chief Fire Officers Fire Peer Challenge Event
 - 6.4 Capturing views whilst onsite
 - 6.5 Lead Peer Feedback
 - 6.6 Member Peer Feedback
 - 6.7 Officer Peer Feedback
 - 6.8 LGA Peer Challenge Manager Feedback

Key findings

7. From the evaluation it was clear that the new Fire Peer Challenge offer was very well received. Overall there was strong support for OpA self assessment and Fire Peer Challenge as a sector led improvement tool and that the OpA & Fire Peer Challenge Toolkit provided a good overview from an operational perspective and increased self awareness and internal challenge.
8. Respondents felt that the peer challenge was well tailored to their needs and that liaison with the LGA was positive. The support and challenge from the peer team was also very well received with positive comments regarding the calibre and professionalism of the peers.
9. All felt that the peer challenge was effective in identifying the key issues for the FRA and that the issues were very clearly presented and commented that they were presented in a 'fair and balanced' approach.
10. There was strong support for the introduction of a core set of corporate health and leadership elements, in addition to the agreed operational focus.

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11. Services welcomed the attendance of FRA members at the presentation.
12. Overall all respondents demonstrated a high degree of satisfaction with the process and would recommend OpA self assessment and Fire Peer Challenge.
13. All respondents felt that the 3 day model was not adequate and requested a move to 4 days.
14. It was agreed that it was important for the Chair of the FRA and FRA Members to be engaged in the process, to sign off the self assessment and to understand and challenge the findings from the peer challenge.

Chief Fire Officer

14.1 *“Good snapshot of service and a fair and balanced view. Felt totally different than inspection.”*

Member Peer

14.2 *“I found it to be much improved from the previous model, much more focussed on the requirements of the FRA.”*

Changes following evaluation

15. Officers from the LGA and CFOA acted upon the feedback and made revisions to the OpA & Fire Peer Challenge offer.
16. The most significant change was to move to a four day onsite model.
17. It was clear from all those involved in the pilots that a move to a four day onsite model would provide more opportunity to engage all elements of the FRS, ensure adequate time to visit front line stations and provide adequate time for the peer team to collate and consider their findings
18. This has been communicated and there is strong support from both Member and Officer Peers for a move to a four day model.

Update on the Fire Peer Challenge Programme

Officer Peer Recruitment and Training

19. A refresh of the existing officer peer pool has been undertaken to update the all peer records.
20. The existing peer pool has been added to the new LGA peer and project management system and the Fire peer cohort is now up to date with over 230 officer peers on record.

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21. Management of the peer cohort is undertaken on an ongoing basis with further filtering and information updates added regularly as part of the Fire Peer cohort management.
22. The Fire Peer cohort has a more than adequate number of peers with the next phase of development being the refining of profile and skill data.
23. A programme of regionally based officer peer training is being delivered.

Region	FRS	Date	Numbers
West Midlands	Staffordshire	24 April	15
North West	Greater Manchester	10 May	16
West Midlands	West Midlands	16 May	15
West Midlands	Hereford & Worcs	31 May	16
North East	Tyne & Wear	14 June	18
East of England	Beds & Luton	13 July	15
South East	Surrey	07 August	TBC
North West	Cheshire	21 August	TBC
South East/West	Hampshire	TBC	TBC

24. Take up has been extremely positive with each training session being over subscribed. A further tranche of training is planned in the Autumn of 2012
25. The training consists of:
- 25.1 a comprehensive briefing on the new approach and the context;
 - 25.2 guidance on how to act as a peer and the skills and competencies required;
 - 25.3 Q&A and discussion session;
 - 25.4 A peers perspective from a CFO or DCFO;
 - 25.5 A simulation exercise; and
 - 25.6 Group feedback and Q&A.

Member Peer Recruitment and Training

26. Lead Member Peers are considering the numbers of Fire & Rescue Authority Member Peers.
27. As yet there has not been any training or development for Member Peers. As political leadership is an integral component of the approach to OpA self assessment and Fire Peer Challenge it is proposed that the existing training programme is extended to include Member Peers.

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28. This will enable both Officers and Members to work together collaboratively replicating the approach of a peer team.

Promote the peer role as a positive approach to personal and professional development

29. Work is underway to include OpA & Fire Peer Challenge as part of the CFOA Executive Leadership Programme.

30. Several options are being discussed including this element be part of a module on leadership and governance with a focus on Member involvement and perspective and how Fire Peer Challenge provides opportunities to work with Members and has a specific focus on leadership and governance.

Notable Practice Library

31. A Library of notable practice is being developed and will be communicated via the LGA Knowledge Hub and the CFOA Communities website.

Encourage all FRAs to publish their peer challenge reports via their own website

32. We can confirm that all of the pilot FRAs have published their peer challenge reports on their websites.

Promote the revised Operational Assessment Toolkit and Peer Challenge offer

33. On completion of the pilot OpA Self Assessments and Fire Peer Challenge a hard copy of the OpA Toolkit, accompanied by a letter on behalf of Lee Howell President of CFOA and Cllr Kay Hammond, Chair of the FSMC Working group, was sent to all FRA Chairs and Chief Fire Officers.

34. The LGA and CFOA then published the revised OpA & Fire Peer Challenge Toolkit on their respective websites.

34.1 LGA Fire Peer Challenge Web page
http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/peer-challenges/-/journal_content/56/10171/3510552/ARTICLE-TEMPLATE

34.2 CFOA Web page <http://www.cfoa.org.uk/10038>

35. A leaflet has also been published on the LGA website and has been produced in hard copy for wider distribution:
http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=09a49624-2048-4491-84cf-2cf6f16803c1&groupId=10171

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LGA Fire Conference

36. Chaired by Councillor Jeremy Hilton and Councillor Kay Hammond and supported by officers from CFOA and the LGA two successful workshops were delivered at the LGA Fire Conference in Bournemouth on the 20 & 21 March 2012 .

LGA Conference June 2012

37. As part of a wider public sector publication on sector led improvement, produced for the LGA Conference in June a case study on the pilot OpA & Fire Peer Challenge at West Yorkshire FRS has been completed

CFOA Executive Leadership Programme

38. Officers from CFOA and the LGA delivered a session at the CFOA Executive Leadership Programme event on the 28 March 2012.

CFO Meetings

39. The LGA Programme Manager has personally met with CFO's from 29 FRS's to communicate the OpA & Fire peer Challenge offer. It is proposed to establish a CFO sounding board where we can bring together CFO's who have either received a peer challenge or led a peer challenge to review and evaluate progress. It is proposed that the first meeting is held in December 2012.

Take Up

40. This promotion has been effective with excellent take up of the new offer with 41 English FRA's having registered interest in undertaking OpA self assessment and having a fire peer challenge. The programme is currently being delivered.

Evaluating the Impact of OpA & Fire Peer Challenge

41. As part of the overall evaluation of the LGAs Taking the Lead offer it is proposed that officers investigate the option to commission an independent research study to evaluate the impact and outcomes of the OpA & Fire Peer Challenge programme.

42. This replicates the approach undertaken as part of the corporate peer challenge programme offered to councils and will be funded as part of the Taking the Lead core offer.

Recommendations

43. In order to take this work forward, the FSMC are asked to note the OpA & Fire Peer Challenge programme and endorse the next steps around development and evaluation.

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Financial Implications

44. There are no financial implications for the FSMC work programme arising directly from this report as the Fire Peer Challenge programme is a core part of the LGA's overall Taking the Lead programme.