

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.

Recommendation

Members to note the update.

Action

Officers to progress as appropriate.

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FSMC update paper

Consultation – name change for Bedfordshire and Luton Combined Fire Authority

1. DCLG has just launched a consultation on altering the name of Bedfordshire and Luton Combined Fire Authority to Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority. The proposed change is intended to reflect the composition of the local council arrangements.
2. The consultation will run up to 25 September and comments can be sent to sed6@communities.gsi.gov.uk. The consultation can be accessed here: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/bedsfraconsult>

Fire Service College – bids

3. The deadline for the Fire Service College bids has been extended to 14 September following feedback from bidders. Helen Murray, LGA Head of Programmes participated in the first round of sifting. The LGA's involvement in the process has now ended.

DCLG secondment programme for firefighters

4. DCLG and CFOA have jointly developed a secondment programme between the department and the fire and rescue service to develop future leaders. The secondment is aimed at middle and senior managers (Group and Area Managers) to enable them to access a range of experiences and opportunities in central government, whilst working alongside civil service colleagues.
5. Secondtees will be placed in policy teams and will contribute to the development of national fire and resilience policy and support the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser. Successful candidates would also be given the opportunity to develop project and programme management skills, gain experience of national project delivery, support ministers and get involved in government media and communications.
6. In order for them to be successful, the secondments need to be supported by individual fire and rescue services. They need to work in partnership with DCLG to make it a worthwhile opportunity for the candidate. In terms of payment, DCLG will pay fire and rescue services up to £60,000 per annum for each secondee. The period of secondment will be for 1 – 2 years.
7. Candidates will be asked to apply through a competitive process run by DCLG, with the support of their fire and rescue authority and agreement between DCLG and the authority in funding terms. Authorities would only be expected to support individuals they see as having leadership potential and who would benefit the most from a secondment to central government.

London Fire Brigade World Rescue Challenge event

8. London Fire Brigade are organising an all-day Rescue Conference on 19 October. It will run concurrently with the World Rescue Challenge event on 18 – 20 October.
9. The conference is aimed at senior decision makers from across the emergency services and associated organizations. Speakers include Andrew Hough, The Daily Telegraph, Dan Stephens, Chief Fire Officer, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service and Commissioner Ron Dobson, London Fire Brigade.
10. The event will be taking place at the ExCel, London and the delegate fee is £85 + VAT. Members can access further information about the challenge event at: <http://worldrescue2012.com> or can contact Ruth Beck (ruth.beck@london-fire.gov.uk).

Association of Metropolitan Fire and Rescue Authorities (AMFRA) response to Fire Minister's evidence at fire finance select committee

11. In July 2012, senior representatives from six Metropolitan FRAs gave evidence before the Communities and Local Government Select Committee. They argued the unfairness of the financial settlement imposed on them compared to other FRAs and that the same round of cuts could not be repeated without severe consequences.
12. At the same session, the Fire Minister and Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser were questioned by the select committee about the funding formula. AMFRA, not having the opportunity to do so at the time, are now responding to the points raised by the Minister and Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser. The response is included in **Appendix A** to this paper.
13. The full transcript of the evidence given by the Minister and the Metropolitan Fire and Rescue Authorities here:
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmcomloc/uc519-i/uc51901.htm>

Westminster Hall debate on the future of fire funding on 5 September 2012

14. The Government was called upon to implement a fairer funding settlement for fire and rescue services in the period 2013 to 2015 during a Westminster Hall debate led by Labour's Bridget Phillipson. She questioned whether the cuts were "fair" and "equitable" and suggested that metropolitan authorities were having to shoulder the biggest burden.
15. Responding for the Government, new housing and local government minister Mark Prisk noted that fire and rescue services, as a front line emergency service, has been given funding protection, with reductions back-loaded to try to give those authorities more time in which to make sustained savings. It was for each authority to understand their own operational priorities and use the integrated risk management plan as the basis on which they make those assessments.

16. Mark Prisk concluded by highlighting the Government's proposals for a fundamentally new approach to the funding of local government, which included proposals for single-purpose fire and rescue authorities to receive two per cent of the local share of business rates.
17. Please refer to **Appendix C** to view the LGA briefing ahead of the debate. To access the Hansard record of the debate members can visit:
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm120905/halltext/120905h0001.htm#12090525000001>
For further information please contact Lee Bruce (lee.bruce@lga.gov.uk).

Fire conference – 12-13 March 2012

18. Members can now book their places at the annual fire conference at the Hilton Metropole, Brighton. To reserve your place, please log on to the LGA website at www.local.gov.uk/events. Delegate fees have been held at 2008 prices and some special rates have been negotiated for delegate accommodation at the conference hotel and a range of other nearby hotels. Further details about hotel accommodation are also provided at www.local.gov.uk/events. The events' manager for the conference, Jane Marcroft (jane.marcroft@local.gov.uk), will be happy to help members with any logistical queries relating to the conference and accommodation.
19. The new Chairman and Lead Members will be considering the conference programme in October and would welcome suggestions at this stage of planning (email the LGA Fire team Adviser Clive Harris (clive.harris@local.gov.uk)). As the national annual fire event, it is proposed that there will be a wide range of plenaries and workshops covering many different aspects of the fire world, rather than a specific theme to the event.

Community right to challenge

20. The FSMC update paper of 16 July outlined the community right to challenge and provided a link to the Government's final statutory guidance, published on 27 June. A Community Rights website has now been launched providing more information and the new powers and the potential opportunities. The website can be accessed here: www.communityrights.communities.gov.uk.

Sprinklers

21. The toolkit website is currently under development and we anticipate piloting it with a handful of FRA members from all types and areas in late September.
22. The British Automatic Fire Sprinkler Association (BAFSA) is holding its biennial Fire Sprinkler Conference on 15 November at the Leicester Marriot Hotel. The event will explore innovative projects (including retrofitting in social housing) and reviewing new technology and product technology. To book, members are advised to visit www.firesprinkler2012.com. Day delegate rates are £195 but there is a discount for early booking.

Publication of the Government response to the Exercise Watermark Report

23. Exercise Watermark took place in March 2011 and examined national and local responses to different types of major flood incidents. The lessons learnt were reviewed and issued the Exercise Watermark Final Report was issued in September 2011 making a number of recommendations. The report can be found at:
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb13673-exercise-watermark-finalreport.pdf>
24. The Government responded to the report in July 2012 and welcomed the recommendations. Some of the key points that concern FRAs that the Government responded to include:
- 24.1 Confirmation that Government and most partners' view is that improved guidance on coordination of flood rescue assets would give the greatest flexibility at the local level: existing guidance will now be amended accordingly;
 - 24.2 Information is provided on the on-going work on co-ordination of the response to an east coast inundation, through the East Coast Flood Group, where fire and rescue authorities are playing a key role;
 - 24.3 The Defra Lead Government Department Plan for Flooding and the National Flood Emergency Framework for England will be revised in autumn 2012.
25. DCLG will be writing to fire and rescue authorities and other key partners in the near future to outline any actions and support needed to deliver the recommendations of the Report.

Retained Firefighter Pensions

26. Following FSMC's request, a delegation led by Cllr Maurice Heaster met with the Fire Minister on 18 July to set out our continuing concern at the government's proposal (as set out in the Minister's letter dated 25th June) on how to deal with non-employee costs arising from retrospective access by retained firefighters to the pension scheme.
27. Following the meeting on 18 July, Cllr Heaster wrote to the Minister, drawing on our legal advice and setting out FSMC's strongly held view that the costs should be borne by government. Cllr Heaster's letter is set out in **Appendix B**. We await the Minister's response.

FSMC at external meetings

28. FSMC members who represent the LGA at external meetings are encouraged to feed back the outcome of discussions to LGA officers so that these can be included in future FSMC updates to ensure all Members have a rounded perspective of all FSMC external activity.