

Note of decisions taken and actions required

Title: Fire Services Management Committee
Date and time: Friday 25 January 2013, 11.00am
Venue: Westminster Suite Room 8.1

Attendance

Position	Councillor	Council
Chairman	Cllr Kay Hammond	Surrey CC
Vice chair	Cllr Sian Timoney	Luton BC
Deputy chair	Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Gloucestershire FRS
	Cllr Brian Copping (Deputy Chair)	Shepway DC
Members	Cllr Mark Healey	Devon & Somerset FRS
	Cllr Maurice Heaster OBE	London FEPA
	Cllr John Bell	Greater Manchester FRA
	Cllr David Topping	Cheshire FA
	Cllr Kevin Foster	West Midlands FRA
	Cllr John Joyce	Cheshire FA
	Cllr Navin Shah	London FEPA
	Cllr Keith Aspden	North Yorkshire FRA
Substitutes	Cllr Les Byrom CBE	Merseyside FRA
	Cllr Les Christie	Kent FRA
Apologies	Cllr Julie Young	Essex FRS
	Cllr John Edwards	West Midlands FRA
Officers:	Helen Murray, Eamon Lally, Gill Gittins, Clive Harris, Jane Marcroft, Steve Service (all LGA)	

Item	Decisions and actions	Action by
	<p>Councillor Kay Hammond welcomed Members and Officers to the meeting.</p>	
1.	<p>CFOA presentation</p> <p>Cllr Hammond welcomed Vij Randeniya and Paul Fuller President and Vice President of CFOA to the meeting.</p> <p>Members received a presentation from Vij and Paul on priorities affecting CFOA's members and the association's response.</p> <p>Members welcomed the update and said there was still a case for deliberative thinking on fire issues. Some Members praised the strength and speed of their response to the news of Sir Ken Knight's review</p> <p>However, in light of CFOA's intention to take a more robust approach with Government, Councillors also recognised the responsibility of the LGA to its FAs and their different local interests. They questioned whether conflicts in policy could be expected between the LGA and CFOA if they decide to take a more forceful position and asked what CFOA's role would be in more divisive issues such as the existence of beds in some stations and County FAs.</p> <p>Vij assured members that divisive issues such as the abolition of county FAs would not be supported by CFOA. While recognising that some areas of controversy could prove challenging, he proposed a "gloves off" approach only on carefully focused issues, while others might require a more partnership based direction.</p> <p>With regards to the LGA, he said that CFOA intended to cross-map areas of commonality with the LGA and deal with differences as they arose. He cited the Maritime Incident Response issue as an example of CFOA recognising and respecting local differences. While most members were not from coastal regions, they recognised the wider importance of this unit to fire safety.</p> <p>Some Members were concerned about CFOA proposals to reduce training for fire crews. Paul replied that this was not about cutting training but looking at delivering certain training</p>	

Item 7

differently through mediums such as e-learning rather than spending time and resources on repeating onsite training. He pointed out that fire deaths and injuries have halved in recent years, so training and on-the-job experience with these scenarios has also reduced significantly. Vij added that CFOA are working with Capita to ensure that the right areas of training are covered.

Members agreed that CFOA's priorities on decisive communications, sprinklers and flooding were central to FAs. Vij replied that on flooding, CFOA were looking to co-ordinate an approach. He highlighted that there were differences between the wider LGA and the FSMC on this issue and CFOA could help make the FSMC's case. Cllr Hammond emphasised that the Committee would want to ensure members had been canvassed to ensure this was a majority review.

Members identified sprinklers as an area where CFOA's proposed "gloves off" approach would be particularly helpful. Vij reported that he had spoken to the insurance industry in December to gain their support.

Members asked how CFOA viewed Sir Ken Knight's review. Vij responded that the biggest question was whether FAs are doing everything they can to meet the austerity agenda and what the key levers were to enable this to move forward. He argued that Sir Ken's report should emphasise the areas in which FAs have led the way and contended that its effectiveness would be dependent on what FAs put into it.

Cllr Hammond thanked Vij and Paul for attending and asked that an annual update from CFOA be arranged for future years. On Sir Ken's review, she highlighted to the Committee that he would be coming to the FSMC in March to discuss his initial findings.

Action

LGA Officers to invite CFOA to a further FSMC in 2013/14.

Stephen Service

2. Pensions update

Eamon Lally, LGA Senior Advisor introduced this item. He asked Members if they would like to submit comments on the Government's review of the normal pension age.

Item 7

Commissioner Dobson added that the recommendations on a minimum of 2.5 hours fitness training per week for firefighters was something requiring further consideration. He argued that it was still not clear what the implications of the drop-out rate rising would be for the pension scheme.

On the **2.5 hours fitness training** proposal, Members said that the issue of whether the employer or employee was liable for the cost was likely to be a key issue. While some felt 2.5 hours to be a reasonable expectation, others argued that a holistic view of firefighters' fitness was wrong. Monitoring crews to ensure they were physically fit was seen as more important than setting an arbitrary number of hours to exercise. Members were also concerned that negative headlines might result from fire authorities buying in gym equipment.

Members noted that the report identified the eligibility of any firefighters up to the age of 60 to work operationally if physically fit.

On **fire pensions' employee contributions increases**, members noted the increase in opt-outs of 150% and asked at what level of opt-out the viability of the scheme was in question. Eamon replied that the cost started to be affected with opt-outs of about 7% of employees. Members concluded that the level of contribution was likely to have a strong impact on opt-out numbers, with individuals' intended length of stay in the service also a factor.

With the dropout from the pension scheme by BME and lower paid staff, Members argued that this should encourage the Government to limit to 0.64% in 2013/14 which would represent a further 20% of the government's intended 3.2% . this would also require the government to extend the period over which it spreads the increase in employee contribution rates. Members agreed that their position had not changed on **retained firefighters pensions**.

The Committee agreed that Officers clear a more robust and focused draft of the consultation response on proposed pensions increase with lead members, incorporating Councillors' comments.

Item 7

Action

Officers to clear a final version of the letter on employee contribution increases with lead members before sending.

Eamon Lally

Officers to draft response to the NPA consultation document, particularly focusing on the responsibility for fitness levels and potential impact on FRAs.

Eamon Lally

3. Equality and Diversity

Helen Murray, LGA Head of Programme presented this item and asked members if the current equality framework was still fit for purpose.

Members recommended that a question on what the fire service is doing for the retention and progression of women and BME staff should be included in the fire peer review. They supported keeping E&D questions as part of the peer challenge.

Members asked if there was more up-to-date information available than the 2008 percentage of women and E&D staff quoted in the report.

Cllr Hammond argued that the current framework was out of date and should put a greater duty on fire authorities than simply to reflect the local community in their workforce. However, it was also acknowledged that with a reduction in recruitment, targets for paid officers will be difficult to achieve. A lighter touch approach driven at local level was seen by some Councillors as more appropriate than legislation, with the emphasis on recruitment of fire volunteers who reflect their community.

Cllr Hammond urged Councillors to consider the equality impact assessment when making decisions that could impact upon their communities, so as to avoid a judicial review.

Action

Officers to add Equality and Diversity as an item on a forthcoming Fire commission agenda

**Helen Murray /
Steve Service**

E&D framework to be updated to reflect the most up to date

Clive Harris

Item 7

legislation and public sector.

4. National collective bargaining

Gill Gittins, LGA Principal Negotiating Officer presented this paper and gave a summary of the type and make-up of the national negotiating bodies.

Councillors identified an issue regarding the varying levels of expertise between Councillors on bargaining bodies. They emphasised the importance of the LGA ensuring colleagues were up to speed on how groups such as trade unions operated. Cllr Hammond asked that ongoing training be given for Members rather than just at the beginning of their involvement.

While some Members voiced frustration at the inability for individuals to engage directly with other groups at the negotiating table, others argued that this formal orchestration was necessary to ensure discipline and a clear direction could be established. While off the record conversations outside were possible, it was acknowledged that trying to accommodate 28 people's views in a single meeting was difficult.

Action

Officers to offer refresher training for Members sitting on LGA negotiating bodies.

Gill Gittins

5. Fire Conference publications

Eamon Lally introduced this item and sought Members' views on the direction of the fire future funding document proposed.

Members suggested giving examples in monetary terms to underline the impact of the Government's proposals and asked Officers to "show their workings" when it came to the figures they arrived at. Some felt that the outlook portrayed was unduly optimistic.

Some Councillors argued that if authorities were not prepared to raise their level of council tax they were not in a position to complain about a shortage of money.

Item 7

Cllr Hammond expressed concern about the Minister's comment in the press that some Chief Fire Officers had claimed they had plenty of money. She urged Members to check what the position was in their authorities.

Action

Officers to include numbers as well as percentages in next draft of the conference publications and refrain from presenting an unduly rosy outlook.

LGA Officers

6. LGA Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition 2014

Jane Marcroft, LGA Events Organiser introduced this item. She put forward potential venues in Birmingham, Liverpool and Cardiff. Members agreed that Wales was the best option in light of their adoption of sprinklers and the potential lessons for other authorities.

Jane said that several venues in Cardiff were considered but only the Millennium Centre and Millennium Stadium were suitable in terms of capacity and price. While the Millennium Stadium was large enough to host, it would require Members to be accommodated elsewhere.

Members agreed that a prestigious venue was needed and decided on the Millennium Stadium. They indicated that they were happy to walk 10 mins or so to nearby hotels, but emphasised that the recommended main hotel should have sprinklers.

Decision

Officers to take forward 2014 conference arrangements for Cardiff as directed.

Jane Marcroft

7. Outside bodies update

Cllr Hammond announced that she will be the FSMC's representative on the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme Board.

Item 7

Cllr Joyce updated the Committee on the work of the Fire College Board. This is continuing to develop leadership courses and ensure that they are accredited. The Board has also engaged with Capita to ensure that they understand the training needs of the Fire and Rescue Service.

Cllr Healey said that no meetings had yet taken place on retained firefighters pensions.

Members confirmed that they were happy with giving verbal updates for outside bodies at future meetings.

8. Industrial Relations

Members received an update from Gill Gittins on the latest developments in Industrial Relations. Members asked for more information on the 2 LGA nominations to the National Employers Advisory Forum.

Action

Officers to supply members with information on Anne Millington and Guy Goodman as LGA nominations to the National Employers Advisory Forum. **Gill Gittins**

9. FSMC update paper

Clive Harris, LGA Policy Advisor announced that the first meeting of the PCC joint working group with the Safer Communities Board would take place on Friday 1 February 2013.

10. Note of the last meeting - 14 September 2012

Members approved the minutes of the previous meeting.

Date of Next Meeting:

Monday, 11 March 2013 at 4.00pm in the Metropole Hotel, Brighton