

## Note of decisions taken and actions required

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<b>Title:</b>	Fire Commission
<b>Date and time:</b>	Friday 11 October 2013, 11.00
<b>Venue:</b>	Westminster Suite Room 8.1, Local Government House

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<b>Item</b>	<b>Decisions and actions</b>	<b>Action by</b>
	<p>Cllr Hammond welcomed members to the meeting, including those newly appointed to the Fire Commission since the summer. She emphasised that it was hoped members would engage with the LGA in a 2 way conversation on leading the sector.</p>	
<b>1.</b>	<p><b>LGA Fire Commission membership, Terms of Reference and meetings 2013/14</b></p> <p>Cllr Hammond asked members to send a substitute on their own behalf where possible for meetings they were unable to attend.</p> <p>For the Fire Commission at the Fire Services College on 6 December, Cllr Hammond announced that she intended to host a dinner on the evening of 5th for members staying overnight. Helen added that the LGA had provisionally held 40 bedrooms at the college if members wished to stay overnight. The cost is £56 and the College have said these would be "Premier Inn" standard rooms. Members were invited to signal on the attendance list at the meeting if they wished to reserve a room, with booking details to be circulated by officers.</p> <p><b>Decision</b></p> <p>Members <b>noted</b>:</p> <p>The membership and lead members of the Fire Commission; the Fire Commission Terms of Reference; and dates for forthcoming meetings.</p> <p><b>Action</b></p> <p>Officers to circulate booking details for Fire college accommodation.</p>	<p><b>Steve Service</b></p>

**2. Priorities 2013/14**

Cllr Hammond said that only 10 of 46 authorities had responded to the circulation of the LGA's draft priorities for 2013/14 and urged outstanding authorities to contact officers to ensure their current issues were reflected in the document. At the same time, she said that it was anticipated that the Knight review would provide a primary catalyst for driving the LGA's agenda over the course of the year. Cllr Hilton added that the Fire Commission needed to keep a close eye on the Ministerial response to the review as it developed.

Members suggested that the December meeting at the Fire College would be an ideal opportunity to discuss the Government's proposed white paper in response to the Knight Review. Cllr Hammond requested that a workshop be arranged following the Fire College Commission meeting to enable more in-depth discussion on this topic.

Members suggested that the report's emphasis on a sector-led approach should encompass PCCs. And some felt that the PCC working group should be reformed with a new remit to deal with ongoing PCC issues as they arise.

A further priority discussed was national resilience. Members noted that there was a perception the Knight review had been light on national resilience and were keen not to lose sight of this as an issue.

Cllr Knox recommended that the Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme also be added to the work schedule, with work speeding up on this in anticipation of it goes to tender in March. This will be added to the agenda of an appropriate forthcoming Fire Commission meeting.

**Action**

Officers to organise an afternoon workshop on the Knight review and the Government's response at the college on 6 December following the Fire Commission meeting.

**Steve Service**

Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme to be added as item at forthcoming Fire Commission meeting based on the tendering timescales.

**Helen Murray /  
Steve Service**

**3. Finance presentation**

Charles Kerr and Alison Kilpatrick of the Fire Finance Network provided an overview of changes to the local government finance system, including the issues unique to fire budgeting (**presentation**

attached).

Cllr Hammond thanked Charles and Alison for their presentation and asked members to consider the question of **how fire authorities could influence business growth**.

Councillors cited the value of the FRS brand as a means of bringing together other agencies on issues.

While it was accepted that FRSs had little opportunity to directly influence local business rate growth, members argued that the fire service had a role to play, with local partners, in shaping the conditions for business development. They suggested that fire needed to reinvent itself as a sector which can open doors for others in the business community, and get involved with Local Enterprise Partnerships.

Members suggested that a natural link between fire and the business community is through the employment of retained firefighters.

Cllr Hammond said that FA Chairs had a role in promoting what the sector does and influencing business leaders.

Speaking from a County Council perspective, Cllr Hilton said that the way authorities deal with fire finance often depended on the quality of cabinet member in the community safety role, with appointees not always experienced enough. Cllr Hammond agreed that counties should be challenged on how they choose their members to sit on FAs.

#### **Action**

Officers to email slides to members of the Fire Commission.

**Steve Service**

#### **4. Industrial relations**

Cllr Hammond sought feedback from members on how the strikes had affected their areas. A number of fire authorities reported receiving fewer calls than normal during the strike action, suggesting that communications asking the public to only call in genuine emergencies had been received. Other members added that robust call handling procedures had significantly reduced callouts to less serious incidents and false alarms.

Some members expressed concern that a lack of serious incidents on the day and their strong contingency arrangements might suggest misleadingly that authorities were overstaffed in normal circumstances. They emphasised that officers on the day were perhaps fortunate to receive few serious incident callouts, with one authority reporting that a serious warehouse fire broke out an hour after striking staff returned to their posts.

One member commented that the strike action had affected risk planning as well as the emergency response from crews on the day, for example, cancellation of a wider resilience meeting.

#### **Action**

Members *noted* the update.

#### **5. Chairman's report**

Members who attended the September Leadership Academy praised it as a training programme and asked that more of them be organised. Cllr Hammond said that she was trying to persuade the LGA to allocate more money for further events. Helen added that another Leadership Academy was scheduled for next year, but she was currently checking if a further one could be arranged in the interim. Members were advised to sign up to the Fire Bulletin as this would contain notification of any new events.

Members *noted* the report.

#### **6. Fire Commission update paper**

Members discussed the potential cost of **retained firefighters pensions**, with some authorities warning that if the Government refuse to foot the bill, this could add up to the cost of their total annual fire budget.

Eamon Lally said that the Government were currently legislating on this issue and that it was expected that the pot would be payable over a 15 year period rather than all at once. However, the LGA's position remained that any costs should be a Government responsibility. As the cost would be applied through employee contribution rates, all authorities would be affected by the outcome.

Cllr Hammond expressed disappointment that DCLG have arranged

their **capital bid meeting** on the same day as the FSMC on 15 November, however Neil O'Connor at DCLG had reassured her that they will try to organise a further meeting to ensure the LGA's input is sought.

On the **Fire Futures Forum** on 27 November in London, Cllr Hammond that she would attend on behalf of the Conservative Group. She asked the vice and deputy Chairs to nominate a representative for their party and to give any names to their respective political group office.

**Decision**

Members *noted* the update.

**Action**

FSMC Deputy and Vice Chairs to let officers know their nominations to attend the Fire Futures Forum on 27 November.

**Lead members /  
LGA officers**

**7. FSMC and Fire Commission notes of the last meeting**

***Decision***

The notes of the last Fire Commission meeting were agreed as a correct record.

**Date of next meeting:** 11.00am, Friday 6 December 2013, Fire Service College, Moreton-in-Marsh