

15 January 2007

Ten Year Vision for Fire and Rescue

Summary of decisions

- The Board is asked to note the summary of comments that have been received so far in response to the draft vision consultation document (Annex A).
- To note the approach to developing the route maps setting out the role of the LGA, DCLG and CFOA in delivering the vision

Actions required

The Task Group and secretariat will take forward work to produce a final vision statement for agreement with Fire Service Management Committee lead members, DCLG and CFOA for publication at the LGA Fire Conference in March.

Ongoing work will be needed to prepare the LGA's route map for delivery of the vision. Partnership working between fire and rescue authorities and the broader local government family will play a key part in this, and the Board's views are requested on any issues it would wish to see addressed in this route map.

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Ten Year Vision for Fire and Rescue

Background

1. At its meeting on 13 March 2006 the Fire Services Management Committee agreed that a ten year vision for fire and rescue authorities should be prepared, with work led by the LGA. For that purpose a Task Group was formed comprising four members representing each of the main political groups. The Group, in conjunction with partners including DCLG and CFOA, drew up a list of statements that they would want to see in any ten year vision. These statements were circulated to stakeholders. During August stakeholders submitted comments on the draft bullet points that had been circulated, which were then addressed, where appropriate, in the consultation document.
2. The formal consultation document, as agreed by the FSMC was launched on 8 November. After some negotiation with CFOA and DCLG, this document was launched as an LGA consultation document. The closing date for responses has now passed and those comments received have been included in [appendix 1](#).

Taking the vision forward

3. The responses to consultation were broadly similar to those that had been received during the pre-consultation circulation. Respondents were overwhelmingly supportive of the principle of a long term vision for the service and felt that this should be owned jointly by the LGA, DCLG and CFOA. Views varied on the level of detail that was considered necessary, with some respondents favouring a shorter statement, and others calling for additional specific issues to be included. The strongest and most consistent message was that the vision needed to be more ambitious, although responses varied as to how this should be achieved. For some respondents, this was an issue of the tone of the document; others called for the inclusion of targets; while for others, this was about specific areas of interest, such as the inclusion of smoke alarms in dwellings.
4. During the consultation period there have been ongoing discussions with DCLG and CFOA to establish the changes that would be needed to the draft to allow a joint ten-year vision to be agreed. Both organisations have confirmed that they support the principle of a shared vision, and have agreed that we should aim to launch this at the LGA's fire conference in March as a fairly short, high level statement of what the fire and rescue service should look like by 2017. It is acknowledged that this will be a formal starting point for a more detailed debate on how this vision should be achieved.

5. The Board may be interested to note certain elements of the vision that will fit closely with the broader safer communities agenda. The bullet points in the consultation related to engagement with local communities and diversity will be strengthened following comments received during the consultation process. These are important areas where Fire and Rescue Authorities will have to work with the broader local government family in addition to other agencies. The Safer Communities Board will have a particular role in providing views on these important areas of work (and others as they feel appropriate) for development into the route maps.

Taking the route maps forward

6. Coordinating potentially quite divergent route maps between partners will be part of a long and potentially difficult process. DCLG have indicated that they see the next version of the Fire and Rescue National Framework serving as their route map. If that is to be the case, it will clearly be important that this version sets out how the Department will contribute to achieving the vision, as well as its expectations of fire and rescue authorities.
7. CFOA are also holding a seminar on 5 February to inform development of their route map, and both the LGA and DCLG will be represented at this event. The Task Group will be working with CFOA to ensure that it is clear to attendees that the event is part of the partnership approach being taken by all three bodies to support delivery of the shared vision.
8. Further work will be needed to co-ordinate the timetable and mechanism by which each partner will set out its route map. The LGA has already circulated a series of questions to inform development of its route map, but considerable work will be needed if this is to take into account the range of relevant work currently underway and that is expected to have a long-term impact on the future of the service: the development of the Centre of Excellence, the Equality and Diversity Strategy, and the changes to the approach to assessment are just three of the most obvious examples. It is unlikely, therefore, that we will be in a position to publish a detailed route map alongside the vision statement in March.
9. It must be clear, however, that the publication of the vision statement is only the first stage in our commitment to work in a co-ordinated fashion with DCLG and CFOA to the long term benefit of the service. It will therefore be important to provide at the very least a clear indication of the process and timetable for producing the LGA's route map – perhaps linked to the process for developing the next National Framework – at the time the vision statement is published.