

Ten year vision for fire and rescue

Responses to the LGA consultation on 10 Year Vision for Fire and Rescue

The following document provides a summary of comments received on the draft high level LGA vision statement. This document opens with a flavour of the general comments that have been received and then reflects comments that were received relating to the specific bullet points included in the consultation document. Several organisations have indicated that their comments will be submitted after the close of the consultation, and there should be time for these late views to be compiled and summarised for members. Other organisations have indicated that they have already made their substantive comments during the pre consultation period and these would still stand.

Comments have been received so far from:

- *The Federation of British fire Organisations*
- *Business and Community Safety Forum (through actions to facilitate a response)*
- *Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (2 responses)*
- *Devon Fire and Rescue Authority*
- *Kent Fire and Rescue Service*
- *AssetCo*
- *South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority*
- *West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service*

Late responses have been scheduled from:

- *Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Authority (12th January)*
- *Business and Community Safety Forum (further comments before LGA Fire Conference, as they have agreed to set up a task and finish group to address the vision)*
- *London Fire Brigade (12th January)*

Key Messages

All of the responses recognised the need for a ten year vision for fire and rescue and welcomed the work that partners were pursuing so far. Several of the responses reflected the view that the vision did not go far enough in its scope or ambition, but still welcomed the aim of a joint vision. It was noted that it is essential for this document to fit in with all partner documents. Some responses thought the vision should be broader, others thought there should be less bullet points, to ensure that it has sufficient impact. Points were also raised regarding the different roles that FRAs need to play, such as in civil contingency and specialist incidents. The comments are grouped in this document into the sub headings included in the consultation document, followed by a summary of the responses received to the consultation questions included at the end of the document.

Primary Role

One response indicated that more emphasis should be given to the work done additionally to that done in partnership, thus having some attention drawn to the work that FRAs undertake independently. Another response remarked that the role of FRAs should be increased to include as a proactive agent in environmental protection. It also remarked that these points are not

dissimilar to those already reflected in many authorities' IRMPs and corporate plans, and thus not particularly visionary. It was also indicated that a specific reference to the provision of an emergency response to incidents would be beneficial.

A private sector response indicated that as the modernisation agenda is embraced by fire services, they will have to find ways of transferring risk to areas outside their core function, for example to partners.

Accountability

One response indicated that the foundations of the fire service should be rooted in the strengthening of democratic accountability at a local level. This response indicated that the document over emphasised the importance of the current relationships between central government, local government and CFA. More emphasis was encouraged on the work done by elected members, as those ultimately responsible for policy decisions in their fire authorities.

Another response clarified that it is solely policy direction that should be decided by elected members as all policy decisions may be too onerous on existing structures. This view is rather the antithesis to that in the previous paragraph. This response also underlined the difference between owning activities and taking responsibility for activities, indicating that central government actually owns many activities.

Other responses reflected that more emphasis should be given to maintaining local control and delivery of service.

The regional dimension was reflected on, in that it was suggested that constitutional arrangements be put into place that are consistent, and robust enabling the delivery of outcomes at a regional level. Several responses reflected that a clearer direction was needed for these Boards. Another response reflected that the different governance arrangements for fire and rescue authorities adds barriers to funding, modernisation and achieving the vision itself. This response noted that differences in the devolved administrations across the UK were also unhelpful.

Partnership working

One response indicated that partnership working should be given much more prominence, as the key in tackling and preventing the impacts of fire. This response indicated that sharing resources would lead to the strong and prosperous communities indicated in the White Paper. The expectations of partnership working should be made explicit. Another response took this further in asking for a clear requirement for FRAs to be involved in LAAs, in order for the Service to be taken seriously.

It was also pointed out that partnership itself does not necessarily achieve anything, but instead facilitates action and that partnership overload should be avoided.

The private sector expressed the view that they should be included explicitly in partnership working. This response also mentioned that there should be reference to seeking out best value through internal and external evaluation of the provision of services. The private sector response also indicated that there should be reference to 'strategic commercial partnerships' and how these can realise potential in terms of achieving 'value for money' and again the perceived benefits of transferring risk were underlined. Although it was reflected that perhaps there should be a formal requirement on the private sector to contribute to building safe and sustainable communities.

Engaging local communities

Responses reflected that engagement may in many instances have to take place beyond just the local community to partners further a field.

It was also pointed out that in combined authorities it is impossible to control the membership of the authority and suggested inclusion of the phrase 'within the staffing establishment of their services' It was noted that all six strands of the diversity agenda should be addressed, particularly encompassing those members of the community who are registered as disabled. It was felt that the use of Equality Impact Assessments should be emphasised as an integral part of all the services deliver.

It was also noted that the role FRA's have with regards to community cohesion should be highlighted, as they are uniquely placed, with high public regard, to be part of a national response to community tension.

Using technology

Responses indicated that advances in data collection and management would assist authorities in utilising technology and national projects, such as the 'Fire Gateway' should be made reference to. The only other points raised on this part were related to specific wording, with the inclusion of the word 'services.'

Authorities to take pride in

Two responses indicated that having authorities to take pride in would require further reasoning in the bullet point, for example the inclusion of a reference to social inclusion, respect and community cohesion. There was the suggestion that more member time was needed solely for the business of Fire and Rescue authorities. This could be achieved through appointing a full time independent Chair or having members that were dedicated to the service, rather than seconded from the local authority.

Generally

On a more general point, one response indicated that the document, while avoiding being too specific, could address further likely developments in legislation and other potential developments

An additional general point reflected on government bodies, indicating that awareness should be raised across the public sector of the work done by the FRS

Question responses

- 1. Do you agree that a vision statement will be useful in setting the strategic direction for fire and rescue service in England? Please comment on any impact you feel an agreed LGA-DCLG-CFOA vision statement would have on the work of your organisation.*

All responses agreed that there should be a shared vision, but many suggested further ambition. Some feedback indicated that the language and priorities used were reflective of those usually found in White Papers and other central government publications. One response indicated that the overarching statement for all partners to sign up to should actually be shorter and punchier. The bullet points proposed in the LGA consultation document would only then represent the

LGA and not be adapted to address the aspirations of all partners. This response also noted that reference should be made to 'services' not 'service' reflecting local difference.

2. Do you agree with the main points of the draft vision statement?

Many thought that these points were very difficult to disagree with and should go further, even risk taking. Some suggestions included closing the gap in risk between different classes and ethnic divides or to provide world beating prevention or community education.

3. Are there any key outcomes that the fire and rescue service should be seeking to achieve in 2017 that have been omitted from the list of statements?

Some omissions were detailed as the development of a maturing central/local relationship, as the 2004 Act is moved on from; the future of collective bargaining and workforce development. Lastly it was thought that the constraints of central control of the IPDS network needed to be addressed.

Further clarity was sought on what kind of organisation a Fire and Rescue Authority should be. It was also thought that the vision should not be reliant upon other organisations to deliver key critical success factors.

One authority indicated that at least one authority would want to see a stronger reference to the service's role in tackling climate change and other environmental issues.

4. What are the main challenges that will need to be addressed if the vision is to be achieved? Please comment freely on challenges for the LGA and fire authorities, DCLG, CFA or other delivery partners.

One response reflected that the main challenge lies in their own staff, in terms of both management and employee practices needing modernisation. Another response also indicated that workforce planning and development will be the main challenge in the years to come. It was noted that further work was needed to research the skill sets required for the staff of the future. A new and innovative approach to industrial relations would be needed as suggested by a number of responses.

Other responses emphasised the relationship with DCLG, in terms of them recognising the role that the fire community plays in the community safety agenda and that this recognition should be matched by access to funding from LSPs.

Responses from at least one authority indicated that stronger reference should be given to the service's role in tackling climate change and other environmental issues, particularly sustainable development.

One response thought the roles and responsibilities of elected members, as employers should be better set out and developed beyond the accountability point. In this way they (with principal officers) they could lead on the broader issues covered, such as equality and diversity.