

## Note of last Fire Commission meeting

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**Title:** Fire Commission  
**Date:** Tuesday 20 October 2015  
**Venue:** Westminster Suite, 8th Floor, Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

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### Attendance

An attendance list is attached as [Appendix A](#) to this note

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
1	<p><b>Presentation from Sarah Benioff, DCLG</b></p> <p>The Chair introduced Sarah Benioff, Director for Integration and Community Rights and Fire, Resilience and Emergencies at DCLG, and her colleague Brian Nash from the National Fire Policy Division at DCLG.</p> <p>The Director thanked members for welcoming her to the Fire Commission and for the warm welcome she has received since her appointment. The Director commented that since taking up her post she has been impressed by the commitment of the fire family to the service and also the outcomes the fire service has produced over many years. She explained that her role encompasses integration and community rights as well as the work on fire, resilience and emergencies that was previously carried out by Neil O'Connor.</p> <p>The Director encouraged members to respond to the current consultation on Enabling closer working between the Emergency Services. She commented that a number of members of the Commission had attended an engagement event on this topic held by DCLG.</p> <p>The government has put £70 million into blue light collaboration. Elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) have shown the benefit of bringing some services together and making savings through use of shared buildings and back office functions. Post-election Home Office, Department of Health and DCLG are working to bring together more of the emergency services. The Knight Review found that collaboration is happening but it is patchy.</p> <p>The powers proposed are not intended to be mandatory but meant to be enabling and that is the emphasis of the consultation. Ministers are clear that the emergency services should be accountable to local communities with local people having a say over how the services are run. PCCs have clear local accountability and a strong incentive to pursue ambitious reform to improve local services and deliver value for money in the interests of local people</p> <p>The consultation aims to find what is happening across the country. It is</p>	

meant to be enabling and about removing barriers which are preventing collaboration. The government is not mandating the transfer of services to PCCs except where local people want it and there is a local case based on strong local economies, efficiency and public safety. The Director reassured the Commission that the powers of police and firefighters will not be mixed and firefighters will not be expected to act as police or be given police powers.

The Spending Review and its launch document stress growth and productivity, particularly local growth, radical devolution and the integration of public services. As in 2010, as directed by the Treasury and along with other government departments, the DCLG submission set out modelling based on 20% reductions and 40% reductions by 2019/20. The Treasury and Ministers are discussing the submissions along with those from other individual organisations. The LGA submission is being considered.

The Director welcomed the LGA and CFOA strategic connections with health as important sustainable partners.

In the discussion which followed the Director's talk the following topics were raised:

- The Adrian Thomas review was still yet to be published. Members asked when the review would be published. The Minister told the DCLG Select Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2015 that it would be published in the next few months.
- The consultation appears more focused on collaboration with police services, whereas the FRS can make a bigger contribution through collaborating with the ambulance and the wider health service. The Director agreed effective collaboration between fire and health services was already taking place and encouraged members to include this in their consultation responses.
- Members were clear that FRAs are already finding ways to collaborate with other services.
- Some members felt the removal of national agreements on terms and conditions for fire fighters would help to drive further collaboration.
- The democratic accountability of FRAs was considered better than that of PCCs. Members felt authorities were working well with PCCs anyway and did not want to lose local democratic accountability of members representing their community.
- There were strong concerns about FRAs being taken over by PCCs. The Director and Mr Nash stressed they did not see the consultation as enabling hostile takeovers. PCCs would only assume responsibility for fire where there is a local case and local people want it. The merging of services should be based on efficiency, effectiveness, public safety and local support.
- One authority reported that it has already invited the PCC to be a member of the fire authority and written to DCLG to increase the membership to account for this.
- Members wanted clarity about how the proposal; to allow councils to retain 100 per cent of business rates will work, with members concerned it will have a disproportionate impact on northern FRAs. The Director agreed to provide more information for members on this point.

- Members expressed particular concern over the paragraph that enabled the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for DCLG to overrule local wishes and reach a view over whether a governance change should take place.
- Members felt that unless all parties involved supported the PCC taking over responsibility for fire the proposal should be dropped.
- It was also suggested that there should be a referendum locally on proposals for PCC to take over fire.

The Chair thanked the Director and Mr Nash for attending the meeting, and looked forward to the Minister for Communities and Resilience attending a future meeting of the Fire Commission.

### **Decision**

- Members noted the comments of the Director for Integration and Community Rights and Fire, Resilience and Emergencies.

## **2 Consultation on Enabling closer working between the Emergency Services**

John Wright, Senior Advisor, introduced the paper and draft response to the consultation. He outlined the key themes of the response:

- Support for collaboration between blue light services.
- Legislating a duty to collaborate could stifle innovation.
- Collaboration is best left at the local level.
- Governance changes are unnecessary.
- The consultation ignores the potential complexities associated with PCCs involvement in the governance of county FRAs
- Changes must have the support of local people and the government should not be able to overrule local decisions.

Members welcomed the draft response. There was a discussion during which members made a number of comments:

- The clause about PCCs making a hostile takeover of fire authorities should be removed from the proposals.
- The response is representative of the national picture and should not be framed in a way that makes it appear that all areas face some difficulties collaborating with the ambulance service. Most areas enjoy good collaborative relationships with their local ambulance trust.
- Integration with the local community is a fire service strength which other blue light services do not have.
- There should be clarity around who pays for the putting together of a business case.
- The fire service is good at collaborating with other services.
- The consultation only considers PCCs taking over FRAs and not vice versa.
- The strength of the fire brand allows the service to reach into places other emergency services cannot.
- Members disagreed that PCCs are more democratically

representative than FRAs. They also felt that, because Police and Crime panels have no power over what a PCC does, local democratic control of the FRS would be lost in any transfer of governance.

- The fire service's strength lies in community wellbeing.
- Any move towards establishing a single employer must be supported by both workforces before such a change takes place.
- Some of the strengths of the current system, peer challenge, and organisational experience could be lost if FRSs merged with police under the governance of the PCC.
- The consultation doesn't address the savings that can be made from preventative work. The current health and wellbeing work undertaken by the FRS saves other services money.

### **Decision**

- Members were unanimous that the proposed legislation was not required.
- Members agreed to forward individual fire authority responses to the consultation to the LGA.

### **Action**

- Officers to make amendments to the draft response as per members' comments.
- Officers to collate fire authority responses to the consultation on receipt
- Officers to forward the final LGA response to members of the Fire Commission.

## **3 Priorities for 2015-16**

### **Decision**

Members noted the priorities for 2015/16 agreed by the Fire Services Management Committee.

## **4 Developing the role of the fire and rescue service and the firefighter in the future**

The Chair introduced the discussion paper, which sets out the current context for fire and rescue authorities, and poses a number of questions on the future of the service.

There was a short discussion during which members made a number of comments:

- The role of the FRS is being reshaped but we should not forget the core business of a firefighter and the importance of resilience.
- As the role expands to cover the wider prevention agenda fire fighters could become National Safety Officers working with both health and the police.
- Budget constraints mean authorities cannot afford more specialist officers, every officer must have the full range of skills. Authorities

would benefit from more flexibility from national negotiating of terms and conditions.

**Action**

Officers to consult with members for their responses on the fire fighter for the 21<sup>st</sup> century

**5 The Spending Review 2015**

**Decision**

Members noted the Spending Review submission and its recommendations.

**Action**

Officers to progress as appropriate.

**6 Workforce Report - industrial relations and pensions**

Simon Pannell, LGA Negotiations, introduced the paper which informed the Fire Commission on the main industrial relations and pension issues at present.

**Decision**

Members noted the report.

**Action**

Officers to progress as appropriate.

**7 Fire Commission update paper**

**Decision**

Members noted the report.

**Action**

Officers to progress as appropriate.

**8 Notes from the previous meeting**

Members agreed the minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 June 2015.

**Appendix A -Attendance**

Chairman	Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Gloucestershire County Council
Vice-Chairman		
Deputy-chairman		
Members	Cllr Andrew Dransfield	Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority
	Cllr David McVicar	Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service
	Cllr Adrian Gulvin	Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr John Horner	Warwickshire County Council
	Cllr John Bell	Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr David Cartwright	London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA)
	Cllr Christopher Carter	Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Rebecca Knox	Dorset Fire Authority
	Cllr Maurice Heaster	London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA)
	Cllr Mark Healey	Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Richard Thake	Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Stuart Davis	West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
	Mr Adrian Busby	Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service
	Cllr Peter Harrand	West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Anthony Hedley	Essex Fire Authority
	Sir Peter Brown	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority
	Cllr John Briggs	Humberside Fire Authority
	Cllr Peter Abraham	Avon Fire Authority
	Cllr Nick Chard	Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Stuart West	Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority
	Cllr Janice Brunton	Cleveland Fire Authority
	Cllr Darrell Pulk	Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Thomas Wright	Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr David Acton	Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Michele Hodgson	County Durham and Darlington Fire & Rescue Authority
	Cllr Judith Hughes	West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Thomas Judge	Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Stef Nelson	Cheshire Fire Authority
	Cllr Val Smith	South Wales Fire Authority
	Cllr Philip Howson	East Sussex Fire Authority
	Cllr Vic Ellery	Torbay Council
	Cllr Geoff Brown	Cornwall Council
	Cllr Mike Biggin	Cheshire Fire Authority
	Cllr Brian Greenslade	Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Roger Price	Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority
	Mr Stephen Knight	Greater London Authority
Apologies	Cllr Gordon Wheeler	Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr David Barling	West Sussex County Council

Cllr Matthew Hicks	Suffolk County Council
Cllr Susan Hall	London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA)
Cllr Ann Holland	Essex Fire Authority
Cllr Kay Hammond	Surrey County Council
Cllr Peter Robinson	Lincolnshire Fire Authority
Cllr Christopher Devine	Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service
Cllr John Fort BEM	North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Authority
Cllr Len Bloomer	Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire Authority
Mr Gareth Bacon	Greater London Authority
Cllr Iain McCracken	Royal Berkshire Fire Authority
Cllr Derek Prodger MBE	Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority
Cllr Simon Spencer	Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Authority
Cllr Peter Jackson	Northumberland Council
Cllr Rodney Rose	Oxfordshire County Council
Cllr Andre Gonzalez de Savage	Northamptonshire Fire Authority
Cllr William Windsor-Clive	Gloucestershire County Council
Cllr Colin Spence	Suffolk County Council
Cllr Marian Stockdale	Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Authority
Ms Fiona Twycross	London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA)
Cllr John Joyce	Cheshire Fire Authority
Cllr Dave Hanratty	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority
Cllr Tudor Davies	South Wales Fire Authority
Cllr Barry Doughty	Cumbria County Council
Cllr Jack Hopkins	London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA)
Cllr Mohammed Idrees	West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
Cllr Dave Ledger	Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service
Cllr Linda Maloney	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority
Cllr Frank De Molfetta	Lancashire Combined Fire Authority
Cllr Miles Parkinson	Lancashire County Council
Cllr Alan Atkin	South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority
Cllr Martin Whelton	Merton London Borough Council
Cllr Jim Andrews BEM	South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority
Cllr Peter Davies	Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire Authority
Cllr Sharon Sullivan	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority
Cllr Richard Udall	Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority
Cllr Bob Carden	East Sussex Fire Authority
Cllr Terry Walker	Avon Fire Authority
Cllr Gary Haley	Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service
Cllr John Edwards	West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
Cllr Bob Price	Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service
Mr Tom Copley	London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA)
Cllr Wynne Evans	Mid and West Wales Fire Authority
Cllr Marcelle Lloyd-Hayes	Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority
Cllr Meirick Davies	North Wales Fire Authority
Cllr Phil Jordan	Isle of Wight Council
Cllr Paul Smyth	Norfolk County Council

Cllr Lucy Nethsingha

Cllr Nick Way

Cllr Zoe Patrick  
Cllr David Wood

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire  
Authority

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue  
Authority

Oxfordshire County Council

Suffolk County Council

In Attendance

LGA Officers