

Note of last Fire Services Management Committee meeting

Title: Fire Services Management Committee
Date: Friday 19 June 2020
Venue: Zoom videoconference

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A** to this note

Item	Decisions and actions
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1 **Declarations of Interest**

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

There were no apologies and no declarations of interest.

2 **Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2020 were agreed.

3 **Lead Member meeting with the Fire Minister - verbal update**

Lead Members of FSMC updated the Committee on their meeting with the Fire Minister on 8 June 2020.

They reported that it had been a positive meeting and welcomed the fact that the Minister was keen to engage with the LGA. He had reemphasised the three priorities he set out in his speech to the Fire Commission in May – people, professionalism and governance – and had talked about how these tied into the recommendations of the HMICFRS State of Fire & Rescue report. Lead Members considered that the Minister would not shy away from making tough decisions and so FSMC needed to ensure that it had robust data and evidence to back up its lobbying positions. They finished by saying that the Minister wanted to have regular meetings with them and that they were going to try and organise another one for July.

Committee members welcomed the feedback from the meeting and found it encouraging that the Minister appeared to be engaged and to want to learn about the sector. Jonny Bugg (Home Office) added that there was lots of joined up work taking place between the Minister and the Minister of State for Crime & Policing, Kit Malthouse MP, particularly over potential blue light collaboration.

Decision

Members of the Fire Services Management Committee noted the update.

4 Workforce update

The Chair invited Gill Gittins, Senior Adviser (Workforce and Negotiations) and Clair Alcock, Firefighters' Pensions Adviser to introduce the update.

Gill and Clair gave a confidential update on pay and pension issues in the sector.

Decision

Members of the Fire Services Management Committee noted the update.

5 Response to HMICFRS State of Fire & Rescue recommendations

The Chair invited Lucy Ellender, Senior Adviser, to introduce the report.

Lucy explained that the report set out the LGA's work to date on addressing the 4 recommendations set out in the HMICFRS State of Fire & Rescue report. The report contained a draft response to the new Fire Minister, who had written to FRAs asking for their views on the recommendations by the end of June.

Lucy then briefly took members through each of the recommendations in turn and the key questions on which feedback was sought.

Following the introduction, members raised the following points:

- On the code of ethics, it was considered vital that leaders and employees understood the Service vision and how their roles linked to it, and that they demonstrated ethical values and behaviours in everything they did.
- Option 17.1.3 was supported whereby services adopt a core code which could be added to depending upon local circumstances and the particular model of governance of the authority. It was stressed that one size would not fit all.
- It was suggested that the trade unions should be involved in the code of ethics discussion.
- It was suggested that the role of the firefighter should include a statutory duty to respond to flooding incidents as was the case in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This was particularly pertinent given the increased risk of flooding due to the climate emergency. Could this be added to the response to the Minister?
- It was stated that the professional view was that if a risk had been identified, the service should be open to responding regardless of whether it was a statutory duty or not.
- Members suggested that the section in the letter to the Minister on operational independence needed to be more strongly worded in defence of the key democratic role of fire authorities. There was a danger that the reforms that were really needed around culture, diversity and broadening the role of firefighters could get lost in the debate on the respective roles of senior managers and members.
- It was suggested that the response to the Minister needed to be clearer in respect of recommendations 1 and 2. As it currently stood, the response was effectively saying that neither the role of the firefighter nor the pay negotiation mechanism needed to

change, when both needed consideration.

- It was stated that the way the service had adapted its working in many parts of the country to help with Covid-19 resilience should be a model for the service moving forward. There needed to be more flexibility and diversity to the role of the firefighter with more proactive rather than reactive work.
- Roy Wilsher, NFCC Chair, said that the NFCC would be responding separately to the Minister but much of it would complement the FSMC's response. He said that the NFCC response would be highlighting the Fit for the Future work and agreed that the tripartite agreement on Covid-19 flexibility had been good for the sector. On operational independence he said that training on roles and schemes of delegation would benefit both members and officers.

Lucy thanked members for their input and said that she would incorporate their comments into the response and send it to Lead Members for final sign off.

Decision

Members noted the report and agreed the response to the Fire Minister subject to the comments raised during the debate.

Actions

Officers to amend the letter to the Fire Minister in response to the comments and submit by his deadline of 30 June 2020.

6 FSMC priorities for 2020-21

The Chair invited Mark Norris, Principal Policy Adviser, to introduce the report.

Mark said that he was seeking the Committee's views on what its main work priorities should be for the next meeting cycle – 2020/21. After reminding members of the priorities that had been set for 2019/20 Mark highlighted some areas which he considered should continue to be a focus for the coming year. These included:

- Response to the HMICFRS State of Fire & Rescue recommendations and how these tied in with the new ministerial priorities of people, professionalism and governance.
- Building safety – with both the Fire Safety and Building Safety Bills going through Parliament, this would be a crucial area.
- Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) submission. Mark added the caveat that the timing of this was not yet clear, nor whether it would be a 1 year or 3/4 year settlement.
- Workforce development.
- Transparency and standards.

Mark added a note of caution that there was still a great deal of uncertainty with Covid-19 and so any work on 'business as usual' priorities may have to be put on hold at short notice if there was a second peak of

the virus and subsequent lockdown.

Following the introduction, members raised the following points:

- Members considered that it was important to include another workstream on learning from Covid-19 as there had been many examples of excellent joint working, particularly around people and culture, that could be taken forward. It was suggested that this should happen proactively and at pace, ahead of any HMICFRS process, and that the NFCC needed to be involved. Roy Wilsher confirmed that the NFCC had established a Covid-19 committee to look at national learning from the crisis and this was being led by Andy Bell, Assistant Commissioner of the London Fire Brigade. He said that he would ensure that this linked into any work that the LGA did.
- It was suggested that the priority on addressing the State of Fire & Rescue recommendations should be widened out to include responding to all inspection/review/inquiry recommendations.
- On the CSR, Jonny Bugg reported that the Senior Sector Group was being reconvened due to the possibility that the CSR may take place in late Summer/early Autumn.

Mark thanked members for their feedback and said that it would be incorporated into a revised and more detailed work plan that would be brought to FSMC Lead Members, the Fire Commission on 25 September and FSMC on 16 October.

Decision

Members of the Fire Services Management Committee agreed the broad priorities for 2020-21 set out in the report and requested that a further 'response to Covid-19' workstream be added. Members agreed the next steps set out in paragraph 23.

7 FSMC End of Year Report 2019-20

The End of Year Report was agreed without discussion.

Decision

Members of the Fire Services Management Committee noted the achievements against the 2019/20 priorities.

8 Building safety update

The Chair invited Charles Loft, Senior Adviser, to introduce the update.

Charles explained that there were two separate reports for members to consider. The first was the standard building safety update and the second - on the supplemental agenda - was on developments with the Fire Protection Board.

On the first paper, Charles reported that the Fire Safety Bill had now passed its second reading in the House of Commons and the LGA was

hoping to be able to promote some amendments to reflect the concerns laid out in paragraph 27 of the report. Officers were shortly meeting with the Shadow spokesperson to discuss whether they would table these during the Bill's committee stages.

On the supplemental paper, Charles said that subsequent to the main FSMC agenda being sent out, the Fire Protection Board (FPB) had written to CFOs about its programme of work to increase the pace of inspection across all high-rise residential buildings (appended to the report). At the last FPB meeting, the LGA had requested that the question set in the Technical Guide include a question on whether the building was a large panel system (LPS) building, but this hadn't been agreed by the Board. Charles therefore said that he was recommending that the FSMC Chair write to all FRAs outlining the concerns with LPS buildings outlined in the report.

Following the introduction, the following points were raised:

- Roy Wilsher (NFCC) and Andy Roe (London Fire Brigade) said that they understood the LGA's concerns about LPS buildings but expressed their position that this was a building safety issue and there wasn't sufficient construction expertise within fire services to be able to identify risks. LPS was just one of many building safety risks facing services and they had limited resources to address them all. They therefore felt that writing to FRA's would be counterproductive. In response, Charles agreed that whilst the long-term solution lay within the Building Safety Bill, this was still a long way off being enacted and, in the meantime, he believed that the LGA had a duty to raise their concerns with FRAs in case a fire broke out in an LPS building in their area. He added that many building owners would not be aware of the issues with LPS. Charles offered to share a draft of the letter with the NFCC before sending it out and it was suggested that this be discussed at the meeting of the FPB taking place the following week. This was agreed.
- It was suggested that the LPS issue was part of a wider problem that started with weaknesses in the building control and planning processes. Fire services should be a mandatory consultee on planning applications and sprinklers should be mandatory in buildings housing vulnerable people, regardless of height. Charles said that he was optimistic about the involvement of fire services in the planning process and the new building safety regulator would also become a statutory consultee.
- Concern was expressed that, in the light of the National Audit Office criticism that the remediation of dangerous cladding was moving too slowly, the construction industry was using the Covid-19 crisis to row back on its commitments.

Decision

Members of the Fire Services Management Committee noted the Building Safety Update and agreed that the Chair write to Fire & Rescue Authority Chairs, Fire & Rescue Portfolio Holders and Police, Fire & Crime Commissioners, outlining the LGA's concerns around Large Panel System (LPS) buildings.

Actions

LGA officers to share draft letter with NFCC and FSMC Lead Members before sending off.

9 National Fire Chiefs Council update

The Chair invited Roy Wilsher, Chair NFCC, to introduce the update.

Roy highlighted two points from the report:

1. The Emergency Services End Point Assessment project that had been launched. Roy said that they were looking to build a register of both assessors and prospective apprentices but it was good that apprenticeship levy money was being used within the sector.
2. Data programmes. The aim was to get data ready for the sector for use for example in the current Comprehensive Spending Review round.

Following the introduction, members raised the following points:

- Did the leadership project mentioned in paragraph 1.39 link in with other public sector partners? Roy confirmed that it did.
- Was use of UPRN as a location tool going to be standardised across the country to ensure interoperability? Roy said that UPRN would help with data on buildings but it would be complementary to What3Words rather than a replacement.

Decision

Members of the Fire Services Management Committee noted the update.

10 Fire Standards Board update

Members noted the update without discussion.

Decision

Members of the Fire Services Management Committee noted the update.

11 FSMC update

The Chair invited Jess Norman to introduce the update.

Jess drew members attention to the proposal in paragraph 7 of the report to bring a further paper to the Committee in the autumn about the use of the resources available to support the sector's Spending Review work.

The accuracy of the data on additional fire services work outlined in the report was queried. Roy Wilsher said that the data came directly from FRS's before the agenda was issued and was believed to be accurate at that time.

Decision

Members of the Fire Services Management Committee noted the report and endorsed the proposal in paragraph 7.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chair	Cllr Ian Stephens	Isle of Wight Council
Vice-Chair	Ms Fiona Twycross AM	Greater London Authority
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Nick Chard	Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Keith Aspden	North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service
Members	Cllr Eric Carter	Shropshire and Telford Fire & Rescue Authority
	Cllr Mark Healey MBE	Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority
	Mr Roger Hirst	Essex Police Fire & Crime Commissioner
	Cllr Rebecca Knox	Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Nikki Hennessy	Lancashire Fire & Rescue Authority
	Cllr Karen Kilgour	Tyne & Wear Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Les Byrom CBE	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Carolyn Lambert	East Sussex Fire Authority
	Cllr Cleo Lake	Avon Fire & Rescue Authority
Apologies	Cllr Michael Payne	Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire Authority
In Attendance	Cllr David Norman	Gloucestershire County Council