

Note of last Fire Services Management Committee meeting (Confidential)

Title: Fire Services Management Committee
Date: Friday 15 October 2021
Venue: Victoria Room, 18 Smith Square, and online via Teams

Attendance

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

Item	Decisions and actions
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1 Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest

The Vice-Chair, Fiona Twycross, welcomed members to the meeting and explained that she was deputising for Cllr Stephens who had unfortunately contracted Covid and was not able to join. Members wished Cllr Stephens a speedy recovery.

In particular, the Vice-Chair welcomed the new members of the Committee and thanked those who had stood down for all their hard work.

Apologies were received from Cllr Ian Stephens (sub - Cllr Luke Frost)

There were no declarations of interest.

2 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 July 2021

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 July 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.

3 FSMC Membership, Terms of Reference and Outside Bodies - 2021-22

The Vice-Chair explained that as this was the first meeting of the new LGA year, the Committee was being asked to agree its new membership, Terms of Reference and appointments to outside bodies.

Members comments and questions:

- It was agreed to delegate the finalisation of outside body appointments to Lead Members outside of the meeting.
- Further information about the on-call steering group was sought as it had not met in the last 2 years. It was considered important that there was continued LGA input into this important issue. Mark Hardingham, NFCC Chair, agreed to look into it and report back to LGA officers in the first instance.

Decision:

Fire Services Management Committee:
1. **agreed** its Terms of Reference;

2. formally **noted** the membership for 2021/22;
3. **noted** the future meeting dates for 2021/22;
4. **agreed** to delegate the Board's nominations to outside bodies to the Lead Members;

Actions:

- Lead Members to agree final nominations to the outside bodies in Appendix D.

4 FSMC Priorities for 2021-22

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

Lucy presented the proposed key priorities as set out in the paper and explained that they had been shaped by the discussion at Fire Commission on 24 September 2021. They broadly reflected the priorities in the revised LGA Business Plan but would also need to take account of the forthcoming Fire Reform White Paper.

Following the introduction, members raised the following points:

- Issues around the planning system were raised as concerns and were requested to be added to the work plan. In particular, that FRSs should be statutory consultees on all major new developments, developer contributions to fire/building safety and the ongoing concerns around fire safety in Permitted Development conversions. In addition, that new developments on the outskirts of larger conurbations had an impact on the FRSs from those conurbations but didn't provide any financial contribution. Lucy said that she would talk to policy colleagues who worked on the Economy, Environment, Housing & Transport Board on planning reform and feed members concerns on fire safety into those discussions. The fact that the Minister sat within both the Home Office and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities should facilitate joint working in this area.
- The work around equality, diversity and inclusion was strongly welcomed and members wanted this to continue and be expanded to reach more people.
- How would FSMC link into the work of the Safer & Stronger Communities Board on the Covid response, in particular the learning from the tripartite agreements? Mark Norris, Principal Policy Adviser, assured members that he would be feeding the experiences of the fire sector into the wider SSCB discussions on Covid.
- Was there any work taking place to bring together best practice examples in FRSs on reducing carbon emissions and responding to climate change? Lucy reminded members of the LGA's policy document on climate change that had been launched at the Fire Conference in 2020. This could be reviewed and updated with new best practice examples where appropriate.
- Members considered that it was important for all governance types to be represented in LGA discussions around the response to the Fire Reform White Paper. Lucy said that it was a matter for members to determine the make-up of the governance working group.

Decision:

- Fire Services Management Committee **endorsed** the proposed priorities, subject to the comments raised during the meeting.

Action:

- Officers to draft work plan for the year 2021-22 based on the agreed priorities.

5 LGA Fire Conference 2022

The Vice-Chair invited Catriona Coyle, Events Manager, to introduce the report.

Catriona explained that the 2021 booking of the Newcastle Gateshead Hilton Hotel had been held over with 2 potential sets of dates – 14-16 or 28-30 March 2022. Her recommendation was that the conference be held in person, subject to further covid restrictions not being introduced nearer the time.

Decision:

Fire Services Management Committee **agreed** that the LGA Fire Conference 2022 should take place in person at the Newcastle Gateshead Hilton Hotel between 14-16 March and that officers should investigate options for livestreaming some of the sessions.

6 HMICFRS - An introduction from Roy Wilsher

The Vice-Chair invited Roy Wilsher, HM Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services, to deliver his presentation.

Roy set out the approach of HMICFRS to the inspection process and advised members that they would be continuing with the hybrid, part virtual, part in-person approach that had worked well over the period of covid restrictions. Between February and August 2021, 13 services had been inspected as the first tranche of the second round of inspections.

Roy advised that the first tranche inspection reports and the annual State of Fire and Rescue Services report would be published in December 2021. He then ran through the main headline findings from the first tranche. Positive steps for improvements included:

- Prioritisation of protection
- Preparation for routine and major incidents
- Promotion of values
- Prioritisation of staff wellbeing and health and safety

But too many services had failed to make progress on:

- Areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection
- Prevention work
- Actual improvements in equality, diversity and inclusion

Roy then spoke about the important role of FRAs in driving continuous improvement in their services and said that they had found examples of where this was working well, and also some where FRAs were losing sight of what needed to be done. It was important to learn from the best examples.

Finally, Roy advised members that the second round of inspections would conclude towards the end of 2022 and that planning for the third round had already begun. He emphasised the important role of the expert reference group in developing future inspections.

Members comments and questions:

- Members felt that there was a fine balance between the benefits of inspection to FRSs and the cost to the sector of the process itself. Did Roy have any views on this? Roy agreed that a balance needed to be struck and there was no point in doing inspection for the sake of it. Inspection needed to have measurable

benefits.

- How would HMICFRS evidence changes to the values and behaviours being demonstrated in FRSs and the impact of the new core Code of Ethics? Laura Gibb, Portfolio Director – HMICFRS, said that workforce surveys were very important in demonstrating behaviour change and giving staff safe spaces to talk. There was huge progress so far from the round 1 inspections but still room for improvement. The new Code had had a big impact. Laura added that they had heard evidence that services were strong on the big ideas around EDI, producing strategies etc., but that were often still not getting the basics, such as recruitment and retention of staff, right
- Were LGA peer reviews of FRAs still taking place? Lucy Ellender said that face to face peer challenges had stopped during Covid but discussions were taking place with improvement colleagues and the NFCC about how to move this forward. This could be brought to a future FSMC meeting for members' information. Mark Hardingham, NFCC Chair, added that CFO Kath Billing was the lead for peer reviews at NFCC and had been involved in the discussions with the LGA.
- Fire Services Management Committee **noted** the presentation.

Action:

- Officers to bring further information on peer reviews to future meeting of FSMC.

7 Building Safety funding

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

Charles updated members on developments around fire and building safety since the previous meeting.

There followed a confidential discussion on building safety funding.

Decisions:

Fire Services Management Committee **agreed** the next steps laid out in paragraph 23 of the report.

Actions:

Members to report back the results of any individual Government lobbying to LGA officers.

8 Workforce update

The Vice-Chair invited Gill Gittins, Senior Adviser Workforce & Negotiations and Claire Hey, Senior Fire Pensions Adviser, to introduce the update.

Gill reported that the LGA (representing FRAs) and the Fire Brigades Union had reached agreement on an Immediate Detriment Framework and Memorandum of Understanding on 8 October 2021 and this was announced to FRAs in a joint statement. It was hoped that the Framework would provide a consistent approach to Immediate Detriment cases across the fire and rescue service and should remove the risk of further legal action. FRAs were therefore being encouraged to adopt the Framework.

Gill reported that officers had again formally written to the 4 UK Governments on behalf of FRAs arguing that any costs arising from the 2015 pension scheme transitional

arrangements discrimination cases should be met by the Governments, not FRAs. Costs relating to the Framework would be added to any new burdens funding type applications if an alternative solution was not forthcoming.

Decision:

Fire Services Management Committee **noted** the update.

9 National Fire Chiefs Council update

The Vice-Chair invited Mark Hardingham, NFCC Chair, to introduce the update.

Mark updated members on progress with the Direct Entry employment scheme which was being led by CFOs Rod Hammerton and Dawn Whittaker at the NFCC.

Mark stressed at the outset that direct entry already happened in services in a range of forms, for example, there were a number of current CFOs who had not come from a uniformed background. However, the current Direct Entry scheme had launched in February 2020 and was specifically designed to increase diversity and experience in middle and senior management roles, and was based on experience of other Direct Entry schemes, for example in the Police and military. The scheme operated at 2 levels – Station Manager and Area Manager, with 12 recruits per year for each. For a ‘gold standard’ Direct Entry scheme the costs had been calculated at around £5 million for the first 4 years but other, less costly options, were being developed. Significant sums of money were not being committed at this stage until the Spending Review and Fire Reform White Paper had been published as these could both alter the landscape.

Members comments and questions:

- Members expressed their support for the principle of direct entry but queried the lead-in time for getting fully-trained staff in? Mark said that it took 12 months to successfully bring a new employee into post.
- Had there been any push-back from existing employees? Mark said that there were a range of views at various levels of the service structure. However, the NFCC and others needed to be very clear about the benefits of Direct Entry and to emphasise that it didn’t replace other more traditional routes into those jobs. Jonny Bugg, Deputy Director at the Home Office added that they were very supportive of the scheme and urged services to make use of it.

Decision:

Fire Services Management Committee **noted** the update.

10 Fire Standards Board update

Decision:

Fire Services Management Committee **noted** the update.

11 FSMC update

The Vice-Chair invited Rachael Aldridge, Policy Adviser, to introduce the update.

Rachael drew members attention to the final Governance & Leadership workshop taking place on 9 November 2021 and to the Fit for the Future strategic workshops taking place on 22 and 27 October. She urged members to share the details of the Governance & Leadership workshop more widely with their FRAs as it was open to all.

Decision:

Fire Services Management Committee **noted** the update.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Vice-Chair	Dr Fiona Twycross	Greater London Authority
Deputy-Chair	Cllr Nick Chard	Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority
Deputy-Chair	Cllr Keith Aspden	North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service
Members	Cllr Eric Carter	Shropshire and Wrekin Fire & Rescue Authority
	Cllr Mark Healey MBE	Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority
	Mr Roger Hirst	Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex
	Cllr Rebecca Knox	Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service
	Cllr Nikki Hennessy	Lancashire Combined Fire Authority
	Cllr Greg Brackenridge	West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Carl Johnson	Tyne & Wear Fire & Rescue Authority
	Cllr Leigh Redman	Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority
Substitute	Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Gloucestershire County Council
	Cllr Frank Biederman	Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority
Apologies	Cllr Luke Frost	Cleveland Fire Authority
In Attendance	Cllr Ian Stephens	Isle of Wight Council
	Cllr Nigel Smith	North Wales Fire & Rescue Authority
	Cllr Les Byrom CBE	Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority
	Mark Hardingham	NFCC
	HMI Roy Wilsher (for item 6)	HMICFRS
	Laura Gibb (for item 6)	HMICFRS
LGA Officers	Cllr John Briggs	Humberside Fire & Rescue Authority
	Niall McKiniry	Humberside FRS
	Mark Norris	Principal Policy Adviser
	Lucy Ellender	Senior Adviser
	Charles Loft	Senior Adviser
	Gill Gittins	Senior Adviser Workforce & Negotiations
	Claire Hey	Senior Fire Pensions Adviser
Catriona Coyle (for item 5)	Events Manager	
Rachael Aldridge	Policy Adviser	



Jonathan Bryant

Member Services Officer