

Note of last Fire Services Management Committee meeting

Title: Fire Services Management Committee
Date: Monday 14 March 2022
Venue: Hilton Hotel Newcastle-Gateshead and online via Teams

Attendance

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

Item Decisions and actions

1 Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllr Carl Johnson (sub Cllr Les Byrom CBE)

There were no declarations of interest.

2 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 December 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.

3 Efficiency and Productivity

The Chair invited Lucy Ellender, LGA Senior Adviser, and Deputy CFO Phil Shillito, NFCC, to introduce the report.

Lucy informed members that current workstream around improving productivity and efficiency in the sector was borne out of the joint LGA/NFCC 2021 Spending Review submission and included the establishment of a Productivity & Efficiency Forum, chaired by the Home Office and including membership from NFCC, the LGA and HMICFRS. The Terms of Reference for the Forum were agreed at its meeting in January 2022 and are appended to the main report.

Phil described the two areas of work that the NFCC was directly involved in – (i) collation and review of current NFCC/LGA projects related to efficiency and productivity; and (ii) a data review to ascertain what further evidence is required to measure efficiency and productivity. Examples of current projects to improve productivity and efficiency, including on duty shift systems, centralised procurement and the Community Risk Programme, were described.

Phil reported that a workshop had been held on 23 February 2022 for stakeholders from across the sector to share learning and good practice,

and agree how existing data and evidence could be used to track progress against the Spending Review commitments. The outputs from this workshop would be reported back to the Forum for consideration.

Members' comments and questions:

- As part of this work, it was considered important to differentiate between the particular requirements of different services – e.g. rural vs urban. Phil confirmed that this was very much a part of the programme and the NFCC had been clear with the Home Office that this couldn't be a one size fits all approach.
- Possible changes to duty shift systems, and on-call in particular, were raised as a concern by members. It was considered to be important that the LGA be involved in this work alongside the NFCC in order to input the FRA perspective. Mark Hardingham, NFCC Chair, said that two new joint leads for on-call work had just started and he would be meeting with them shortly to discuss the programme going forward. As part of this, they would discuss how members could best be engaged in the structures decided upon. Phil added that the current piece of work around productivity and efficiency was limited to full-time staff, with on-call coming further down the line.
- There was a discussion about the meaning and implications of the proposed 3% and 2% increases in productivity and efficiency respectively. Some members expressed concern that targets were Treasury-led and that it should be down to individual FRAs to determine their own productivity and efficiency targets. On the other hand, it was argued that without improvements in productivity and efficiency, it became very difficult to justify increased investment in services. Phil confirmed that the efficiency target broadly related to areas such as full-time firefighter salaries and centralised procurement, with savings being reinvested into the service. On productivity, work was being done with HMICFRS to establish a baseline against which productivity increases could be measured. These could relate to areas such as improved technology or more training, and scope for increased productivity would likely vary between different FRSs.

Decision:

FSMC **noted** the report and **endorsed** the proposed way forward subject to the comments made by members in the discussion.

4 Building Safety Bill and Improvement Update

The Chair invited Mark Norris, Principal Policy Adviser, and CFO Gavin Tomlinson, Fire Safety Lead for the NFCC, to introduce the report.

Gavin delivered a presentation on the catalysts for the Government's proposed reforms to the building safety regime and the implications of the measures contained in the Building Safety Bill for FRSs across the country. In particular, the concerns of both the NFCC and LGA were outlined that there would not be enough resources available for FRAs to fulfil both their obligations under the new Bill and also their obligations under local Integrated Risk Management Plans. This lack of resource was both financial and also tied to the supply of trained personnel required to

fulfil the workload. In addition, secondary legislation would be required before services could recover their costs from the Regulator. The new Bill is expected to receive Royal Assent by the Spring/Summer of 2022 with commencement of the new Regulator following 12-18 months later.

The NFCC's work had identified the following key issues for the sector in England:

- 240-250 additional fire engineer roles required to deliver on the Bill
- £40m funding gap over next 3 years, with DLUHC likely only funding half of this
- Just 1 year before Gateways 2 and 3 come in
- Fire Safety Act 2021 – most Fire Risk Assessments will need revising to take into account external walls and common parts of residential buildings
- Additional work needed around the large number of Medium Rise Residential Buildings

Members' comments and questions:

- Concern was expressed about the funding / resource gap resulting from the new burdens placed by the Bill. This should be flagged up as a significant risk for most FRAs moving forward and could have a detrimental impact on their capacity to undertake current IRMP work. What more could the LGA and NFCC do to be more proactive in getting Government to acknowledge the problem and provide adequate funding? Mark Hardingham said that all these concerns had been aired with the Home Office and DLUHC at the monthly Fire Protection Board meetings. The NFCC had been asked to provide a business case for what could be provided with less funding and this had been presented to DLUHC. DLUHC was still yet to confirm the final amount of money available and so it would be important to continue to lobby jointly to press for full reimbursement of the new burdens. Mark Norris added that there was scope for further engagement and lobbying at ministerial level but, given the confidential source of some of the data, it was not considered wise to raise the issue publicly at this stage.
- There was considered to be a wider skills issue across the sector that needed to be addressed. This included the loss of highly experienced trained staff to the private sector, and also the capacity in the system to train the required number of staff in time for the new Regulator. Mark Hardingham acknowledged that the investment in protection services post Grenfell had made staff significantly more marketable and the workforce was now more mobile than it had ever been. This was also set against a background of reduced numbers of inspecting officers in the 10 years pre-Grenfell. However, work was being done by the NFCC to try and improve productivity and efficiency in the workforce to try and bridge some of the gap. But the expectation was that the burden would not be fully funded.
- Were FRSs generally behind on inspection work even prior to the introduction of the new Regulator?

Decision:

FSMC **noted** the report and presentation, and the implications for FRAs of the situation outlined.

5 Fit for the Future

Members had a confidential discussion on Fit for the Future.

Decision:

FSMC:

- 1) **Approved** the direction within the document for updating Fit for the Future, as well as the proposals for two complimentary but separate documents.
- 2) **Noted** the anticipated delivery timetable for approval of the new draft of Fit for the Future of Spring 2022.

6 Fire Conference agenda

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

Lucy updated members on the detail of the conference agenda for the 15/16 March. She confirmed that there were approximately 200 delegates signed up to attend which was only slightly less than previous years.

Decision:

FSMC **noted** the update.

7 Building Safety update

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

Mark explained that the report covered two main areas: (i) remediation progress; and (ii) the Government's reform agenda, including the issues discussed in item 4. He highlighted the fact that the Fire Safety Act and was now expected to commence sometime during April 2022, with the regulations implementing the Grenfell Tower Inquiry phase 1 recommendations following on – possibly in October 2022.

Decision:

FSMC **noted** the update.

8 Workforce update

The Chair invited Gill Gittins, Senior Adviser (workforce and negotiations) and Claire Hey, Senior Fire Pensions Adviser, to introduce the update. Gill indicated that they were happy to take questions on the report.

Clarification was sought on paragraph 13 of the report around which costs arising out of the Sargeant age discrimination pensions claims would be

reimbursed by the Home Office. Gill confirmed that there had never been a guarantee that costs arising from the Sargeant age discrimination legal judgment would be covered by government. However, the paragraph referred in particular to those immediate detriment costs which fall outside of the pension account.

Decision:

FSMC **noted** the update.

9 National Fire Chiefs Council update

The Chair invited Mark Hardingham, NFCC Chair, to introduce the update. Mark indicated that he was happy to take questions from members on the report.

Further details of the new JESIP Ministerial Oversight Board were requested. Mark welcomed the ministerial involvement in this area and confirmed that the Board had only met once so far. It would be chaired by a minister on a rotating basis. Mark Norris confirmed that he had attended the first meeting on behalf of the LGA. The Chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board had been the proposed LGA member representative, but Mark suggested that it would be more appropriate for one of the FSMC Lead Members to attend in future, given the direction the Board was likely to take. This was agreed.

Decision:

FSMC **noted** the update.

Action:

Agree FSMC Lead Member representation on the JESIP Ministerial Oversight Board.

10 Fire Standards Board update

The Chair invited Cllr Nick Chard and Mark Hardingham to introduce the update. Mark indicated that they were happy to take questions on the report.

Decision:

FSMC **noted** the update without discussion.

11 FSMC update

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

Lucy highlighted the update in the report on the Government's review of the role of Police & Crime Commissioners. Roger Hirst clarified that there were currently two consultations out and encouraged members to contribute to both.

Members' comments and questions:

- Officers confirmed that there was still no publication date for the Fire Reform White Paper and the reasons for, and implications of, this were discussed.
- Had the LGA taken a position on recall of PFCCs as outlined in the written Ministerial Statement? Mark Norris agreed to check on this.
- Clarification was sought on the strengthening of Police and Crime Panels, and the possibility of regional panels. Mark Norris confirmed that discussions had taken place at the Safer & Stronger Communities Board on this, including with the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, and neither organisation was supportive of the Government's proposals in this area. PCPs themselves were also opposed to the move to regionalisation. This could be brought back to a future FSMC meeting for further discussion.

Decision:

FSMC **noted** the update.

Actions:

- Check on LGA position on PFCC recall.
- Schedule discussion on PCPs at future FSMC

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chair	Cllr Ian Stephens	Isle of Wight Council
Vice-Chair	Dr Fiona Twycross	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 Wrekin Fire 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 Leigh Redman	Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority
	Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Gloucestershire County Council
	Cllr Frank Biederman	Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority
Apologies	Cllr Carl Johnson	North Tyneside Council
In Attendance	Cllr Roger Price	Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Authority
	Cllr Carolyn Lambert	East Sussex Fire Authority
	Cllr Les Byrom CBE	Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority
	Cllr Luke Frost	Cleveland Fire & Rescue Authority

Mark Hardingham	NFCC
Phil Shillito	NFCC
Gavin Tomlinson	NFCC

LGA Officers

Mark Norris	
Lucy Ellender	
Gill Gittins	
Charles Loft	
Claire Hey	
Jordanne McKenzie-	
Blythe	
Emily McGuinness	
Claire Johnson	
Jonathan Bryant	