

Minutes of last Fire Commission meeting

Fire Commission

Friday, 14 October 2022

Hybrid Meeting - 18 Smith Square and Online

Attendance

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

| Item | Decisions and actions |
|------|-----------------------|
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1 Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of interest

The new Chair welcomed members to the meeting and introduced himself.

Apologies were received from Cllr Carolyn Lambert, Cllr Darren O'Donovan, Cllr Dave Norman, Cllr Duncan Crow, Cllr Brenda Massey, Cllr Andy Crump, Cllr Morris Bright, Cllr Brian Kenny, Cllr Nikki Hennessey, Cllr Cal Corkery and Paul Fell.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 June 2022

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 June 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

3 Home Office - verbal update

Jonny Bugg (JB), Head of the Fire Strategy and Reform Unit at the Home Office, introduced a short recorded message from the new Fire Minister – Jeremy Quin MP. In this, the Minister confirmed (a) that the Home Office would not be financially supporting a new pay offer to help resolve the dispute with the FBU; and (b) that a response to the consultation on the Fire Reform White Paper would be published before the end of 2022. The Chair thanked the Minister on behalf of the Fire Commission.

Members' comments and questions:

- Members felt it was disappointing that the Minister had not been able to find the time to attend the meeting in person. JB apologised on behalf of the Minister and added in his defence that his sole focus to date during his short time in the role had been on leading on facilitating the arrangements for HM the Queen's funeral. He added that the Minister had committed to address the LGA Fire Conference in March 2023. In addition, being a Minister of State in

the House of Commons should give more influence with other Government departments

- Disappointment was expressed at the Minister's decision not to intervene financially in the pay dispute. More generally, the view was expressed that fire had always been a 'cinderella' service when it came to Government funding and the new Minister's praise and admiration for the fire service should be backed up by increased investment. The split in responsibility and funding between the Home Office and DLUHC was not considered helpful in this respect. JB responded that the Minister had concluded early on that it was not appropriate for the Home Office to intervene in a pay dispute given the current NJC mechanism. He added that the Home Office had a good record in terms of getting funding from the Treasury although clearly, serious conversations were needed about the future.
- There were aspects of the White Paper, such as operational independence, which the sector could get on with implementing without waiting for the Government response. Others, such as governance, would be more challenging but the LGA should continue to work with the Home Office to find the best solution.

4 Resilience and Climate Change

The Chair invited CFO Ben Brook (BB), Warwickshire FRS and NFCC Climate Change lead, to give his presentation.

BB informed members of the NFCC's approach to Environment, Climate Change and Sustainability, particularly in relation to the large number of wildfires that hit the country during the Summer. BB set out both the legal and moral/ethical duties on the fire sector to act in relation to contributing to the UK's net zero target.

BB reported that there had been 976 wildfires in the UK so far this year related to the record high temperatures - a huge increase on previous years. Flooding events were also becoming more frequent with the changing climate. BB argued that climate change was an emerging and growing risk that needed to be taken into account by FRSs in their Community Risk Management Plans. This also needed to be reflected in emerging Fire Standards and in the Fit for the Future document.

BB talked about the toolkit that was being developed by the NFCC to help FRSs to understand the future risks and how to be best prepared to tackle them. He appealed to members to send him any examples of good practice in this field that could be included as part of the toolkit. It was hoped that the toolkit would be ready for use within the next 6 months and following that, a process of evaluation and stakeholder feedback would take place.

Members' comments and questions:

- Further detail was sought on the grant funding available to FRAs to increase their sustainability. BB said that he was working with a successful bidder to develop best practice that would be included

in the toolkit.

- The sheer pace of climate change impacts was raised and whether services could be prepared for the impacts in an increasingly short timeframe. Had the NFCC been working with colleagues internationally who might be further down the line in terms of impacts than the UK? BB said that the use of data for predicting extreme events needed to be improved, with more emphasis on prevention. The Climate Change Committee was due to release a report on wildfires in the near future which would be very helpful. The NFCC lead on wildfires, Paul Headley, would be attending the FSMC meeting in December to talk about his work. NFCC were engaged closely with the Metro Fire Chiefs in the US, AFAC in Australia & New Zealand and FEU in Europe.
- What more could the sector be doing to join up and capture all the data on wildfires and other events in order to build a case to put to the Home Office for greater resourcing? BB said that the NFCC was leading on debrief sessions following the Summer's wildfires and this would feed into further discussions with Government. This would also support the NFCC's project on the Economic and Social Impact of Fire & Rescue.
- The point was made that wildfires were often started by people's behaviour resulting from a lack of understanding of the risks. Whilst this has clearly been exacerbated by climate change, links needed to be made to education and overcoming 'psychological distance'.
- The importance of joining up with the devolved administrations over flooding prevention work and general catchment management was emphasised, particularly in relation to the River Severn. BB agreed that the discussions needed to be more wide-ranging than just wildfires and to take into account less well-known issues such as the impact of soil degradation on buildings.
- The Chair of Cheshire FRA outlined some of the actions they were already taking in relation to climate change, including building the first zero carbon fire station in the country. Early sight of some of the data in the toolkit was requested in order to further help planning. BB agreed to share this with the CFO.
- What more could be done to make things under the direct control of FRAs, such as buildings and vehicles, more sustainable? BB said that the NFCC was working to ensure that climate change preparation was embedded in all their work strands, including property, procurement etc.
- Members asked if the statistics from the presentation could be shared. BB agreed.

Decision:

Fire Commission **noted** the presentation.

Action:

BB to share wildfire statistics with LGA colleagues for circulation.

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

CL briefly updated members on LGA activity since the previous Fire Commission meeting. Officers had continued to monitor the progress of the Building Safety Act's implementation and had planned related improvement work for FRAs. A response to the Emergency Evacuation Information Sharing (EEIS) consultation had been submitted and more specifically, concern expressed about the potential transfer of liability from responsible persons to the fire service.

CL then introduced Sandra Tomlinson (ST) and James Tancred (JT) from the Health & Safety Executive to give members an update on the new Building Safety Regulator (BSR).

ST and JT gave a presentation on the new Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDT), comprising the BSR, local authorities and FRAs, and how they would jointly deliver building control and building assessment certification under the new regime. This had been a key recommendation of the Hackitt Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety in the wake of the Grenfell tragedy. Each of the partner regulators would be reimbursed for their work within the MDTs with the NFCC setting the rates. The processes for both Building Control applications and In-Occupation Building Assessment Certificate applications were outlined. FRAs and local authorities would also retain their regulatory role under the Fire Safety and Housing Acts. The BSR was developing Memorandums of Understanding with FRAs and local authorities and also producing a National Framework Document that would set out in detail roles and responsibilities and the expectations of the BSR. Finally, the timeline for implementation of the new regime was presented.

Members' comments and questions:

- In response to a question about the strengthening of post-Grenfell regulation, ST confirmed that, as well as new high-rise buildings, the new regime applied to any works to existing buildings that would have to go through building regulations. As part of the new Gateway process, no works could begin on site until design approval had been achieved. Bringing FRSs into the MDTs would strengthen the voice of the fire sector in the process.
- Clarification was sought on the role of the new statutory resident panel. ST said that an interim panel was set up in December 2021 and that the final panel would be put in place by December 2022. She agreed to provide a further update to members following the meeting.
- Concern was expressed about the potential for the new regime to slow down the planning process, particularly in relation to new build housing. ST said that the Gateway 1 process had been in place now since August 2021 and the HSE was using that to advise of any potential building safety issues with projects moving forward. It was hoped that this would save time down the line when the building control regulator regime came into force.
- Members requested that the slides from the presentation be shared. ST agreed to this request.

Decision:

Fire Commission **noted** the presentation and update.

Actions:

HSE to provide copy of presentation slides and further update on resident panel.

6 Economic and Social Value of the UK Fire & Rescue Service

The Chair invited Assistant CFO Dan Quinn Shropshire FRS, and NFCC project lead to deliver his presentation.

DQ gave members a brief overview of the NFCC's Economic and Social Value of the UK FRS project, which aims, for the first time, to put a monetary value to the services provided by fire and rescue services in the UK. This will help negotiations around funding nationally, and also at a local level to allow FRS's to direct resources to the most beneficial activities. The final report was officially launched at the NFCC Autumn Conference. The initial report covered English FRS's with a further phase 2 report covering the whole of the UK. The digital tool for individual FRSs would be launched towards the end of 2022.

DQ reported that over the period 2016/17 – 2018/19 the model estimated that the value of saved property due to FRS intervention was £4.45bn per annum and the value of saved lives was £5.35bn per annum. There were also significant savings from water rescue, making environments safe, clearing spills and leaks, medical assistance and extrications. For every £1 spent on the Fire and Rescue Service there was £6.17 saved. DQ finished by saying that this was an ongoing project and he looked forward to further data and improvements from services to fine tune the model.

Members' comments and questions:

- Some of FRSs' work around prevention and protection – e.g. drowning prevention education work – is difficult to quantify. How could this be taken into account as part of the model? DQ said that they had done the best they could with the data currently available but this kind of activity had been identified as an area where more work was necessary in order to more accurately quantify the benefits. Work was currently taking place across the NFCC, for example through evaluation of the Community Risk Programme to try and address any gaps or shortfalls.
- Had the Home Office been made aware of this project and its implications in terms of resourcing the sector? DQ confirmed that they had held discussions with the Home Office team that was looking into the economic cost of fire around some of the methodology used in the model. DQ would be holding a workshop session at the LGA Fire Conference in March 2023 and was happy to present to any audience that members felt might be helpful.

Decision:

Fire Commission **noted** the presentation.

7 Fire Commission and FSMC priorities 2022-23

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

LE briefly outlined the work priorities for 2022-23 that had been agreed by the Fire Services Management on 23 September. This included the addition of two new priorities from those agreed for 2021-22 – Sector-Led Improvement and Climate Change.

Decision:

Fire Commission **noted** the report.

8 Workforce update

The Chair invited Gill Gittins (GG), Senior Adviser (Workforce and Negotiations) and Claire Hey (CH), Senior Fire Pensions Adviser, to introduce the update.

CH reported that since the update had been written, the proposed remedy hearing to assess injury to feelings awards had been vacated to enable all parties to negotiate a settlement. This applied only to claims bought by the FBU. The Government had confirmed that it would be covering the cost of these claims on the basis that funding would be provided to FRAs before they would be required to make any payments. The LGA would be persisting with its representations to Government that they must fund all other costs arising from the Sargeant discrimination case.

GG reported that in relation to the FBU's postal ballot, referred to in para 40 of the report, the timetable had now been pushed back, although it was not known by how much. In relation to para 41 of the report, updated FAQs and a template letter had been completed and were available for FRAs to use in local communications with their workforce to reflect local circumstances.

In relation to previous comments made during agenda item 3 by the Minister and Home Office representative, GG reminded members that recommendations from pay review bodies were often not accompanied by additional funding from Government.

Decision:

Fire Commission **noted** the update.

9 Building Safety update

Noted with item 5.

10 National Fire Chiefs Council update

The Chair invited Mark Hardingham (MH), NFCC Chair, to introduce the update. In view of the time, MH indicated that he was happy to take any questions from members on the update.

Members' comments and questions:

- The Chair asked MH to pass on the Commission's thanks to firefighters for the incredible work they did to tackle the summer wildfires.
- The climate change work needed to be joined up with effective public education campaigns about the risks associated with certain behaviours that lead to wildfires.

Decision:

Fire Commission **noted** the update.

11 Fire Standards Board update

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

Decision:

Fire Services Management Committee **noted** the update without discussion.

12 Fire Commission update

The Chair invited Rebecca Johnson (RJ), Adviser, to introduce the update.

RJ highlighted some of the upcoming events that were outlined in the report.

LE reported that the Competition and Markets Authority had just released findings in relation to ESMCP and had provisionally concluded that Motorola, which operates the Airwave network, appears to be able to charge the Home Office (which represents the emergency services) prices well above competitive levels, resulting in higher costs which would ultimately be paid by taxpayers. The CMA had therefore outlined a set of proposed changes to limit the price that Motorola could charge to a level that would apply in a well-functioning, competitive market.

Decision:

Fire Commission **noted** the update.

Appendix A -Attendance

| Position/Role | Councillor | Authority |
|---------------|---------------------------|---|
| Chair | Cllr Frank Biederman | Devon County Council |
| Vice-Chair | Cllr Keith Aspden | City of York Council |
| Members | Cllr Paul Duckett | Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Service |
| | Cllr Paul Gittings | Royal Berkshire Fire Authority |
| | Cllr Simon Rouse | Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority |
| | Cllr Edna Murphy | Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority |
| | Cllr Janet Willis | Cumbria County Council |
| | Cllr Trevor Ainsworth | Derbyshire County Council |
| | Cllr Sara Randall Johnson | Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority |
| | Cllr Simon Coles | Somerset County Council |
| | Cllr Rebecca Knox | Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service |
| | Cllr John Shuttleworth | Co. Durham and Darlington Fire Authority |
| | Cllr Carol Theobald | East Sussex Fire Authority |
| | Ms Jane Gardner | Essex Deputy Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner |
| | Dr Fiona Twycross | Greater London Authority |
| | Cllr David Lancaster | Greater Manchester Combined Authority |
| | Cllr Steve Williams | Greater Manchester Combined Authority |
| | Cllr Dylan Butt | Greater Manchester Combined Authority |
| | Cllr Rhydian Vaughan MBE | Hampshire and Isle of Wight Combined Fire Authority |
| | Cllr Roger Price | Hampshire and Isle of Wight FRA |
| | Cllr John Briggs | Humberside Fire Authority |
| | Cllr Nick Chard | Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority |
| | Cllr Stuart Tranter | Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority |
| | Cllr David O'Toole | Lancashire Combined Fire Authority |
| | Cllr John Shedwick | Lancashire Combined Fire Authority |
| | Cllr Neil Bannister | Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Combined Fire Authority |
| | Cllr Lindsey Cawrey | Lincolnshire County Council |
| | Cllr Les Byrom CBE | Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority |
| | Cllr Elwyn Williams | Mid and West Wales Fire Authority |
| | Cllr Gordon Stewart | Northumberland County Council |
| | Cllr Jenny Hannaby | Oxfordshire County Council |
| | Cllr Eric Carter | Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority |
| | Cllr Charlie Hogarth | South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority |
| | Cllr Rachel Bailey | Cheshire Fire Authority |
| | Cllr Mark Healey MBE | Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority |
| | Cllr Lynn Hall | Cleveland Fire Authority |
| | Cllr James Doyle | Tyne and Wear Fire Authority |
| | Cllr Jeremy Hilton | Gloucestershire County Council |
| | Cllr Ruth Skelton | Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Authority |

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| | Cllr Steven Lambert | Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority |
| | Cllr Ian Roome | Devon and Somerset FRA |
| | Cllr Luke Frost | Cleveland Fire Authority |
| | Cllr Tom Woodwark | Tyne & Wear Fire & Rescue Authority |
| | Cllr Denise Turner-Stewart | Surrey County Council |
| | Cllr Jane Hugo | Lancashire Combined Fire Authority |
| | Cllr Colleen Atkins MBE | Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Authority |
| | Cllr Byron Quayle | Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Authority |
| | Cllr Donald Davies (as sub) | Avon Fire Authority |
| | Cllr Tina Claydon | North Wales Fire & Rescue Authority |
| Apologies | Cllr Brenda Massey | Avon Fire Authority |
| | Mr Roger Hirst | Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex |
| | Cllr David Norman MBE | Gloucestershire County Council |
| | Cllr Morris Bright MBE | Hertfordshire County Council |
| | Paul Fell | Northants Police Fire & Crime Commissioner |
| | Cllr Andy Crump | Warwickshire County Council |
| | Cllr Duncan Crow | West Sussex County Council |
| | Cllr Darren O'Donovan | West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority |
| | Cllr Carolyn Lambert | East Sussex Fire Authority |
| | Cllr Nikki Hennessey | Lancashire Combined Fire Authority |
| | Cllr Cal Corkery | Hampshire & Isle of Wight Combined Fire Authority |
| In Attendance | Mark Preece | Gloucestershire FRS |
| | Neil Odin | Hampshire & Isle of Wight FRS |
| | Mick Osborne | Buckinghamshire FRS |
| | Phil Shillito | Humberside FRS |
| | Steve Helps | Durham & Darlington FRS |
| | Steven Adams | National Fire Chiefs Council |
| | Mark Hardingham | National Fire Chiefs Council |
| | Jonny Bugg | Home Office |
| | Ben Brook | Warwickshire FRS and NFCC |
| | Dan Quinn | Shropshire FRS and NFCC |
| | Sandra Tomlinson | Health and Safety Executive |
| | James Tancred | Health and Safety Executive |