

End of Year Board Report

Purpose of report

For information and discussion.

Summary

This report provides an overview of the issues and work the Committee has overseen during last year. It sets out key achievements in relation to the priorities for the Fire Services Management Committee in 2015/2016, and looks forward to next year's priorities.

Recommendations

The Committee is invited to:

- (a) Note the achievements against the Committee's priorities in 2015/2016; and
- (b) Note the Committee's priority areas for 2016/17.

Action

Officers to action as appropriate.

Contact officer: Ciarán Whitehead
Position: Member Services Officer
Phone no: 020 7664 3107
E-mail: Ciaran.Whitehead@local.gov.uk

End of Year Board Report

Background

1. The updated Business Plan for 15/16 set out a clear priorities for the Fire Services Management Committee. These included: making the case for risk based funding of the fire and rescue service; working to transform service delivery, including greater collaboration across blue-light services; influencing the government's proposed governance changes and supporting the development of the role of firefighters.

Achievements

2. The LGA's annual fire conference in March was attended by 280 delegates and heard from a range of speakers including the Fire Minister. Sessions and workshops looked at the spending review, collaboration between the bluelight services, devolution, the Policing and Crime Bill and flooding.

Make the case for risk based funding of the fire and rescue service

3. FSMC continued to make the case for risk based funding of the fire and rescue service. The submission to the spending review, in conjunction with the Chief Fire officers' Association, made a strong case for the fire service to be funded on the basis of risk rather than activity, levels of which have significantly reduced over the past ten years due in large part to a shift towards prevention. The submission also emphasised the added value of fire service prevention activity to health and social care services.
4. Following the publication of the two National Audit Office reports in early November on the impact of funding reductions on the fire service and the financial sustainability of the fire service, FSMC Chair, Cllr Jeremy Hilton, gave evidence at a pre-panel session to the Public Accounts Select Committee

Transforming service delivery, collaboration, and the development of the role of the firefighter

5. The Committee continued its work on blue light services collaboration. The publication of 'Beyond fighting fires 2' at the fire conference in Bristol showcased some of the collaborative projects that are happening across the fire and rescue service. From working in partnership with clinical commissioning groups, to setting up a limited liability partnership with the Police, these case studies demonstrate the sector's ability to lead the way on collaboration in order to improve services for local people and deliver a more efficient and cost effective service.
6. FSMC members attended a series of Fire/Health summits attended by representatives from the LGA, the Chief Fire Officers Association, Age UK, Public Health England and NHS England. The summit formally signed off a consensus statement made between the LGA, NHS England, Public Health England, the Chief Fire Officers Association and Age UK, which affirmed our commitment to work together on this issue. The fire service plans to work with commissioners to extend the 670,000 home safety checks already

carried out each year into a 'Safe and Well' visit to help particularly the vulnerable and those with complex conditions.

7. Members attended a number of meetings and spoke at a number of events related to this work. Cllr Kay Hammond, attended the National Operational Guidance Programme's Parliamentary Seminar where she spoke about the pressures and challenges facing fire and rescue services as we look to the future. Cllr John Edwards spoke as part of a panel at a regional event in the West Midlands organised by the Chief Fire Officers Association, Public Health England and NHS England on how fire and rescue services can become more involved in improving the health and wellbeing of their communities. Cllrs Hilton and Hammond also spoke at a Public Policy Exchange conference on the role of Fire and Rescue Authorities in building safe and healthy communities, and Cllr Hammond represented the Committee on the Board of the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme which considered issues related to improving interoperability between the blue-light services.

Influence the proposed governance changes

8. FSMC discussed and agreed a response to the government's consultation on enabling closer working between the emergency services, and has subsequently been lobbying for amendments to the Policing and Crime Bill to ensure that changes in governance can only occur where there is local agreement.
9. Following the transfer of ministerial responsibility for fire and rescue policy from the Department of Communities and Local Government to the Home Office Cllr Hilton spoke with the Fire Minister and Home Office Permanent Secretary and met the Home Secretary in March for an introductory discussion about the government's reform agenda for the fire and rescue service.
10. Members have continued to attend a range of meetings and boards where the government's reform proposals have been discussed including the Fire Strategic Resilience Board, which is attended by Cllrs Hilton and Byrom. Issues considered at the meetings of the Board included flooding, national resilience and the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme.

Programme of work and priorities 2016/17

11. There is likely to be a degree of continuity in the Committee's work over 2016/17. Lobbying on the Policing and Crime Bill and work associated with possible changes in governance will remain at the forefront of the Committee's work into 2017, alongside new work around the transparency agenda. The fire reform programme with its emphasis on collaboration, increased efficiencies and effectiveness and workforce reform is also likely to make up a considerable amount of the Committee's work during 2016/17.

Financial Implications

12. All work programmes are met from existing budgets and resources.