

Note of last Fire Services Management Committee meeting

Title: Fire Services Management Committee
Date: Friday 1 July 2016
Venue: Westminster Suite, 8th Floor, Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

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

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
1	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>The Chair noted that since the Committee last met it has lost two members, Cllr Maurice Heaster and Cllr John Joyce. The Chair has written to each of the members to thank them for their service and the Committee formally noted their thanks to the two members.</p> <p>Cllr Thomas Wright has been appointed to the Committee to replace Cllr John Joyce. Cllr Mark Healey is substituting for the Conservative vacancy.</p> <p>The Committee congratulated Cllr Mark Healey who received an MBE in the last Queen's Birthday Honours and Fiona Twycross AM on her appointment as chair of LFEPA.</p> <p>Decisions:</p> <p>There were no Declarations of Interest. The Committee noted its thanks to departing members and congratulations to Cllr Healey MBE & Ms Twycross AM.</p>	
2	<p>The Policing and Crime Bill and Fire Reform</p> <p>Mark Norris, Principal Policy Advisor, introduced the paper which provides an update on the LGA's lobbying around the Policing and Crime Bill and set out the proposed steps by the LGA to respond to the issues identified in the Home Secretary's speech.</p> <p>The Bill has completed its passage through the House of Commons and its next stage will be in the House of Lords. The original timetable for the Bill has slipped and may not be completed this year. A briefing will be circulated to peers ahead of the debate and the LGA is already making contact with interested members of the Lords to discuss laying amendments along similar lines to those in the Commons.</p>	

The LGA is engaging with the group APACE formed, which includes CFOA, to develop a model business case. The paper proposes to establish a cross party group to engage with the Home Office around some of the issues in the Bill.

There was a discussion during which members made a number of comments:

- Qualitative data should also play a role when drawing comparisons between different services.
- FRAs must start and have an agreed way of collecting data on preventative work.
- The lobbying around the Bill should reflect that the conversation has moved on and the Home Secretary has clarified some areas. The LGA should seek to lay amendments which set out the vision for the service.
- Comparisons between FRAs on performance should be treated with caution because the risk profile differs across the country.
- There is knowledge within the Committee which should be shared with the Home Office.
- Information provided and published should be what the public want and expect of the service.
- There will be some similarities within the service, for example in how category 1 events are classified.
- PCCs will put forward most robust business cases if they know they will be subject to independent review.
- There was a clear message from the Home Office that while there was a role for the NJC they were looking for it to be reformed, and this could be done by making the employees side more representative, and with there being more open dialogue.
- The cross party group that will engage with the Home Office must report back regularly to the whole Committee.
- There needs to be a narrative around the legislation on what work is being done with health and ambulance, need the Lords to see these benefits and describe them.
- There will be understandable differences in response times between metropolitan and rural services.
- There needs to be some pragmatism around the duty to collaborate so it doesn't become a tick box exercise.

Dan Greaves, Director of Fire & Resilience at the Home Office responded to members comments:

- The Home Secretary wants more transparent information and there will be public engagement on this.
- The Home Office is keen to engage around independent assessment and the business case.
- The Home Office will publish a basket of data over the summer and it will be reviewed to look for any behaviour change.

Decision:

The Committee noted the lobbying around the Bill to date and agree to continue to seek to amend the Bill going forward. The Committee agreed to engage with the APACE group working on the design of a model business case and nominated the following members to engage with the Home Office around the issues set out in paragraphs 5, 12 and 17 in the report:

Con: Cllrs Knox and Chard
Lab: Cllrs Acton and Edwards
LD: Cllr Hilton
Ind: Cllr Phil Howson

Action:

Officers to progress in line with members comments.

3 Inspection and Fire Peer Challenge

Charles Loft, Senior Advisor, introduced the paper which summarises the Home Office's proposals for re-introducing an inspectorate for Fire and Rescue Authorities, and the proposed LGA response.

The Home Secretary has been critical of Peer Challenge and has introduced amendments to the Policing and Crime bill to introduce an inspection regime on similar lines to the police inspectorate. However, the Home Office has recognised that Peer Challenge does have a role for self-improvement.

Gary Hughes, Principal Advisor, emphasised that Fire Peer Challenge is not an inspection tool; instead it is about constantly driving improvements to the service. The demand for Peer Challenge is great and they are booked until June 2017. The LGA sees it as a very successful sector-led improvement model.

The LGA is keen to engage with the Home Office with the aim of ensuring there is an effective and efficient inspection regime and for FSMC members to provide views on how the Peer Challenge offer could be adapted to secure a future for Peer Challenge alongside the new inspection regime.

There was a discussion during which members made a number of comments:

- The LGA and CFOA had already revised the Peer Challenge to make it more forward looking, and it was possible for there to be both inspection and peer review.
- There were concerns about additional bureaucracy around an inspection regime and it should be proportionate to the budget and capacity of the FRS.

- The Committee invited the Director to attend a Peer Review to gain a better understanding of their role.
- The Committee reiterated its support for the idea of an inspection framework.
- Inspection would need to take account of collaboration, partnership working and co-responding.
- Inspection could be used to check if the recommendations of a Peer Review have been carried out.
- When the government removed the previous inspection regime it retained the financial savings and therefore any new inspection regime should not place the financial burden onto local government.

The Director responded on behalf of the Home Office:

- The Home Secretary's rationale for inspection is to increase efficiency and to drive up standards.
- It needs to be proportionate and not to become a burden and the Home Office was keen to work with the sector on that.
- There was then a question about how the Peer Review could be refreshed to sit alongside inspection.
- There will be a consultation in the autumn on an inspection framework.
- A number of Home Office colleagues had already participated in the Peer Challenge process and been complimentary about it.

Decision:

The Committee agreed to remove recommendation 21.2 and to deal with this issue as part of its wider work with the Home Office on inspection. The committee agreed that there should be an equivalence of inspection regimes across all types of fire authorities.

The Committee agreed to engage with the Home Office to shape and influence the design and creation of fire inspectorate and continue its commitment to the principal of sector-led improvement, with further reports brought back to the Committee.

The following members indicated they would be willing to inform the ongoing development of the Operational Assessment and Fire Peer Challenge: Cllrs Hammond, Acton, Hilton & TBC.

4 21st Century Firefighter

Charles Loft, Senior Advisor, introduced the paper which discusses the potential changes to the firefighter role and workforce, and outlines a future work programme.

Deepening collaboration and reforms to the workforce were identified as key areas of work in the Home Secretary's speech on fire reform. The

Home Secretary wants to change the demographic of the service to make it more representative of the communities it serves. She argued the age range of firefighters meant that recruitment would be necessary in the near future and this offered an opportunity for change.

The paper recommends that the LGA work on a high-level political direction-setting publication which will examine what opportunity exists to make the front-line service more reflective of the community it serves. This will cover the possible influence of retained and apprenticeships in delivering change.

There was a discussion during which members made a number of comments:

- As the work of the CFOA RDS operational working group demonstrated FRAs had come forward with a range of ideas on how to improve recruitment rates, and the work on changing the demographic make needed to draw on a similar range of ideas such as national advertising campaigns, changes in taxation and how those at home during the day could be encouraged to join the FRS.
- Fire Scotland has done interesting work using retained firefighters to improve recruitment which could be a helpful approach in England and Wales.
- LFEPA recently agreed a new inclusion strategy. As part of some research they found male firefighters would not recommend a career in the service to their female friends and relatives. Need to get the culture right and need leadership on this from the top down.
- Lack of recruitment due to budget pressures makes this difficult. The service will be different in 10 years time and should take every legal measure available to make itself more representative of the community it serves, but there was already practice that could be drawn on from FRAs and shared more widely.
- Members had concerns around apprenticeships in terms of the levy and targets.
- What will the 21st Century Firefighter role look like? It would be less about putting out fires and more about working with partners such as health and the police, with firefighters possibly becoming more like Public Safety Officer?

The Director responded on behalf of the Home Office:

- The Home Secretary had set a real challenge to the sector and it had been good to hear the positive approach taken by members to the issues.
- Other public services had experiences that could be drawn on, for example to help remove the barriers that stopped people being attracted to joining the fire service.
- There has been some work done in equality legislation which could be applied around recruiting from an area to improve diversity.

- Inspection will look at this in terms of representation of communities served, and transparency to allow comparisons.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report and agreed to the recommendations in paragraph 21.

5 Workforce report

Clair Alcock, Fire Pensions Advisor, introduced the paper and the main pensions issues at present. The Scheme Advisory Board will be shortly writing out to all Local Pension Boards, Chiefs and Chairs to introduce themselves.

The planned amendments to allow for a contribution holiday where a Firefighter achieves 30 years' service before becoming entitled to a pension, the survivor amendments to the 1992 regulations and 2014 amendments are hoped to be laid over the summer. It is expected that as per the GAD v Milne case money will be provided by the government to Fire Authorities in order to pay refunds where due. More information on that procedure will be expected after the regulations have been laid.

Cllr Knox urged members to get involved in their local pension boards and stressed the importance of them.

Gill Gittins, Principal Negotiating Officer (industrial relations), informed the Committee that on pay, terms and conditions an additional three authorities had joined the trials approved by the NJC, Northamptonshire, North Yorkshire and Humberside. The trials are being extended to the end of February 2017.

The NJC-led Inclusive Fire Service Group set up to explore equality, diversity and cultural (including bullying and harassment) issues, has released a detailed report to FRAs setting-out the current position. It will continue its work to explore in more detail a number of key indicators, issues and trends including low levels of female and BME recruitment, retention and progression across the uniformed workforce in order to develop improvement strategies for use at national and local levels. Members wanted to know if work was being done to improve retention of female firefighters after they have children. It was confirmed that this one of the issues that would be considered.

The Joint Working Group (Fitness) has concluded its work, issuing a best practice guide on fitness issues before the deadline for completion.

Work continues on behalf of FRAs in respect of the thousands of pension scheme transitional arrangements Employment Tribunal cases supported by the FBU.

In relation to the NJC workstreams members were pleased work was

being undertaken on national guidance on welfare arrangements when working at major incidents outside of the individual's home service.

Decision:

The Committee noted the report.

6 Update paper

Decision:

The Committee noted the update paper.

7 End of year report

Decision:

The Committee noted the achievements against the priorities in 2015/16 and noted the priority areas for 2016/17.

8 Outside Bodies - oral update from members (a maximum of 2 minutes each)

Cllr Rebecca Knox updated the Committee on the Fire College Engagement Forum. There is a change of chief executive at Capita and the College will be going on a marketing exercise shortly to listen to FRAs. Cllr Knox requested that the ELP Chief Fire Officer be invited to the next Fire Commission meeting to update members.

Cllr Kay Hammond updated the Committee about the work done on JESIP and the upcoming Fire/Health summit. Cllr Hammond also updated the Committee about a meeting with the Firefighters Memorial Trust and asked that the date be circulated to members for the memorial in September.

Cllr Nick Chard paid tribute to Cllr Maurice Heaster for his work on the NJC. He had noted the comments in the Home Secretary's speech in respect of the NJC and felt it to be the right time to consider looking at the NJC, what it is for and how it is used.

Decision:

The Committee noted the reports from outside bodies.

9 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2016 were agreed as correct.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Gloucestershire County Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Kay Hammond	Surrey County Council
	Cllr Philip Howson	East Sussex Fire Authority
Deputy-chairman	Cllr David Acton	Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority
Members	Cllr Rebecca Knox	Dorset Fire Authority
	Cllr Simon Spencer	Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Nick Chard	Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Peter Jackson	Northumberland Council
	Cllr Michele Hodgson	County Durham and Darlington Fire & Rescue Authority
	Ms Fiona Twycross	London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA)
	Cllr Darrell Pulk	Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr John Edwards	West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Thomas Wright	Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority
In Attendance	Cllr Les Byrom CBE	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Roger Price	Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority
LGA Officers		