

## **Fire Services Management Committee update paper**

### **Purpose of report**

For information and direction.

### **Summary**

The report outlines issues of interest to the Committee not covered under the other items on the agenda, and seeks views from the Committee on the programme for the 2017 Fire Conference, on the impact on political balance of inviting PCCs on to FRAs and on changes to guidance on installing sprinklers in new or refurbished school buildings.

### **Recommendations**

That the Committee:

1. note the update; and
2. to provide views on the questions and issues set out in paragraphs 12, 15 and 17.

### **Action**

Officers to progress as appropriate.

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## **Fire Services Management Committee update paper**

### **Home Office Fire Reform Programme**

1. On 31 August following an invitation from the Home Office Cllrs Acton, Chard, Edwards, Hilton, Howson, and Knox, met with Dan Greaves, Director of Fire and Resilience and Peter Holland, the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, to discuss the government's fire reform programme. The agenda was focussed on:
  - 1.1. Diversity;
  - 1.2. Inspection and peer review;
  - 1.3. The independent assessment of a Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC's) business case for taking over the running of the fire and rescue service; and
  - 1.4. On-call firefighters.
2. The Director of Fire and Resilience started the meeting with an overview of progress on the fire reform agenda since the Home Secretary's fire reform speech. This included publication of the different prices paid to buy standard items of equipment by different Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs), and the survey asking the public what information they would like to be made available on the performance of fire services. Members then outlined the work the LGA has in train around improving the diversity of the workforce, and there was a discussion of the work FRAs had already taken and how the Home Office could assist with this agenda going forward.
3. The meeting then discussed the Home Office's plans for inspection of the fire service. Members explained the capacity issues within the fire service to support inspection and it was agreed that the inspection process needed to be proportionate and risk based, and that the LGA's Peer Challenge process could co-exist alongside inspection.
4. There was then a discussion of how the requirement in the Policing and Crime Bill for a PCC's proposal to take on fire governance to be independently assessed where it was not supported locally would work. Members suggested that the process would be genuinely independent if the assessment was carried out by a panel. It was agreed a letter would be submitted to the Fire Minister setting out LGA views on how the process could be made robust and fair. The meeting then concluded by discussing work on on-call firefighters and agreed there would be benefit in the LGA and Home Office working more closely together on this in the future.

### **Ministerial Appointments**

5. Brandon Lewis MP was appointed as Minister of State for Policing and the Fire Service at the Home Office on 15 July. Lord Porter wrote to him at the time of his appointment to congratulate the returning Minister and invite him to an early meeting with Cllr Hilton as Chair of the FSMC. The letter also contained an invite to him to speak at the LGA's Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition. A meeting between the Minister and FSMC Lead Members has been arranged for 31 October.

6. Amber Rudd has been appointed as the new Home Secretary on 13 July. She was elected as the MP for Hastings and Rye in 2010. She has previously been the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change.

### **LGA's Annual Fire Conference Programme**

7. The draft Fire Conference programme for March 2017 is included in **Appendix A**. The programme looks at the key issues included in the Home Office's Fire Reform agenda.
8. Overall satisfaction with the 2016 Fire Conference was 79.7%, which was down on the previous year, where we achieved a record high of 100% satisfaction (in 2014 we achieved an overall satisfaction rate of 70.8%). However, 81.5% said that they would return to the conference again (compared to only 1.9% who said that they would not). Many people find the networking opportunities at the event the most beneficial (59.3%) followed by the opportunity to hear about emerging issues (57.4%). We have therefore not proposed changing the structure, which allows plenty of time for informal networking.
9. The proposed agenda focusses on the key elements of the Fire Reform programme (including equality and diversity) and issues identified in the feedback from the 2016 conference such as devolution, the future of fire governance and funding of the fire service.
10. Feedback suggests that the Innovation Zone was not well attended. The Innovation Zone was held at the same time as the workshops and we have therefore suggested that we should hold only the four workshops, which are then repeated. This will hopefully help to ensure good attendance across all four. We have suggested including health and fire as a workshop session, however this could also be picked up in other sessions, such as the proposed opening session with three FRAs.
11. The feedback also suggests that attendance at sessions declines on the second day, so we have provisionally scheduled the Fire Minister's session to close the conference to try and ensure that people will stay to hear the other discussions. This is however dependent on his diary. We included an invite to the conference to the Minister in Lord Porter's letter welcoming him back to his role.
12. Members are invited to give their views on the draft agenda, the themes so far identified and your thoughts on speakers:
  - 12.1. Does it cover the key issues?
  - 12.2. Are they given the appropriate weight?
  - 12.3. Is there anything missing from the agenda?

### **Hampshire FRA**

13. Earlier this month Hampshire FRA voted to reduce its size to 10 members (which was the smallest model possible under the Combination Order) plus the PCC. We believe

this will require the Secretary of State to amend Hampshire's combination order, once the Policing and Crime Bill receives Royal Assent. One issue this raise is the political balance of the authority, which will be affected by adding the PCC to it. Officers have raised this with the Home office who have informed us that it will be for FRAs to decide how to address this issue.

14. It appears that there could be three possible approaches:
  - 14.1. An FRA could reject a PCCs application to become a member on the grounds of political imbalance;
  - 14.2. An FRA could include the PCC in addition to the existing compliment of members;
  - 14.3. An FRA could include a PCC but require one of the existing members from the same party to step down in order to maintain the political balance.
15. As yet we do not know what Hampshire FRA and the Home Office will agree as the preferred way forward in this case (except that it is not (a)). Members' views are sought on whether the LGA should lobby the Home Office to ensure that all options are left open and that no decision taken on Hampshire will affect other authorities.

### **Sprinklers in new school buildings**

16. Over the summer the Department of Education consulted on revisions to Building Bulletin 100 which advises on how to design school buildings so they meet the fire safety requirements in building regulations. Building Bulletin 100 was first published in 2007 and the review was intended to update out of date content. The 2007 Bulletin stated that the expectation was that all new schools would have sprinklers fitted, with any exceptions having to demonstrate that a school was a low risk and installing sprinklers would not demonstrate good value for money. Although the 2016 revisions to Building Bulletin 100 note the success of sprinkler systems in fighting fires, the Bulletin states that as the building regulations do not require the installation of sprinklers Building Bulletin 100 no longer includes an expectation that new school buildings will be fitted with them.
17. The LGA has previously run a campaign to encourage the greater use of sprinkler systems in premises where the most vulnerable people live or visit (including schools) as they save lives, protect property and improve firefighter safety. The LGA campaign focused on local action to drive the uptake of sprinklers through closer working relationships with stakeholders and encouraging a change of culture in the building industry. It also stated that the fire and rescue sector expected new and refurbished schools to use the risk assessment tool and policy set out in the 2007 version of Building Bulletin 100. The changes in the 2016 version of the Bulletin will make it more difficult for the fire and rescue service to press at a local level for the installation of sprinkler systems. As the consultation on the new version of Building Bulletin 100 has ended it is proposed that the Chair of FSMC write to the Department of Education calling on them to restore the wording used in the 2007 version of Building Bulletin 100.

### **Fire/Health**

18. The next Fire/Health Summit is due to take place on 19 October. The Lead Members from both the FSMC and the Community Wellbeing Board have been invited to the meeting.

### **Association of Police and Crime Commissioner Chief Executives (APACE): Model Business Case**

19. As members will recall, the Police and Crime Bill allows a PCC to replace a Fire and Rescue Authority subject to a business case showing it is in the interests of economy, efficiency and effectiveness for the change to take place or it is in the interests of public safety. APACE established a working group to draw up a model business case earlier this year, and following a decision at FSMC in March the LGA is represented on this group at officer level.
20. We expect to have received the latest draft of this document on 16 September and will be consulting FSMC members on it immediately in order to respond by the end of the month.

### **Electrical safety**

21. An enabling power was included in the Housing and Planning Act 2016, allowing the government to set mandatory requirements for electrical safety in the private rented sector at a later date if needed. The Department of Communities and Local Government has now set up a cross-sector working group to design and implement options to improve the electrical safety for privately rented tenants. The group has also been tasked with ensuring that any requirements are beneficial and strike the right balance by protecting tenants while not over burdening landlords. The Chief Fire Officers Association is represented on the group, as is the LGA. LGA work is being led by the Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board.

Appendix A

***Programme***  
**Annual fire conference and exhibition**  
**7 – 8 March 2017**  
**Hilton Hotel, Newcastle Gateshead**

**Tuesday 7 March**

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09.00	Registration, refreshments and exhibition viewing
10.30	<b>Conference opening and chair's welcome</b> <b>Mayor of Gateshead</b> <b>Chairman: Councillor Jeremy Hilton</b> , Chair LGA Fire Services Management Committee and Gloucestershire County Council
10.45	<b>Keynote session 1. Where next for the Fire Service?</b> Metropolitan FRA Combined FRA County FRA  Chair: Questions and discussion
11.20	Refreshments and exhibition viewing
11.55	<b>Keynote session 2. Inspection</b>  Chair: Questions and discussion
12.45 To 1.50	Lunch, exhibition viewing and networking  Lunchtime fringes
2.00	<b>Workshops – session 1</b> An opportunity to attend a workshop from the list below. These sessions will be repeated at 3.30

**W1. New Models of Employment/RDS**

Chair:

**W2. Health/fire – case/studies**

Chair:

**W3. Transparency and Accountability/data in the fire and rescue service**

Chair:

**W4. Collaboration – case studies**

Chair:

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3.00 Refreshments and exhibition viewing

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3.30 **Workshops – session 2 repeated**  
An opportunity to attend another workshop from the list above.

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4.40 **Keynote session 3. PCCs/Mayoral Candidates**

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5.20 **Political group meetings**

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6.20 **Fire authority meetings**

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7.30 Drinks reception

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8.00 Conference dinner

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**Wednesday 8 March**

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8.45 to **Morning Fringe**

9.30

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09.00 Registration for new delegates, refreshments and exhibition viewing

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09.45 **Welcome to day two from the conference chair**

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09.50 **Keynote session 4. Equality and Diversity**

Police/MOD speaker

FBU Woman's Officer

Chair:

Questions and discussion

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10.25 **Keynote session 5. Fire Finance**

Chair:

Questions and discussion

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11.00 Refreshments and exhibition viewing

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11.30 **Keynote session 6. Leadership, Culture and Scrutiny**

Chair:

Questions and discussion

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12.05 **Keynote session 7. Fire Minister**

Chair:

Questions and discussion

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12.40 Conference close, lunch, exhibition viewing and networking

Chairman: **Cllr Jeremy Hilton**, Chair, LGA Fire Services Management Committee and Gloucestershire County Council

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