

## **Priorities for 2016/17**

### **Purpose**

For discussion and direction.

### **Summary**

This paper sets out proposals for Fire Services Management Committee's priorities and work programme for 2016/17.

It outlines how the LGA-wide priorities on responding to the Brexit vote will impact the work of FSMC, as well as options for broader work priorities based on a combination of areas of interest previously indicated by FSMC members, on-going work, and recent policy announcements by government. Subject to members' views officers will develop a work programme to deliver these priorities.

### **Recommendations**

The Committee are invited to:

1. Consider and comment on the draft proposals above; and
2. Agree the priorities for FSMC to enable:
  - 2.1 Officers to prepare a detailed work programme to manage the day to day work; and
  - 2.2 The Chairman to communicate the agreed priorities to all members of Fire and Rescue Authorities.

### **Action**

Officers will develop a forward work programme to deliver the agreed priorities.

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## **Priorities for 2016/17**

### **Background**

1. At its first meeting FSMC is asked to consider the policy priorities for its work programme for the coming year. In making these decisions members are asked to consider two issues:
  - 1.1. The work that the LGA Leadership Board has asked Boards to undertake based on the overall policy priorities of the LGA; and
  - 1.2. Specific policy priorities based on the remit of this Committee.

### **Work commissioned from the LGA Policy Boards by the LGA Leadership Board**

2. As in 2015/16, LGA Policy Boards, including FSMC, are being asked to incorporate cross-cutting LGA priorities within their work programmes. The key request from the LGA's Leadership Board as we begin the 2016/17 board cycle is for individual boards and committees to:
  - 2.1. Consider the impact of the vote to leave the European Union on their policy areas and make appropriate provision in their work programme.
  - 2.2. Contribute to the development of the LGA's Autumn Statement submission and pitch to the new Government.
3. Alongside this the LGA Business Plan is being refreshed this month. The key themes in the plan, in common with previous years are expected to be devolution, housing, finance, adult social care and health, as well as Brexit. Our work programme will need to reflect the new business plan, with the following areas likely to have particular resonance: adult social care and health and increased collaboration between the fire and rescue service and health; and devolution in terms of governance changes in fire and rescue services.

### **Impact of the vote to leave the EU on FSMC policy areas and work planning**

4. At its meetings in July and September, the Leadership Board identified five priority areas for the LGA to influence following the vote to leave the EU:
  - 4.1. Securing investment which is currently sourced from the EU
  - 4.2. Developing a new legal base for local government
  - 4.3. Initiating a constitutional debate
  - 4.4. Community Cohesion
  - 4.5. Place-based impact
5. The work on developing a new legal base for local government will be of relevance to FSMC's work programme as EU legislation has operational and workforce implications for the fire and rescue service.

## **Developing a new legal base for local government – impact of Brexit on Fire and Rescue Authorities**

6. Local government services are influenced to a significant degree by European legislation. With the UK having voted to leave the EU, there is a need therefore to develop a new legal base for local government.
7. The working and operational environment for the fire and rescue services is shaped by Europe, with a range of standards driven by European legislation having direct relevance for Fire and Rescue Authorities, including the following areas:
  - 7.1. Procurement
  - 7.2. Groundwater pollution
  - 7.3. Environmental damage
  - 7.4. Product safety
  - 7.5. Health and safety
  - 7.6. The working time directive
  - 7.7. Transport of dangerous goods
  - 7.8. Packaging and labelling requirements in particular for chemicals and hazardous materials
8. Some of these areas also fall within the remit of other LGA boards for example environmental damage and the working time directive.
9. In common with other services, the fire and rescue service is subject to a mix of EU directives that have been transposed into UK law (which will still apply when the UK actually leaves the EU) as well as EU regulations and decisions that apply directly. These would not apply once the UK leaves the EU, meaning that in those areas there will be no legal framework following exit.
10. In relation to both, Brexit provides an opportunity for political choices to be made to change laws previously based on EU regulatory frameworks, for example if they have been 'gold-plated', are simply outdated or are no longer desired.
11. All Boards with policy areas whose legal basis will be affected by withdrawal from the EU are being asked to identify priority areas to flag with government as part of our ongoing discussions on Brexit.
12. Given the range and technical nature of much of the EU-led regulation in this area, we do not propose that FSMC should reach a view on each or even groups of them. Instead it is proposed that FSMC gives a general steer on any priority areas for the fire and rescue services affected by the UK leaving the EU. This will help to shape our LGA wide approach to renegotiating the legal base for local government. **Members are therefore asked to identify any priorities for Fire and Rescue Authorities.**

## **Proposed Priorities**

13. The draft priorities outlined below suggest five key overarching themes for FSMC this year, and a series of activities underpinning them:

### **13.1. Governance**

- 13.1.1. The Policing and Crime Bill has now reached the House of Lords, with the expectation that it will receive Royal Assent towards the end of the year. During the remainder of the Bill's passage through parliament will continue to press the case for amendments to the provisions so that a transfer of governance to a police and crime commissioner (PCC) can only take place where there is local agreement.
- 13.1.2. We will also continue to discuss with the Home Office the basis on which any independent assessment of a PPC's business is made and make the case for it to be conducted by a panel.
- 13.1.3. Additionally we will continue to engage with the Association of Police and Crime Commissioner Chief Executive's work to develop a template business case.
- 13.1.4. Once the Bill has received Royal Assent we will support Fire and Rescue Authorities around the implementation of the legislation.

### **13.2. Transparency**

- 13.2.1. The Home Office's fire reform agenda looks to increase the transparency of the fire and rescue service. At the heart of these proposals is a plan to reintroduce a fire inspection regime to help Fire and Rescue Authorities and PCCs hold the service to account. We will engage with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary's work on what the inspection regime should look like going forward. We will also work with the Home Office to ensure that any inspection regime is proportionate, that it does not place a financial and administrative burden on the fire and rescue service, and that it allows the LGA's and the Chief Fire Officers Association's (CFOA) Fire Peer Challenge to coexist alongside the inspection regime.
- 13.2.2. A fundamental component of a successful inspection regime will be performance data allowing the inspectorate to compare performances across different fire and rescue services. The Home Office is committed to publishing performance data and as the LGA already published performance data on the fire service and is advising regional benchmarking activities we will engage with this work to ensure that Fire and Rescue Authorities' views are taken into consideration.

### **13.3. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Firefighter**

- 13.3.1. At its last meeting FSMC considered the issue of workforce reform and greater flexibility in the use of resources. We will publish a paper examining the extent for large scale recruitment in the future in light of

further funding reductions and how this could be used to increase the diversity of the workforce. This will bring together case studies and good practice to help the sector prepare for when further recruitment is necessary.

- 13.3.2. We will examine how on-call firefighters and apprenticeship fit within this picture and what contribution they can make to increasing the diversity of the workforce.
- 13.3.3. We will share best practice from across the fire and rescue service on diverse recruitment, as well as work with organisations with expertise in increasing the diversity of workforce such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission, and learn from other public services which have been successful in increasing the diversity of their workforce.
- 13.3.4. We will work with improvement colleagues to provide resources to aid this work for example the Equalities Workbook for councillors. This was originally published in 2008 and provides a series of practical exercises around equality and diversity for councillors to complete.
- 13.3.5. The work of the NJC Inclusive Fire Service Group will continue to be supported.
- 13.3.6. We will work with improvement colleagues and CFOA to ensure that the peer challenge process considers equality and diversity issues in general and specifically in relation to recruitment.
- 13.3.7. We will respond to the recommendations of the Thomas review when it is published.

#### **13.4. Collaboration**

- 13.4.1. The LGA will continue to engage with NHS England, Public Health England, CFOA and Age UK to promote further joint working between the fire and rescue service and health, including contributing to the development of robust measures to assess the value provided by the fire and rescue service in engaging with this work.
- 13.4.2. We will continue to support and engage in this work, and will consider the scope in the near future for the LGA to support thinking on governance designed to further encourage and support collaboration.

#### **13.5. Funding**

- 13.5.1. We will continue to make the case for fair, risk based funding for the fire and rescue service and encourage the Home Office to recognise that the reduction in fire related and other incidents is due in large part to the prevention work undertaken by the fire and rescue service, and unless the service retains the capacity to continue this work there will be an inevitable rise in incidents and fire related deaths.

### **Communications and events**

14. There are a number of internal and external communications channels available to help FSMC promote the work it is doing and to seek the views of member authorities.  
Throughout the year we plan to continue to issue a quarterly e-bulletin, maintain the dedicated fire and rescue section of the LGA website and place the agenda and papers of both FSMC and Fire Commission on the site. In addition we will support members in outside speaking events and interviews, and ensure that fire and rescue service features and news items take their place in First magazine. We will also make use of twitter to keep in touch with our members.
15. Additionally we will arrange and support the annual fire conference, scheduled for 7-8 March 2017 in Gateshead, and deliver a dedicated Fire Leadership Essentials course, 25-26 October, with the possibility of a second course in 2017 if there is demand and funding is available.

### **Next steps**

16. Members are asked to:
- 16.1. Consider and comment on the draft proposals above; and
  - 16.2. Agree the priorities for FSMC to enable:
    - 16.2.1. Officers to prepare a detailed work programme to manage the day to day work; and
    - 16.2.2. The Chairman to communicate the agreed priorities to all members of Fire and Rescue Authorities.

### **Financial Implications**

17. The proposals set out in this paper can be delivered through existing resources.