

Fire Commission update report

Purpose

For information.

Summary

The report outlines issues of interest to the Commission not covered under the other items on the agenda.

Recommendation

That the Commission note the update.

Action

Officers to progress as appropriate.

Contact officer: Lucy Ellender
Position: Adviser
Phone no: 020 7664 3321
E-mail: lucy.ellender@local.gov.uk

Fire Commission update report

Ministerial Appointments

1. 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.
2. 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.

HMIC External Reference Group on inspection of the Fire and Rescue Service

3. On 4 October three members of the Fire Services Management Committee attended the first of two meetings of an External Reference Group on inspection of the fire service set up by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC). The Home Office has asked HMIC to propose an inspection system for the fire service, although no decision has been taken on who would conduct the inspections. The Group, which includes Chief Fire Officer Association (CFOA) representatives, discussed the principles behind inspection and will consider the form inspection takes and the timetable and nature of the roll out of inspections from April 2017. There is a broad consensus that there will still be a role for peer challenge.

Sprinklers in new school buildings

4. 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 Building Bulletin 100 was first published in 2007 and the review was intended to update out of date content.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.
5. 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.

6. The LGA will be writing to the Department for Education to call on them to restore the wording used in the 2007 version of Building Bulletin 100.

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

7. The Police and Crime Bill allows a police and crime commissioner (PCC) to replace a Fire and Rescue Authority subject to a business case covering economy, efficiency and effectiveness or public safety. The Association of Police and Crime Commissioner Chief Executives (APACE) established a working group to draw up a model business case earlier this year. The LGA is represented on this group by Cllr Rebecca Knox and by the Senior Fire Adviser.
8. Business cases will be referred to some form of independent security. The Home office asked FSMC lead members to write to the Minister setting out their views on the form this should take. The LGA has now written to the Home Office to propose that a Panel of experts from a range of fields look at the PCC's proposals and any counter proposals on the grounds of economy, efficiency and effectiveness or public safety.

Fire/Health

9. 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.

Electrical safety

10. 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. CFOA is represented on the group, as is the LGA. LGA work is being led by Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board.