

Professional Standards Body

Purpose of report

For discussion.

Summary

In her speech on fire reform in May 2016, the then Home Secretary, the Rt. Hon. Theresa May MP, committed to developing a coherent and comprehensive standards for the fire and rescue service. The Professional Standards Body will attend Fire Commission to outline the work taking place to establish a professional standards body and a set of professional standards for the Fire Sector.

Recommendations

Fire Commission members are asked to:

1. Note the work to establish a professional standards body; and
2. Provide views on the proposals being developed by the project team to inform future work on the establishment of a professional standards body.

Action

Officers to action as appropriate.

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Professional Standards Body

Background

1. In May 2016, the then Home Secretary set out the Home Office's commitment to developing a coherent and comprehensive set of professional standards as part of the work to increase accountability and transparency in the fire and rescue service.
2. In response, the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) commissioned the Chief Fire Officer for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, Dave Curry, to lead work to establish a working group to develop a body that could provide those professional standards.
3. The working group was set up with members drawn from the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), the Home Office, the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, and a range of partners.
4. Subsequently the working group has become a project board overseeing the work of a project team, with a membership of the board drawn from the Home Office, NFCC, the College of Policing, the devolved administrations, as well as the Local Government Association.

The Standards Body

5. The working group proposed that a Professional Standards Body would become the home for professional standards for Fire across a range of areas to ensure the highest standards of public service, delivery, accountability and integrity. It would create standards that individuals and Fire Services follow and would create a professional pathway for individuals, giving accreditation to Fire Sector professionals.
6. There has not been an independent standards function for the fire and rescue service previously. However, there was a Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council which '*was empowered by the Fire Services Act 1947 to advise the Home Secretary on all matters relating to the fire service, except fire fighters' conditions of service*'. It is the current expectation that the new Fire and Rescue National Framework for England will state that Fire and Rescue Services and Authorities are expected to be required to take due regard of the standards created by the new body.
7. The working group has explored various forms of models for the body, all of which include how it could be staffed and funded, the governance of how standards would be signed off, where it would be located and what it would be called. As part of the development, the working group considered whether the College of Policing, or parts thereof, could be replicated for fire. This development included working with policing colleagues and the College of Policing as part of the scoping phase, as well as looking at professional standards models from other professions.
8. Having established a project team the project board agreed a project plan with three work streams to build on this initial work:

- 8.1. *Establishing the current standards landscape.* This work has made it clear that there are a number of different interpretations of what a standard is, and the project team have therefore agreed a set of definitions as follows:
- 8.1.1. Standard – a mark of achievement or quality;
 - 8.1.2. Setting Standards – the process to establish the requirements for reaching the desired level of achievement or quality;
 - 8.1.3. Providing a standardised approach to delivery – providing supporting information and tools to help staff achieve desired outcomes in a common way.
- 8.2. The project is considering standards both from an organisational perspective (what does the organisation need to attain and maintain adherence to) and an individual standard (what does an individual need to attain and maintain adherence to). This collective of both organisational and individual standards will form a new standards framework. It is proposed, that this framework will act as a baseline for what a good organisation looks like, across all areas of its business, once the body is established.
- 8.3. *The options for a standard-setting process.* A key function for the new body will be the review and management of sector-owned standards, and the project team have conducted extensive research into how other sectors undertake this work and the process involved.
- 8.4. *The options for operating models for the proposed body.* The Home Office have been keen to understand if there are opportunities to align to, or work with the College of Policing. The project team have scoped a number of potential operating models, which were discussed at the Project Board in August.

Implications for Wales

9. The Project Board involves the Devolved Administrations and it is envisaged that Wales and other Devolved Administrations will be able to adopt some or all of the standards.

Financial Implications

10. The implementation and maintenance of an independent standards body will have financial implications and how the body would be funded is currently being explored.

Next steps

11. Members are asked to:
- 11.1. Note the work to establish a professional standards body; and
 - 11.2. Provide views on the proposals being developed by the project team to inform future work on the establishment of a professional standards body.