

Fire Commission Update paper

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

The report outlines issues of interest to the Fire Services Management Committee not covered under other items on the agenda, including the LGA member improvement offer.

Recommendation

That members of the Commission note the report.

Action

Officers to continue to provide updates to members.

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Fire Commission Update paper

Fire Reform Agenda

1. Over the summer both Cambridgeshire and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Authorities lost judicial reviews against Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner respectively.
2. Unless further challenges are brought the Cambridgeshire and West Mercia PCCs will join Essex, North Yorkshire, Staffordshire and Northamptonshire as Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners.

Spending Round

3. The Spending Round announcement on the 4 July was generally positive for local government, delivering a funding package of more than £3.5 billion for local services next year. This was the biggest year-on-year real terms increase in spending power for local government in a decade.
4. The Home Office received a settlement of £12.9 billion for 2020/21 which is a 6.1 percent real terms increase on 2019/20. For fire this should mean a settlement funding assessment which will increase by inflation.
5. An allocation process will now take place during which decisions on the specific funding for fire will be made. Lead members of the Fire Services Management Committee intend to continue discussions with the Home Office on what the allocations process will mean for fire and rescue authorities.
6. For the full press release please click the link [here](#).

Fire Statistics

7. New fire statistics were published in early August; the new statistics were about incidents attended by fire and rescue services in England for 2018/19 up to the end of year in March 2019.
8. Key statistics:
 - 8.1. There was a two percent increase in incidents attended compared to the previous year, of which 32 per cent were fires – a nine percent increase compared to the previous year and was driven by a 19 percent increase in secondary fires.¹

¹ Secondary fires are defined as small outdoor fires, not involving people or property.

- 8.2. Of the attended incidents, 32 per cent were fire related, 40 per cent were fire false alarms and 28 per cent were non-fire incidents.
- 8.3. There were 253 fire-related fatalities which is the lowest number of fatalities in the series and 25 percent less than the previous year (including the 71 fatalities from the Grenfell Tower fire).
- 8.4. Over the last decade the general trend of incidents has been in decline reaching a low point between 2012/13 and 2015/16 at around half a million a year. Since then the number has increased to around 576,000 incidents in 2018/19.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary of Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)

9. The second tranche of inspection results were published in June and can be found on the HMICFRS website [here](#).
10. The results of the second tranche are in general more positive than those in tranche one to a degree. There is only one finding of inadequate in the tranche, however there are also no outstanding results and the areas of concern and themes for improvement are very similar to those identified in the first tranche of inspection.
11. Main findings:
 - 11.1. The national report highlights 'considerable variation in definitions and how things are done across services' and cites localism as the reason for unhelpful variation. Similarly a variation in financial stability across different services was also highlighted, with some unable to absorb further reductions according to the inspectorate.
 - 11.2. Effectiveness – continues to be a strength for the sector, however, protection remains a considerable concern with teams under-resourced and unable to resource risk-based inspection programmes.
 - 11.3. Efficiency – services' prevention activities are not always targeted at those at most risk, the benefits of new technology are not being exploited, and operational learning is not always gathered in the most useful way.
 - 11.4. People – there is not enough progress in diversifying the workforce and in some areas diversity appears to be getting worse.
12. The Inspectorate made two recommendations within the national report which are summarised below:
 - 12.1. Recommendation 1: As soon as practicable the Home Office, National Fire Chiefs Council and Local Government Association to establish a programme

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of work to create consistency in four priority areas listed below and that by December 2020 there will be significant progress against those four areas:

- 12.1.1. Identifying and measuring emergency response standards and approaches;
 - 12.1.2. Identifying and determining risk as part of the IRMP process;
 - 12.1.3. Defining what are high-risk premises for the purposes of fire protection; and
 - 12.1.4. Setting an expectation for how frequently high-risk premises, and part of those premises, should be audited for compliance with fire safety legislation.
- 12.2. Recommendation 2: As part of the Spending Review, the Home Office in consultation with the Fire and Rescue Sector should address the deficit in the fire sector's national capacity and capability to support change.

13. The Inspectorate will publish a final tranche of inspection results in December and make recommendations in its first State of Fire and Rescue report, which we anticipate will be published at the same time.

Emergency Services Mobile Communications Project (ESMCP)

14. On the 11 May the National Audit Office report published a report into the ESMCP, the replacement to the Airwave system currently used by 107 blue light services in England Scotland and Wales for communications between control rooms and the field.
15. The report raised concerns about the management of the project by the Home Office, in particular the management of suppliers and contracts; time and cost overruns; and risk management. Members can access the full report [here](#).
16. On the 17 July the Home Affairs Select Committee also released a report on the project. The report raised similar concerns to the National Audit Office and came to six conclusions with accompanying recommendations as detailed below:
- 16.1. Concern 1: Despite extending the project by three years and increasing the budget by £3.1 billion, the Home Office still had not clear idea on whether it can be delivered.
 - 16.2. Recommendation 1: To produce a detailed project plan by October 2019 which includes when Airwave can realistically be turned off and the cost extending the Airwave system.
 - 16.3. Concern 2: An unhealthy 'good news' culture meaning warnings were not heeded.

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- 16.4. Recommendation 2: To write to the committee by October 2019 to set out the steps to be taken to improve senior oversight of the programme, to create challenge to current assumptions and to gain independent assurance.
 - 16.5. Concern 3: Mismanagement of the project means that emergency services do not have confidence that the Emergency Services Network (ESN) service will meet their needs.
 - 16.6. Recommendation 3: The Home Office should agree with users a set of specific and detailed criteria to determine when ESN is ready to replace Airwave.
 - 16.7. Concern 4: The Committee was not convinced that the Home Office has the plans or skills needed to integrate the different elements of ESN in to a coherent plan.
 - 16.8. Recommendation 4: Before contracting with another delivery partner, the Department should analyse the skills and tasks needed to integrate ESN, fill skills gaps and learn from lessons of previous contracts.
 - 16.9. Concern 5: Based on past failures the Home Office may not be able to manage the significant commercial risks facing the programme.
 - 16.10. Recommendation 5: The Home Office should write to the Committee by October 2019 setting out how it will manage these risks.
 - 16.11. Concern 6: Delays to the revised business case and further increases in cost raise doubts over the value for money case for ESN.
 - 16.12. Recommendation 6: The Home Office should ensure it delivers a revised and approved business case by the end of 2019, which should include a 'plan B' if the project failed the value for money test.
17. Members can read the full report [here](#).

Local Government Association member development offer

18. [LGA Leadership Essentials for Fire and Rescue](#): The LGA is holding two fire and rescue leadership essentials programmes in 2019/20 on 26-27 September 2019 and 12-13 February 2020. Both programmes will be held at Warwick Conferences. By the end of the course, delegates will have had the opportunity to:
 - 18.1. Develop a comprehensive understanding of the fire sector, including clarity on duties and responsibilities and on key partners like the Fire Services Management Committee, National Fire Chiefs Council, Home Office and fire unions.

- 18.2. Develop skills around collective leadership in fire and rescue authorities (FRAs).
 - 18.3. Gain a thorough understanding of good governance in fire and rescue authorities and practical skills to apply that understanding.
 - 18.4. Improve knowledge of the key strategic issues facing the sector, including building safety, the fire inspections regime and the emerging issue of culture, inclusion and diversity in the fire sector.
 - 18.5. Share ideas and network with leading members from a variety of FRAs.
- 19. Leading the fire sector:** Fire Services Management Committee have now launched a series of member development resources and events 'Leading the fire sector', including:
- 19.1. 'Leading the fire sector: Oversight of performance and engaging with inspection' guide is designed to help members to effectively hold senior officers to account in the context of a broad assurance landscape and inspection. The guide is due to be published shortly, it will be accessible via the LGA publications [webpage](#) and will also be circulated to Fire Commission members on publication.
 - 19.2. The LGA has commissioned two training events to accompany the Guide which will go through the practical application of the principles expressed in the guide. The events will take place on the 14 and 26 November and members can book on to the session via these links [Merseyside](#) and [Hampshire](#).
 - 19.3. Following five successful regional events earlier this year, two further 'Leading the fire sector: Culture, diversity and inclusion' events have been planned for January. The events will include speakers from key partners like HMICFRS, Women in Fire, the Asian Fire Services Association and the Fire Brigades Union. Members can book on to the session via the events [webpage](#) shortly.
- 20. Distance learning resources:** The LGA has produced a series of distance learning materials, covering a number of topics, in the form of workbooks and e-learning modules. For more information see this [webpage](#) and for access to the e-learning platform please email elarning@local.gov.uk. Particularly useful courses include:
- 20.1. Equality, Diversity and Unconscious Bias
 - 20.2. Community engagement and leadership
 - 20.3. Scrutiny for Councillors.