

Note of last Fire Services Management Committee meeting

Title:	Fire Services Management Committee
Date:	Friday 28 June 2019
Venue:	Smith Square 3&4, Ground Floor, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A** to this note

Item	Decisions and actions
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1	Chair's Welcome, Declarations of Interest and Apologies
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The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted the apologies.

2	On Call Staffing
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Terry McDermott, Chief Fire Officer Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service (FRS), and Paul Illman, Hampshire FRS, gave a presentation on the On-call recruitment campaign. The campaign stemmed from comments made in the Adrian Thomas review about the need for a national awareness programme for retained duty systems. Paul highlighted the high rate at which on-call staff left the service, the decline in applications to become on-call firefighters and therefore the cost of on-call recruitment on services, at nearly £10,000 for each service each year; in contrast the campaign cost £25,000 in total.

Members made the following comments:

- The on-call firefighters are an important part of the community and vital to the diversity of the workforce, but pay structure is a problem in terms of retaining on-call staff.

Terry McDermott and Paul Illman responded:

- Terry confirmed that retention is the next challenge to be addressed, but recruitment was the first phase of this work.
- The next stage will be to review pay, benefits and training across different services having surveyed Fire and Rescue Authorities.
- Alternative ways of operating on call will then need to be considered, for example, using on-call staff in other ways, like to do community safety work.

Decision

Members noted the presentation.

3	HMICFRS Tranche 2
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Lee Braithwaite, from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, gave a presentation on the findings of the second tranche of inspection and the ongoing work of the Inspectorate.

Lee outlined the timescales for the third tranche of inspections with all inspections being completed by early August and publication on the 9 December of the service reports and State of Fire and Rescue report, which will summarise the findings from all 45 of the inspections.

Lee went through the findings of the second tranche of inspections and how Fire Services measured against the three pillars of effectiveness, efficiency, and people. There were sixteen services in the second tranche of inspections with a good spread of size, geography and governance structure.

Lee took the committee through the outstanding results from Merseyside FRS, West Midlands FRS, and Oxfordshire FRS:

- Merseyside had excellent prevention practices where there is a high volume of activity, high workforce buy-in to prevention as a core activity rather than a bolt-on, and demonstrable evidence of a positive effect of this work in the data around arson and fire setting, accidental dwelling fires and deaths.
- West Midlands received outstanding in emergency response. They have used compelling data analysis to evidence their ambitious response standards, which they are generally hitting, and were able to demonstrate why it was important to the public. They were using technology innovatively to improve their response, using CCTV and 99eye to allow control room staff to visually assess an incident and make early decisions about what resources need to be deployed.
- Oxfordshire received an outstanding in the people pillar. Despite being a county council service, where values, culture and behaviours of the council can feel detached from those of the fire service, Oxfordshire had created values, culture and behaviours which were aligned with the council, but were relevant to and known by the workforce and demonstrated at every level.

Overall the Effectiveness and Efficiency pillar gradings were similar to the first tranche of inspections with about a 50/50 split between good and requires improvement. The People pillar gradings were notably stronger with almost a 50/50 split between good and requires improvement, compared with only three goods in the first tranche.

Lee then went through key findings from the Effectiveness pillar:

- Risk was initially assessed by how services assess and mitigate risk. The Inspectorate found that services have very wide range of methodologies for defining and mitigating risk. Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMP) vary across the country and also compliance to the plan varied from service to service.
- Risk was also assessed by the quality of risk information available to operational staff. The inspectorate found that systems for maintaining and gathering this data were poor and staff expectation of the quality of that data was also low.
- There was a generally positive picture on prevention with services embracing the change from home safety to safe and well visits, evidence of good partnership working in terms of data sharing arrangements. However, evaluation of those activities would help to evidence the effectiveness of this work.
- Findings around protection mimicked the first tranche findings where teams are under resourced and unable to carry out the full programme of audits for high risk premises. There is also disparity across different areas in terms of the definition of a high-risk premises and how often high-risk premises are being audited.
- There was evidence of a strong operational response as expected. However, the

variety of response standards and ways of measuring response makes comparison a challenge for the Inspectorate, for services and for the public.

- There was evidence of strong arrangements in place for national incidents requiring cross-service cooperation. However, a specific concern was that Greater Manchester didn't have Marauding Terrorist Attack (MTA) capability at the time of inspection due to local industrial relations issues, but instead had an arrangement with Merseyside.

Lee then went through the key findings from the Efficiency pillar:

- In general services were similar to tranche 2 in terms of using resource to manage risk. However, finances were so constrained in two services (Northamptonshire and Northumberland) that the Inspectorate felt that further cuts to budgets would have an impact on public safety. In those areas it had become business as usual to operate with fewer appliances than indicated in the IRMP.
- Efficiency around protection echoed the comments around effectiveness in protection teams. Some services working to increase staff in their protection teams have the challenge of upskilling those staff members which can take up to two years.
- In terms of transformation there is good work going on in certain areas, in particular West Midlands. In Kent and Oxfordshire there is innovation around location of appliances and staffing. There is some good work going on around different duty systems and appliance crewing.
- There is lots of collaboration going on, but in a similar manager to prevention work this work needs to be evaluated to realise benefits.

Lee outlined the key findings from the People pillar:

- Welfare and health and safety arrangements are still good, as with tranche 1. Mental health provision is receiving more attention and in particular post-traumatic incident support.
- There is a mixed picture on values, cultures and behaviours, with particularly good services being Oxfordshire, Kent and Shropshire. In other services values and behaviours are still not understood throughout the organisation and where they are not embraced middle and senior managers are not always challenging this.
- Training delivery is a strength for services, well-resourced and well-delivered. Central training is well recorded, however, for watch-training this was not always the case, with poor record keeping of training undertaken making it difficult to assure those skills.
- Most services have development pathways for future leadership, although they tend to be very traditional. Only a couple of services are looking into other ways to foster their staff with high-potential, Humberside and Kent.
- Temporary promotions are a useful tool for giving junior staff the opportunity to develop and to help with workforce issues. However, there appears to be overuse of temporary promotions in some cases, which cause tangible workforce issues around job security and confidence to challenge others.
- Every service is trying to make a difference in terms of the diversity of their workforce, but with limited success. Good examples include internships for people with disabilities at Royal Berkshire, taster-days and preselection training, and flexible working and job-share as key part of the advertising campaign at Shropshire.

Lee detailed the recommendations from the report focusing on the need for consistency of definitions and standards across four priority areas: emergency response standards, determining risk to the public, definition of high-risk premises and compliance to the standards set for auditing high-risk premises

The second recommendation is for the Home Office to create and resource the national capacity to support the transformation that they require of the fire and rescue service.

Lee outlined the legal status of these recommendations, which is that whilst individual fire

and rescue services must have due regard to the recommendations as stated in the National Framework, the Inspectorate has no legal authority to say that the rest of the sector or Home Office will respond to the recommendations in the National report.

Finally Lee outlined the possible themes in the State of Fire and Rescue report from his perspective as Assistant Director for People as values, culture and leadership, with particular reference to watch-culture and barriers to workforce reform. Lee confirmed that the question of Chief Fire Officers operational independence in comparison to Chief Constables may still be included in the final report and that the idea of 'postcode lottery' may well persist.

Members made the following comments:

- National standards should not dictate local arrangements in terms of number of firefighters per appliance and specific response times. Standards for response should be assessed in a qualitative manner, for example what were the outcomes achieved when responding to a fire. As long as this recommendation is about consistency in measurement of response that is fine.
- Response times are also completely focused on fire, but actually most incidents are for other incidents and those response times need to be part of this assessment.
- Postcode lottery is not necessarily a helpful term for HMICFRS to be using. These services are locally determined by local choice and difference isn't necessarily a problem.
- Were the two services facing constrained financial circumstances doing so because of national funding decisions or local issues?
- Consistency is needed in terms of the IRMP as all elements of the service flow from this document, and there needed to be consistency in how response times were measured.
- Was there any work underway on what constituted high risk?
- Recommendations made by HMICFRS need to be addressed quickly, rather than waiting for the third tranche of results.

Lee responded:

- HMICFRS recognise that services know their own risk and must make the appropriate arrangements, and HMICFRS was not trying to prescribe response standards or standardise the times, but were looking for there to be a common way of measuring response times. However, services should know why they set their response standards as they do, and be able to demonstrate their rationale.
- How services are funded is important, but understanding what the capacity of services are currently achieving is important as well, as is looking at the focus they give to allocating resources for example putting more into response than into protection.

Decision

Members noted the presentation and welcomed the opportunity to discuss this further at other meetings, for example Fire Commission.

Action

Lead Members to review how to respond to the HMICFRS recommendations with the NFCC and to decide on a way forward.

Ann Millington presented on the work the NFCC has done on recruiting and developing leaders in the fire sector. Ann Millington highlighted the high number of chiefs leaving the service in the next two years and the activity which she as NFCC lead for People has been doing:

- A new NFCC Leadership Framework was published in January after a thorough consultation which should help with recruitment at all levels.
- Ann has distributed a list of questions for aspiring chiefs to consider in the run up to this expected turnover and is working on promoting mentoring for junior officers to help them consider whether they are suited to senior leadership.

Ann highlighted issues that continue to prevail in fire leadership, including the assumption that chiefs need to have an operational background and to have come up through the ranks in the traditional manner. This assumption is harmful to the development of strong leadership teams as it puts operational experience above other necessary skills for senior leadership and narrows the talent pool. To address this FRAs need to be clear that when they look to appoint leaders from a non-operational background that they were doing so because they wanted to appoint the best person to run the service. Ann informed members that she and other chiefs were sponsoring a debate at the NFCC meeting on this topic and more broadly about direct entry at various levels.

Ann raised the concern that where recruitment from outside the sector has occurred, and particularly where those recruited have been women, there had often been a virulent backlash in social media.

Ann asked members to lend their official support to this position and to challenge others who are wedded to this idea or who do not support direct entrants in senior roles.

Members made the following comments:

- The committee is committed to this agenda, endorses the work going on under Ann as NFCC lead for People and agreed that the service is strongest and performs best with more diverse workforces recruited for their skills and merit.
- Bringing in experience from outside the sector would improve the skills the sector needed such as around people management.
- The talent pool is small in the service and FRS' need to invest in better talent management to develop more junior members of staff a lot earlier to ensure development and retention. It is important to signpost early the future leaders of tomorrow.
- With the turnover of senior staff in the next two years we need to invest rapidly in this training.

Ann Millington responded:

- A strategic approach to succession planning for new diverse leaders is vital to building up the service, as part of this the NFCC is developing a standard job description and advert for a chief executive/chief fire officer which authorities can use.
- Supporting outside appointments to ensure they feel welcome to the service is important to retention.

Decision

Members noted the presentation and committed to supporting the position that senior officers in the fire service must be recruitment on skills rather than operational training and that direct entry appointments create a more diverse senior leadership team which is positive for the fire and rescue services.

Action

Ann Millington to work with officers and Lead Members to promote this position and to define how FSMC can support this work.

5 Fire Services Management Committee annual report and policy priorities for 2019-20

Mark Norris presented the Fire Services Management Committee annual report and asked members to discuss priorities for the 2019-20 political cycle.

Members made the following comments:

- The report made reference to the Fire Vision 2024, and there needed to be a link between the Vision and the work plan. However as the Vision had been written before the Grenfell fire consideration should be given to revisiting it and seeing if there were elements that needed to be changed.
- The priorities for the coming year should focus on responding to publication of the Phase 1 Grenfell Inquiry report and HMICFRS's State of Fire and Rescue report.
- Considering the current instability in parliament officers should develop a lobbying strategy around changes in government.

Decision

Members noted the report and agreed to review the priorities at the next FSMC meeting in October.

Action

Officers to use comments to revise the priorities paper and to consult on it with Fire Commission prior to bringing it back to FSMC.

6 Workforce Paper

Gill Gittins and Clair Alcock presented the industrial relations and pension issues at present.

Decision

Members noted the report.

7 Fire Safety in High Rise Buildings

Charles Loft updated on the LGA's building safety related work and highlighted that MHCLG has now published a consultation document on its proposals for building safety reform and the Home Office has produced a call for evidence on the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 which sits alongside it.

Decision

Members noted the report.

8 NFCC update paper

Roy Wilsher summarised the current work of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Central Programme Office, and provided an update from Committee Chairs.

Decision

Members noted the report.

9 Update Paper and Outside Bodies

Jess Norman outlined issues of interest to the Committee not covered under the other items on the agenda.

Decision

Members noted the report.

10 Minutes of the previous meeting

Members noted the minutes.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Ian Stephens	Isle of Wight Council
Vice-Chairman	Ms Fiona Twycross AM	Greater London Authority
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Nick Chard	Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Keith Aspden	North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service
Members	Cllr Eric Carter	Telford and Wrekin Council
	Cllr Mark Healey MBE	Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Roger Hirst	Essex County Council
	Cllr Rebecca Knox	Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service
	Cllr Les Byrom CBE	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr John Edwards	West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Nikki Hennessy	Lancashire County Council
Apologies	Cllr Jason Ablewhite	Huntingdonshire District Council
	Cllr John Robinson JP	County Durham and Darlington Fire & Rescue Authority