

## **Note of last Fire Services Management Committee meeting**

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<b>Title:</b>	Fire Services Management Committee
<b>Date:</b>	Friday 24 January 2020
<b>Venue:</b>	Smith Square 1&2, Ground Floor, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

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### **Attendance**

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

<b>Item</b>	<b>Decisions and actions</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest</b>  The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting.  Apologies were received from Cllr Carole Burdis.  There were no declarations of interest.	
<b>2</b>	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting</b>  The minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 October 2019 were agreed.	
<b>3</b>	<b>HMICFRS State of Fire &amp; Rescue report</b>  The Chair welcomed HMI Zoe Billingham and asked her to present the findings of the State of Fire & Rescue Report to the Committee.  Zoe explained that this was the first State of Fire & Rescue report and was based on inspections carried out between June 2018 and August 2019. She apologised for the delayed publication of the report and said that this was because of changes to the Parliamentary timetable brought about by December's General Election.  Zoe said that only 16 services had been graded as 'good' for all 3 pillars with the 'effectiveness' pillar being the strongest for most services and the 'people' pillar the weakest. She added that for the next round of inspections, there would be a greater focus on the 'efficiency' pillar.  Zoe highlighted some of the good practice that they had found - in particular, strong response to emergencies and good collaboration between services. She then went on to talk about the areas where services needed to improve such as compliance with fire safety regulations, workforce diversity and a toxic culture in some. She added that overall, there were some serious barriers to change faced by services	

including - the strength of the FBU; lack of consensus over the role of firefighters; ineffective national staff negotiating mechanisms; unclear demarcation between political oversight and operational leadership; and variable capacity to bring about change. Overall, the inspectors concluded that significant reform was needed across the sector both locally and nationally to address these issues.

Zoe concluded by running through the reports 4 recommendations – (i) Home Office to define the role of Fire & Rescue Services; (ii) Home Office, LGA and NFCC to consider reforming pay negotiation machinery; (iii) Home Office to consider legislating to give Chief Fire Officers (CFOs) operational independence; (iv) NFCC and LGA to produce a code of ethics for Fire & Rescue Services.

Following Zoe's presentation, there was a discussion amongst members during which the following comments and questions were raised:

- What was the evidence base for giving CFO's operational independence? Some members expressed the view that this wasn't an issue in their authorities and others said that it would risk losing democratic and community oversight, and the checks and balances on decision-making, which Fire & Rescue Authorities bring. Zoe quoted examples of where she had been told that Fire Authorities were blocking sensible operational decisions by CFOs. Members responded by saying that there were a lot of grey areas between operational and strategic decision-making and that in practice CFOs generally consulted with their fire authorities before making key or controversial decisions. In addition, it was stated that the Police and Fire services were very different when it came to operational decision making and so it was wrong to make comparisons between the two.
- It was suggested that there was a tension in the report between national and local factors and it wasn't clear whether more central direction was being recommended. Zoe admitted that this could have been made clearer in the report but she said that, although there would inevitably be some local variation between services, at the moment there was far too much inconsistency, especially with IRMPs.
- Concern was expressed that FRS's were not getting the political steer from the Government that they needed in order to fulfil expectations. Jonny Bugg from the Home Office responded by saying that the State of Fire & Rescue report had landed well with Ministers and that one of the key questions for the Home Office was how to boost change capacity in fire services.
- The report was considered to be a good benchmarking exercise but members queried what came next. With the next round of inspections due to start already later in the year, members felt that more time was required in order to respond to the recommendations from the first tranche. Zoe acknowledged this point and said that HMICFRS had tried to give longer gaps between inspections for the services that required greater

improvement.

- Concern was expressed that, with its recommendations, HMICFRS was in some way stepping into the role that Government should be playing, and that it was becoming more than an inspectorate. Zoe denied that this was the case and said that it would have been strange if they hadn't come up with some recommended courses of action following all the inspections.
- Disappointment was expressed that there weren't any recommendations on the 'people' pillar. The conversation at the morning's Fire Commission meeting about changing the culture in the service was referenced, and it was felt that services that fell short on this pillar should have the spotlight shined on them. Zoe said that they could have made recommendations on many more issues but had agreed that it would be more helpful to focus on four at this stage. She added that the recommendation about adopting a code of ethics was aimed at addressing some of these cultural problems.
- It was stated that there was a 98 per cent satisfaction rate amongst the public with fire services nationally and that this should be taken into account when making judgements about them.
- It was stated that many fire services were in need of modernisation in many aspects of their operations and so this report was a welcome wake up call.
- Members agreed that it would be beneficial to have a wider airing of the report's recommendations at the LGA Fire Conference in March.

### **Decision**

FSMC Members:

1. Noted the publication of HMICFRS's State of Fire and Rescue report.
2. Thanked Zoe for attending the meeting to discuss the contents of the report.
3. Agreed the way forward set out in paragraph 11 of the report in response to the four recommendations made by HMICFRS.

### **Action**

- Officers to arrange a discussion session on the State of Fire & Rescue Report at the LGA Fire Conference in March.

## **4 Comprehensive Spending Review**

The Chair asked Lucy Ellender to introduce the report.

Lucy circulated a risk register associated with the proposal. She explained that following discussions with Lead Members and the NFCC a letter had been sent out to fire and rescue authorities asking for them to commit to

funding to create a central Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) team. Lucy said that at the current time, she had received 27 positive responses with 17 FRA's yet to reply, and that FRAs who agreed to provide funding would be invoiced by the end of the financial year.

Lucy said that she was working closely with John Buckley, the NFCC finance lead, on job descriptions, and he would provide line management for the new team.

Following Lucy's introduction, Members made the following comments:

- Cllr Chard offered to speak to FRA's who were yet to respond, or who responded negatively to the letter.
- Several members suggested that they hadn't received the letter. Lucy agreed to check and resend if necessary. The Chair suggested that a reminder be sent to the authorities who were yet to respond.

### **Decision**

Members noted the terms of reference for the CSR team and the associated risk register and agreed that LGA and NFCC officers should proceed with the creation the team.

### **Action**

Officers to send a reminder e-mail to authorities who hadn't yet responded.

## **5 Climate Change**

The Chair asked Lucy Ellender to introduce the report.

Lucy explained that Lead Members had agreed that a document should be written, and presented at the LGA Fire Conference, which would set out the role that fire and rescue services could play in tackling the climate emergency, both in terms of reducing their carbon footprint and responding to the consequences of more frequent severe weather events.

Lucy asked members for comments and a steer on the questions set out in paragraph 18. In particular should the LGA and NFCC be seeking to develop a vision for what carbon neutral fire and rescue services would look like in 2050, and what changes individual services would need to make to meet that commitment? In addition, she asked members to consider how work at a national level on procurement and research and development could assist FRAs?

Following Lucy's introduction, members raised the following questions and comments:

- It was suggested that some short, medium and long-term targets should be set that services could contribute to, either individually or jointly.
- Members asked if there were any examples of best practice already out there that could be replicated? Lucy said that there

were some, and these would be set out in the document, but they could always do with more.

- The Chair suggested that a small working group of FSMC members be set up to take this work forward, along the lines of the sprinkler working group. It was agreed that this proposal should be discussed at the next Lead Member meeting.

### **Decision**

Members noted the report and agreed that officers should continue to work towards launching a publication at the LGA Fire Conference in March 2020, taking into account the comments made during the discussion.

### **Action**

Lead members to consider setting up a climate change working group.

## **6 LGA Fire Conference and Exhibition 2020 and venue options for Fire Conference 2021**

The Chair asked Jess Norman to introduce the report.

Jess said that the report set out the proposed programme for the 2020 Fire Conference, including proposed speakers and session chairs and asked whether members had any comments.

She also set out the 3 options for the location of the 2021 conference highlighting the pros and cons of each.

Members agreed that in the light of the importance of the recommendations from the HMICFRS State of Fire & Rescue report, it would be beneficial to have 2 sessions at the conference devoted to discussing these. It was agreed that these should take the place of the proposed “future of on-call” and “shadow ministers” sessions.

Members further agreed that the venue for the 2021 Fire Conference should be the Hilton in Gateshead.

### **Decision**

Members noted the programme and chairing allocations for the LGA Fire Conference 2020 and agreed that the proposed “future of on-call” and “shadow ministers” sessions should be replaced by two sessions on the recommendations from the HMICFRS State of Fire & Rescue report.

Members agreed that the venue for the 2021 LGA Fire Conference should be the Hilton in Gateshead.

## **7 Workforce update**

The Chair asked Gill Gittins to introduce the update.

Gill highlighted the work of the Inclusive Fire Service Group which comprises the National Employers, the NFCC, the Fire Brigades Union, the Fire Officers Association and the Fire and Rescue Services Association which seeks to secure improvements in fire service equality, diversity, inclusion and cultural issues. She said that this was particularly pertinent in the light of the HMICFRS's findings in these areas.

Members asked whether there was any new information on the financial implications of the McCloud judgement for FRAs. Gill said that there wasn't but, as the decision was outside of the control of the fire service nationally, it was unlikely that any extra costs would fall on FRAs and, if they did, there would be a good case for new burdens funding.

### **Decision**

Members noted the update.

## **8 FSMC update**

The update was noted without discussion.

### **Decision**

Members noted the update.

## **9 NFCC update**

The Chair asked Nick Collins to introduce the report.

Nick said that he didn't have anything particular to add to the update but was happy to answer questions.

Members asked if the NFCC was going to be responding to the State of Fire & Rescue report. Nick said that the Chair issued a press statement on the day the report was released but that they would also be writing to Sir Tom Winsor seeking greater clarity on specific recommendations, for example on the meaning of 'operational independence'.

### **Decision**

Members noted the update.

## **10 Update on NFCC and National Employers (England) partnership working**

As this was a confidential item, the Chair asked any press or public present to leave the room. He then asked Gill Gittins and Nick Collins to present their report to the Committee.

Gill explained that the report updated members on the Fit for the Future work currently being undertaken by the National Employers (England) and the NFCC and said that they were seeking members' agreement for the

LGA to become the third official partner.

Gill highlighted the proposed new draft of the Fit for the Future document attached at Appendix B and in particular, the summary of the improvement objectives on page 105.

Nick expanded further on the objectives and outlined the approach that was being taken to implement these, including a Strategic Improvement Model, creating an improvement narrative and developing a business case to present to Government. Nick and Gill both stressed that pay matters related to broadening the role of firefighters would be a separate business case from the wider work being undertaken by the LGA and NFCC on the Comprehensive Spending Review covered earlier in the meeting. They said that this approach had been endorsed by Lead Members at their last meeting on 9 January.

Members welcomed the presentation and the work being undertaken as part of Fit for the Future and agreed that they were happy to support the approach and for the LGA to become the third partner. The only reservations expressed were about the tight timescale for delivering it. Gill and Nick reassured members that they were comfortable with the timetable.

### **Decision**

Members agreed that the LGA should become the third partner, alongside the NFCC and National Employers (England), on the Fit for the Future workstream.

### **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
	Cllr Keith Aspden	North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service
Members	Cllr Eric Carter	Shropshire and Telford Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Mark Healey	Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority
	Mr Roger Hirst	Essex Police Fire and Crime Commissioner
	Cllr Rebecca Knox	Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service
	Cllr Nikki Hennessy	Lancashire Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Karen Kilgour	Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Les Byrom CBE	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority
Apologies	Cllr Carolyn Lambert	East Sussex Fire Authority
	Cllr Cleo Lake	Avon Fire and Rescue Authority
In Attendance	Cllr Roger Price	Hampshire Fire & Rescue Authority

Commissioner Andy Roe  
Nick Collins  
Jonny Bugg  
Steven Adams

London Fire Brigade  
NFCC  
Home Office  
NFCC/LFB