

Fire Commission Update paper

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

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

Recommendation

That members of the Commission note the report.

Actions

Officers to continue to provide updates to members.

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Fire Commission Update paper

New Fire Minister

1. On 18 March Stephen Greenhalgh was appointed an unpaid Minister of State jointly at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Home Office on 18 March 2020, he has since become Baron Greenhalgh. His portfolio spans both fire and buildings safety. He is also Communities Minister.
2. James Brokenshire had been appointed Minister for Security at the Home Office a month earlier with responsibilities including fire, which have now transferred to Lord Greenhalgh, although we assume James Brokenshire will answer fire questions in the House of Commons.
3. The new Minister has asked for regular meetings with FSMC lead members. The first of these will take place in June.

LGA Fire Conference

4. The LGA Fire Conference was held in Blackpool in March. There is anecdotal evidence that turnout was affected by Covid 19 concerns but although there was a slight drop in sponsorship and exhibition income the Conference remains profitable.
5. The user feedback survey showed an increase in satisfaction from the previous year to almost 90 per cent. However, once again, very few attendees responded to the survey.
6. At present we are not advertising the 2021 conference online, pending decisions about LGA events in the current crisis.

Comprehensive Spending Review Team

7. At the November FSMC meeting members agreed to support a proposal to develop the sector's spending review submission through a joint National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC)/LGA resource. At the meeting in January members agreed the terms of reference for the Spending Review Team. The report and terms of reference can be accessed [here](#).
8. All fire and rescue authorities have now agreed to financially support this work and invoices have been issued to services.
9. Interviews for the post of CSR Team Leader were held on 26 February and Amy Webb, Chair of the Fire Finance Network and Director of Finance and Resourcing at Devon and Somerset FRS has now been appointed Team Leader of the Comprehensive Spending Review team.

10. Amy began her secondment in mid-March but the CSR was almost immediately suspended. Amy has remained in post supporting work by the sector to secure Government funding in relation to Covid 19 and as a liaison on issues around fire finance. This has contributed to the £48m for fire in the second tranche of emergency funding.
11. As yet no further recruitment has taken place to the team and the position will be reviewed by FSMC lead members as the future timetable for the CSR becomes clearer.
12. Key to the success of the project will be ensuring that we are able to have access to good quality evidence to underpin the arguments we will be making. Requests for information will be sent out to fire and rescue services as they are identified.
13. It will also be important to ensure that this work is joined up with the work being undertaken by the NJC on a pay claim into the CSR. Officers will ensure that the two pieces of work are coordinated.

**Her Majesties Inspectorate for Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)
–response to State of Fire and Rescue**

14. The recommendations within the State of Fire Report are:
 - 14.1. By June 2020, the Home Office, in consultation with the fire and rescue sector, should review and with precision determine the roles of: (a) fire and rescue services; and (b) those who work in them
 - 14.2. By June 2020, the Home Office, the Local Government Association, the National Fire Chiefs Council and trade unions should consider whether the current pay negotiation machinery requires fundamental reform. If so, this should include the need for an independent pay review body and the future of the 'grey book'.
 - 14.3. By September 2020, the Home Office should consider the case for legislating to give chief fire officers operational independence. In the meantime, it should issue clear guidance, possibly through an amendment to the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, on the demarcation between those responsible for governance and operational decision making by the chief fire officer.
 - 14.4. By December 2020, the National Fire Chiefs Council, with the Local Government Association, should produce a code of ethics for fire and rescue services. The code should be adopted by every service in England and considered as part of each employee's progression and annual performance appraisal.

15. This timetable will obviously have to be revised and officers should be able to update verbally on this at the Commission meeting.
16. The LGA and NFCC held a meeting in February to discuss the recommendations at which it was agreed to hold a workshop on each of recommendations 1-3, to discuss the recommendations in more detail and consider a sector response. None of these workshops has taken place as yet, due to Covid-19.
17. Members also agreed that the NFCC and LGA should write a joint letter to Sir Tom Winsor to ask for a meeting to discuss the recommendations, in order to understand his reasoning for the recommendations and the evidence that underpinned them.
18. The code of ethics work is being led by the NFCC but the LGA and FSMC will input into its development in order to ensure a jointly agreed approach before any wider circulation. Members outlined their support for a code of ethics based around the Nolan Principles. This work is coming under the People Programme in the NFCC and officers will continue to feed in members' views. There is also crossover with the work of the Fire Standards Board.

Her Majesties Inspectorate for Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Cycle 2

19. The inspection programme for cycle two has now been approved and the Inspectorate was due to commence the second cycle of inspection in April. On 13 March HMICFRS suspended all inspection work which requires appreciable input from FRSs. When the inspection cycle resumes it will again take place in three tranches with a national report at the publication of each tranche. The grading system will remain the same as in the first cycle, however, the Inspectorate intends to comment explicitly on the progress made by each service against their last inspection. HMICFRS will also continue monitoring services in between inspections to promote improvement where a cause for concern has been highlighted.
20. The cycle two inspection programme and framework can be found on the Inspectorates website here: <https://www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/frs-inspection-programme-and-framework-2020-21.pdf>

Fire Standards Board

21. The Fire Standards Board has now been running for just over a year and is coming to the stage of publishing the first standard. In preparation for this a new website has been established which can be viewed here: <https://www.firestandards.org/>

Latest Firefighters' Pension Scheme bulletin

22. [FPS bulletin 28](#) contains a detailed update on transitional protections remedy. Help is needed on our national member website project.

LGA Events

23. The LGA Fire Pensions Annual Conference will take place in London on 22-23 September 2020. At present, the intention is to hold it virtually. Further details will be circulated once they are available.

Outside bodies update

24. Her Majesties Inspectorate for Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service External Reference Group: Roger Hirst attended the External Reference Group on the 27 January representing the Fire Services Management Committee. The Group discussed the outcomes of the State of Fire and Rescue report, the second cycle of inspections, monitoring arrangements and possible thematic and governance inspections processes. Another meeting is scheduled for 12 May.
25. Strategic Resilience Board: The Board took place on 29 January and Cllr Les Byrom and Cllr Cleo Lake attended for the LGA. Discussions focussed on flooding response capability and industrial relations. A further meeting was held on 27 April, focussing on the response to and impact of Covid 19. Cllr Les Byrom attended.
26. LGA Fire Diversity and Inclusion Champions Network: Fiona Twycross opened and led the first meeting of the Network which has been established to provide a forum for elected members with responsibility for Diversity and Inclusion to network, share their local challenges and best practice. The meeting was attended by twenty authorities and established the general purpose of the network and future ways of working.
27. LGA Leading the Fire Sector: Culture, diversity and inclusion event: Cllr Rebecca Knox led the LGA masterclass on culture, diversity and inclusion in Salisbury in January. Fifteen fire officers and fire authority members attended the full day events and heard from speakers from the Fire Inspectorate, Avon Fire and Rescue Service, Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service and from Women in Fire.
28. Fire Lawyers' Network: Officers attended the Network where the focus of the meeting was on diversity and inclusion and the use of the positive action elements of the Equality Act 2010.
29. LGA Fire and Rescue Leadership Essentials, Programme 14: Fiona Twycross opened and lead the fourteenth Fire and Rescue Leadership Essentials programme in early February, where seventeen delegates including elected members and an officer from a police, fire and crime commissioner area.
30. National Fire Chiefs Council – People Engagement Forum: Cllr Roger Price attended the Forum on 25 February where the forum discussed items related to the NFCC People Programme. The forum received updates on various aspects of the programme and made comments on key projects including the Fire Standards Board and the Leadership Programme Project Initiation plan, which included the Code of Ethics.
31. National Fire Chiefs Council – On Call Closure meeting: The Group met on the 2 March.

32. National Fire Chiefs Council – Strategic Engagement Forum: The Forum met on the 4 March.
33. Fire Standards Board. The Board met on 27 March. Cllr Nick Chard attended. The Board discussed its delivery plan and the impact of Covid 19 on its timescales. It still hopes to make some progress this year.