

Fire Services Management Committee Update paper

Purpose of report

For discussion.

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 Committee note the report, and endorse the proposal in paragraph 7 to bring a further paper to the Committee in the autumn about the use of the resources available to support the sector's Spending Review work.

Actions

Officers to continue to provide updates to members.

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New Fire Minister

1. In February 2020 James Brokenshire was appointed Minister for Security at the Home Office with responsibility for fire. However, on the 18 March this responsibility was transferred to Lord Greenhalgh who is now an unpaid Minister of State jointly at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Home Office. His portfolio spans both fire and building safety. He is also Communities Minister. We assume James Brokenshire will answer fire questions in the House of Commons.
2. Lord Greenhalgh attended the last Fire Commission on the 15 May where he outlined his experience in local government and his priorities for fire: Professionalism, People and Governance. The minister requested regular meetings with FSMC lead members, the first of which took place on the 8 June.

FRS COVID-19 activity

3. The fire service National Employers, Fire Brigades Union and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) reached an agreement on 26 March which, together with National Joint Council agreement, has meant that to date 14 additional areas of work have become available to the fire and rescue service to deliver additional activities.
4. This [Tripartite](#) agreement has enabled all fire services to “step up” in supporting the effort to minimise the impact of Covid-19 on our communities. The table below demonstrates both the range and quantity of additional activities that have already been carried out by fire services.

Additional Fire Service Activities 24th March – 31st May	
Vulnerable persons - delivery of essential items	58519
Movement of bodies	2001
Face fitting for masks to be used by frontline NHS and clinical care staff	3259
Delivery of PPE and other medical supplies	15075
Assisting in taking samples for Antigen testing	720
Assembly of single use face masks	66100
Packaging of food supplies	14158
Driving instruction by FRS driver to deliver training for non-FS personnel to drive ambulances	253
Ambulance service assistance - ambulance driving and ambulance personnel support	30494
Driving ambulance transport not on blue lights - excluding COVID-19 patients	716
Known COVID-19 patients transfer to and from hospital	1438
Non COVID-19 patients transfer to and from hospital	3337

5. At Fire Commission on the 15 May members were asked to provide examples of activities of their local services have been undertaking during this period; their submissions and other reports can be seen in **Appendix A**.

Comprehensive Spending Review Team

6. Since being appointed in March, the Sector Spending Review lead (Amy Webb) has also been acting as sector finance lead for Coronavirus, supporting the Home Office and MHCLG with securing a significant increase for fire in the second tranche of funding at £48 million. This success has been thanks to FRA colleagues who have provided the information to evidence the funding bid which was put forward.
7. Latest intelligence from central government is that the Spending Review (SR) is likely to be undertaken over the summer and cover one year, although this is subject to confirmation from the Treasury. In light of the changing landscape and likely move away from a longer-term SR, recruitment of a wider team has been deferred. With recruitment on hold and no travel expenses, the £200,000 funding will stretch further and provides an opportunity to maintain capability to support this SR using the lead only, with an intention to revisit team requirements later in the year. Committee members are asked to endorse this approach in the short term, with options on how to best utilise the remaining funds to be proposed in the autumn.
8. Work is now underway to evidence spending pressures and emerging funding challenges in light of the Coronavirus pandemic as well as ensuring that bids for improvement activity are aligned to the Fit for the Future framework. The Senior Sector Group comprising of members of the FSMC, NFCC and Home Office will be reinvigorated in late June/ early July to consider the case for funding going forward.

LGA Fire Commission

9. LGA Fire Commission was held virtually on the 15 May via Zoom. Speakers for the Commission included Lord Greenhalgh as mentioned above, Peter Baker from the Health and Safety Executive on the building safety programme, and Roy Wilsher from the National Fire Chiefs Council, who updated on COVID-19 related work.
10. The Commission was attended by around 80 attendees, which is the highest number of attendees we have ever had for the Commission.
11. Following Roy Wilsher's update on COVID-19 related activity, Cllr Ian Stephens requested that members update us with information on what their service have been doing during the crisis. Several members have supplied this already, but if you would like to contribute please do email your submissions to Jonathan.Bryant@local.gov.uk.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Cycle 2

12. The inspection programme for cycle two has now been approved and the Inspectorate is commencing the second cycle of inspection in April. On the 13 March HMICFRS suspended all inspection work which requires appreciable input from FRSs to enable them to focus on responding to COVID-19. Cycle two is not expected to recommence until next year.

Outside bodies update

13. LGA Fire Diversity and Inclusion Champions Network: Cllr Rebecca Knox chaired a lunchtime meeting of the Network on the 10 March at LGA Fire Conference where the Networks Terms of Reference were agreed and an approach to future work was agreed.
14. Strategic Resilience Board: Cllr Cleo Lake attended this meeting on the 27 April where the impact of COVID 19 on the fire sector of discussed. Members updated that availability remained high with a low level of absenteeism.
15. National Fire Chiefs Council: Strategic Engagement Forum: Cllr Cleo Lake attended the most recent meeting of the NFCC Strategic Engagement Forum on 27 May. Members of the Forum received an update on the work of the NFCC, including that in respect of the COVID-19 response phase. In addition, it was agreed that the next meeting would consider a review of the terms of reference of the Forum to ensure it continued to meet the expectations of all stakeholders.
16. Fire Standard Boards: Cllr Nick Chard attended the meeting on the 4 June where the impact of the current pandemic on the standards development programme and possible mitigations were discussed.
17. Executive Leadership Programme Board: Cllr Rebecca Knox attended this meeting. The Programme ran it's 14th cohort this year and the number of applicants continue to increase. Content is reassessed every year to ensure the programme remains up-to-date and guest speakers are tailored to the needs of cohort and work is underway to secure a session with LGA/FSMC representatives. The work of the programme has understandably been affected by COVID-19, but the current cohort will resume in July using online platforms and 1-1 coaching.
18. NFCC People Engagement Forum: Cllr Roger Price attended this meeting on the 9 June where the forward programme was discussed and the NFCC presented a series of new policies and the new Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Strategy to the Forum for comment.
19. Her Majesties Inspectorate for Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service External Reference Group: Cllr Ian Stephens, Roger Hirst, Cllr Rebecca Knox attended this meeting on the 10 June. Members of the Group updated on current COVID-19 activity in their local areas and discussed proposed inspection activity ahead of the second cycle of inspections.

Appendix A

FRS/Area	Activities/link to reports
Avon	Supporting ambulance services
Bedfordshire	Stay Home, Save Lives, Supporting ambulance services
Buckinghamshire	Working with our partners in response to COVID-19V
Cambridgeshire	Supporting ambulance services
Cheshire	Supporting vulnerable people
Cleveland	Supporting care homes
Cornwall	Supporting ambulance services
Cumbria	Supporting vulnerable people
Devon & Somerset	Supporting ambulance services
Dorset & Wiltshire	Supporting ambulance services
Durham & Darlington	Supporting vulnerable people
East Midlands	Providing support to EMAS (Humberside, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Northamptonshire)
East Sussex	Voluntary activities, Supporting ambulance services
Essex	Voluntary activities, Supporting ambulance services
Gloucestershire	Delivering PPE and medical supplies to NHS and care partners
Greater London	Supporting ambulance services
Greater Manchester	Movement of bodies
Hampshire	Supporting ambulance services
Herefordshire & Worcester	Face fitting for mask to be used by frontline NHS and clinical staff
Hertfordshire	Supporting ambulance services
Humberside	PPE deliveries to partner agencies; supporting ambulance services ; supporting vulnerable people
Kent & Medway	Supporting ambulance services, Supporting vulnerable people
Lancashire	Distribution of PPE to social care services, supporting NHS Nightingale Hospital and temporary mortuary arrangements, and face mask training for hospital and social care staff
Lincolnshire	Community Safety team supporting LRF Communities and Volunteers Cell and the Mortality Planning Cell and supporting Trading Standards Team to protect communities from new unsafe PPE and related products
Merseyside	Supporting vulnerable people
Norfolk	Supporting ambulance services
Northumberland	Supporting vulnerable people
North Yorkshire	Supporting ambulance services
Nottinghamshire	Supporting vulnerable people and care homes, Supporting ambulance services, Distributing PPE
Oxfordshire	Supporting ambulance services
Shropshire & Wrekin	Transportation and delivery of PPE
South Yorkshire	Delivering PPE, Supporting ambulance services
Staffordshire	Delivery of PPE and other medical supplies to NHS and care partners
Suffolk	Supporting ambulance services
Surrey	Supporting ambulance services
Tyne and Wear	Supporting vulnerable people
Warwickshire	Packing food supplies for vulnerable people
West Midlands	Transportation of bodies
West Sussex	Supporting ambulance services
West Yorkshire	Supporting ambulance services