

FSMC Priorities 2020/21

Purpose of report

For discussion.

Summary

This paper provides an overview of the range of potential activities for Fire Services Management Committee for the coming LGA meeting cycle in 2020/21. Members' views are sought on what activities should be prioritised in order to inform the paper on priorities that will be brought to the Committee in its first meeting of the new cycle.

Recommendations

Members are asked to comment on the possible FSMC priorities for 2020/21.

Actions

Officers to use Fire Service's Management Committee's comments on the possible priorities to draft a paper for consideration at the next meeting of FSMC.

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FSMC Priorities 2020/21

Background

1. The potential priorities for the FSMC in the forthcoming meeting cycle were discussed at the FSMC lead members meeting on 15 May. Given the difficulties in predicting the context in which the FSMC, fire and rescue services and the LGA will be operating over the coming year and consequent uncertainty over the available resource, members felt it was not yet possible to identify three or four priorities for the FSMC. Instead officers were asked to produce a paper on the range of key activity areas from which priorities might be drawn. This paper sets out those issues that are likely to impact on Fire and Rescue Authorities over the coming year.
2. In considering possible priorities for 2020/21 the Committee will need take into account the possibility that a further second global peak in the pandemic over the autumn or winter would likely result in a restructuring of LGA activity along the lines of that seen recently as the Association supported local authorities with implementation of the national lockdown, with an impact on what can be delivered.

Existing Fire Services Management Committee priorities

3. Following discussion at the Fire Commission in September 2019, in October the FSMC approved the following priorities:
 - 3.1. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) State of the Nation Report: it was outlined that the report would include a variety of challenges and recommendations for the FRS around inclusion, diversity, culture, values, risk, protection and talent management and consistency.
 - 3.2. Building safety: including the Phase 1 report of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. Work would also continue on wider building safety issues including the implementation of the recommendations from Dame Judith Hackitt's review of fire safety and the building regulations, and the work by MHCLG to develop a new regulatory framework. There would also be further work on sprinklers.
 - 3.3. Inclusion: members identified a range of issues including diversity, talent management, culture, values as well as strengthening services' ability to provide a good service to their communities by reflecting them. It was acknowledged that achieving true inclusion and change in the service will take time, but it had to become business as usual in the future.
4. Other key issues identified by FSMC were:

- 4.1. Spending Review: working with the Home Office and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) to ensure that the sector's funding needs are understood and that the sector receives sustainable funding.
 - 4.2. Transparency and standards; supporting FRAs on the improvement journey through the provision of peer challenges and sector support which complements the inspection regime as well as continuing to work with HMICFRS on the inspection regime and the Fire Standards Board.
 - 4.3. Governance: continue to work with areas on their governance including where changes to governance are proposed, undertaking two masterclasses on governance and scrutiny to support members.
 - 4.4. Workforce development: Including pay and broadening the role. Though this work comes under the National Joint Council the issues have a wider impact, policy and workforce officers will therefore continue to work together on these issues.
5. It was decided the inclusion and climate change should run through the work of the FSMC, rather than act as standalone priorities.

Subsequent Developments

HMICFRS Report

6. HMICFRS published the State of Fire and Rescue Report on 15 January 2020. The report made four recommendations:
- 6.1. 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.
 - 6.2. 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'.
 - 6.3. 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.
 - 6.4. 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.

7. We held discussions on the recommendations at the January FSMC and at the LGA's Fire Conference in March setting out our concerns. We have held a workshop with the NFCC on operational independence.
8. The Fire Minister wrote to Fire Authority Chairs in May to invite them to contribute to the consideration of the recommendations. A report and draft response to the Minister will be circulated to members before the meeting under Item 5.

Building Safety

9. The Phase One report of the Grenfell Inquiry was published on 30 October 2019. The Report's recommendations fall into three categories:
 - 9.1. Those that FRSs nationally will need to consider, for example: that all fire and rescue services ensure that their personnel at all levels understand the risk of fire taking hold in the external walls of high-rise buildings and know how to recognise it when it occurs.
 - 9.2. Those that will inform the work the government is doing supported by the LGA and others to reform the system of buildings safety.
 - 9.3. Those that are specific to London Fire Brigade. The LGA has no view on these operational matters.
10. The full list of recommendations were annexed to a [paper to the Fire Commission in January](#)
11. The Fire Protection Board is developing a programme of work designed to increase the pace of inspection across all high-rise residential buildings. £10m of funding has been made available to support the work of the Board, both centrally through NFCC and in fire and rescue services, in addition to funding announced in the budget to support protection.
12. The Fire Safety Bill is expected to receive royal assent by the end of 2020 and is likely to lead to an increase in demand for FRS activity around dangerous cladding systems.
13. The Building Safety Bill is expected to pass Parliament in 2021 and will lead to a new relationship between the FRS and the Building Safety Regulator, the precise nature of which has yet to be determined.

Coronavirus

14. The Coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on FRAs and the LGA's ability to deliver the work agreed in September, with resources diverted towards the coronavirus response. There have been the following impacts on the priorities and key areas identified last year and the issues that have arisen since:

- 14.1. HMICFRS has put its second tranche of inspection on hold and has returned many secondees to FRSs. This does not mean that its recommendations are no longer relevant, but the timetable for action on them may change.
- 14.2. The work of the Fire Standards Board, leadership development and other activities relevant to the FSMC have all been disrupted
- 14.3. The Spending Review was postponed, and a one-year settlement reached prior to the outbreak. Recruitment of the Spending Review team was put on hold after the Team Leader post was recruited and work on the CSR has effectively halted.
- 14.4. NJC discussions have been disrupted as resource was diverted to agreements made in relation to the outbreak.
- 14.5. Temporary agreements have been reached with the FBU to facilitate emergency services collaboration during the pandemic.

Ministerial Priorities

15. On 18 March 2020 Lord Greenhalgh was appointed 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. The new Minister has identified the following issues as his fire priorities:

- 15.1. Professionalism
- 15.2. People
- 15.3. Governance

16. On 14 May alongside the letter on the HMICFRS recommendations, the Minister also wrote to the chairs of the FSMC, Employers side of the NJC and NFCC. He stated his hope that blue light collaboration introduced in response to the pandemic would continue in future and that *Fit for The Future* would provide a 'solid foundation' for future ways of working.

Other issues

17. With the national response to the coronavirus outbreak continuing, the context in which the FSMC is operating will continue to be uncertain for some time. However there are a number of key themes and priorities that will continue to be important into 2020/21. We

hope to be able to provide firmer proposals on priorities in September following further discussions with lead members.

18. Responding to the issues set out in the inspections and the recommendations in the State of Fire Report will continue to shape the LGA's work. The themes highlighted in the report and the inspections are broad ranging, from diversity and inclusion through to leadership and the role of protection. The Fit for the Future improvement objectives, provide an outline of how we would like the sector to develop.
19. The coronavirus response and the lessons learned from the sector's activities and changes brought about by Covid-19 will also need to be considered.
20. Further issues that need to be considered are set out below:
 - 20.1. Finance – assessing the impact of Covid-19 and preparing for the Spending Review, continuing to work with the Home Office and NFCC to ensure that the sector's funding needs are understood and that the sector receives sustainable funding.
 - 20.2. Governance: continue to work with services to strengthen their governance, while developing new ways of supporting authority members expand their skills and knowledge when traditional means of delivering training in person on residential courses may not be available or only available in a limited way.
 - 20.3. Transparency and standards; continuing to support FRAs on the improvement journey, including responding to the results of inspections, while also developing new ways of delivering that support as it is unlikely to be possible to deliver peer challenges in the same way over the coming year.
 - 20.4. Workforce development: Including pay and broadening the role. Though this work comes under the National Joint Council the issues have a wider impact, policy and workforce officers will therefore continue to work together on these issues.

Implications for Wales

21. Fire and rescue related policy is a devolved matter and much of the Committee's work will focus on changes for FRAs in England, with the Welsh Local Government Association leading on lobbying for Welsh Fire and Rescue Authorities in Cardiff.

Financial Implications

22. The programme of work to deliver FSMC's priorities will be delivered within existing budgets. Additional supporting projects maybe commissioned subject to funds being available from a small team budget.

Next steps

23. Officers will draft a paper setting out draft priorities for consideration at the first meeting of the Committee in the new cycle based on the views and comments expressed by members in considering this report.