

Fire Commission and FSMC Priorities 2020/21

Purpose of report

For discussion.

Summary

Following the discussion at the June Fire Services Management Committee (FSMC) meeting, this paper outlines potential priorities for the Fire Commission to consider for 2020/21.

Recommendations

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

Actions

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

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Background

1. The Fire Commission is asked to discuss the potential priorities set out in this paper. These are based on discussions at the FSMC in June 2020 and discussions with Lead Members in August. Following the discussion at Fire Commission the potential priorities will go to the FSMC in October.
2. At the last meeting of the Fire Commission the Fire Minister discussed his priorities of People, Professionalism and Governance, which has informed how we have themed the priorities set out within this paper. Following the Fire Commission meeting there were a number of announcements and further activities coming out of Government that have informed the draft priorities set out in this paper.
3. These have included the announcement of both the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Review and the new Covid-19 inspection from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and the requirement to submit our Spending Review evidence to the Home Office. The potential for a second wave of Covid-19 during the Autumn or Winter is still present with the associated potential impact on fire and rescue services and LGA resources.

LGA Business plan

4. The LGA's business plan for 2019-2022 sets out a range of cross-cutting LGA priorities which Boards are asked to incorporate within their work programmes:
 - 4.1. Funding for local government
 - 4.2. Adult social care, health and wellbeing
 - 4.3. Children, education and schools
 - 4.4. Places to live and work
 - 4.5. Strong local democracy
 - 4.6. Sustainability and climate action
5. FSMC's priorities will contribute in the main to the LGA's work around places to live and work, but will also link in with other areas such as those around health and wellbeing. Additionally, LGA boards and committees have also been asked to incorporate equalities issues into their work through the designation of a champion or lead for equalities. This role has been established on the Fire Services Management Committee for a number of years, and is held by Fiona Twycross.

Proposed priorities

6. Subject to Members' views it is proposed FSMC's work in 2020/21 is themed around the Minister's priorities of people, professionalism and governance to ensure that FSMC's

work links to the Government's reform agenda. In addition, there are a number of issues that could be cross cutting to these themes. The paper outlines the work that would come under these themes.

7. However, it is clear that there are still uncertainties for the future. The outcome of the Spending Review will have an impact on the work that the sector is able to undertake. Coronavirus is still present, and the possibility of a second wave interacting with normal winter weather pressures would also have consequences for the sector. The findings of the PCC review may also have implications for the sector.
8. Bearing this in mind we are seeking Fire Commission's views on the following potential priorities for the coming year:

8.1. People

8.1.1. **Inclusion:** HMICFRS's State of Fire reports recommended the LGA develop a code of ethics with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) to address issues around culture. Alongside working with the NFCC on the development of a code of ethics FSMC will continue its work to assist Authorities create inclusive cultures in their services. This work will include developing the Inclusion and Diversity Member Champions network, with three meetings set for the coming year, and we are currently considering what other training and support could be given in the coming months.

8.1.2. Alongside this strand of work the employers' side of the National Joint Council will continue its work around workforce development, including taking forward with the NFCC the work around Fit for the Future.

8.2. Professionalism

8.2.1. **Responding to inspection and other learning reports:** HMICFRS's State of Fire report highlighted a number of areas for further work including around the role of the fire services, the pay negotiation machinery, operational independence and culture. They will expect to see movement on the recommendations made on these issues, and others highlighted in the first round of inspections before publishing the next State of Fire report in January 2021. The inspectorate are also undertaking the Covid-19 inspection over the next few months looking at the sector's response to the pandemic. The LGA will look to respond to the recommendations in State of Fire, and contribute to the further development of the inspection regime.

8.2.2. **Fire and building safety:** delivering an effective fire and building safety regime will continue to be a priority for the coming year. The Fire Safety Bill is currently making its progress through Parliament, and the draft Building Safety Bill has been published. Both pieces of legislation will have consequences for Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs).

8.2.3. **Outcomes from the Spending Review:** having jointly submitted evidence with the NFCC to the Home Office to assist in developing their submission to Her Majesty's Treasury there may be further work needed before the Spending Review announcement is made later in the year.

8.2.4. **Transparency and standards:** over the coming year the LGA will continue to support 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.

8.3. Governance

8.3.1. Part 1 of the **Government's PCC review** is currently underway, the Government will use this to outline their ambitions for fire governance going forwards. The LGA have already responded to the first part of the review and will continue to engage with the Home Office as they announce their plans and look at part 2 of the review.

8.3.2. We will work with the NFCC on the principles of good governance.

8.3.3. We will produce a suite of online resources for members on governance including videos on:

- 8.3.3.1. Governance during a crisis
- 8.3.3.2. Induction into the FRA
- 8.3.3.3. Oversight of performance and improvement
- 8.3.3.4. The officer/member relationship

9. There are 2 other key issues that members may wish to consider as themes running throughout each of the strands of people, professionalism and governance. These are:

9.1. Learning from Covid-19: how this work is taken forwards will be influenced by the discussion happening at Fire Commission and the issues identified by members there. It will be important to link into the work being undertaken by the NFCC on learning from the operational side of the response, as well as engaging with the HMICFRS inspection on Covid-19 and the second State of Fire report.

9.2. Climate change: last year the FSMC agreed to look further at climate change and the impact on the fire and rescue service. The LGA produced a document entitled: [Climate Emergency: fire and rescue services](#). Further work on this issue during the last political cycle was impacted by coronavirus. Therefore, members may wish to consider how we address this within our work further.

Implications for Wales

10. 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

11. 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

12. 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.