

Spending Review

Purpose of report

For direction.

Summary

The report seeks members' views on the future options for use of the funding provided by Fire and Rescue Authorities to support the LGA's and National Fire Chiefs Council work around the Spending Review.

Recommendations

Members are asked to consider the options set out in paragraph 7.

Actions

LGA and National Fire Chiefs Council to work together to take forward next steps.

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Spending Review

Background

1. Last year the LGA and National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) agreed to work together with the Home Office on a Spending Review submission that would set out to the Treasury the business case for funding the fire and rescue services.
2. Lead Members and the NFCC held a number of meetings on the content of the submission and it went to the Home Office in August. It is attached at **Appendix A** and has been shared with Chairs and Chief Fire Officers.
3. The work was funded through contributions from Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) and this paper sets out options for what to do with the rest of the contributions, with a view to have a further paper bought back to a future meeting of the Committee.

Issues

4. The LGA and NFCC wrote to FRA Chairs and Chief Fire Officers in December 2019 to seek contributions towards a central team that would take on the role of providing a Spending Review business case to the Home Office. FRAs and FRSs agreed to the creation of a central team and contributions into the team from individual services were based on population size.
5. Applications were invited for the team manager role and Amy Webb, from Devon and Somerset FRS, was appointed to lead this work at the beginning of March. The work was expected to last a number of months, with a team taking on the task of gathering evidence and writing the business case. However, the Spending Review was initially bought forward, then postponed due to Coronavirus then reinstated as a September Spending Review.
6. The shifting timescales meant that it was not possible to recruit a team to support Amy, therefore she carried out the work on her own. The contributions that FRAs were asked for were based on the need to recruit a team, therefore we are currently left with an underspend of approximately £150,000.
7. Members are asked to discuss the options for the funding (subject to wider discussions with the sector). The options are:
 - 7.1. The money is returned to FRAs minus their contribution to the Spending Review work that Amy undertook.
 - 7.2. Options for further work that uses the Spending Review contributions are explored. Options could be based on feedback from the Home Office, and as a result of the outcomes of the Spending Review for example using the money to improve data

collection to provide evidence for the next Spending Review. These options can be bought back to a future meeting of the Committee prior to being put to the sector. There would need to be a strong business case for any options put forward.

8. If members do not agree that any of the options are worth pursuing, then we would still be able to return the money to FRAs (minus their contribution for the Spending Review work). That would need to be done within this financial year.

Implications for Wales

9. There are no implications for Wales as the fire and rescue service is a devolved responsibility and funding is provided to Welsh Fire and Rescue Authorities by the Welsh Assembly Government. The Welsh FRAs were not approached to participate in this project.

Financial Implications

10. There are no further financial implications following on from the initial Spending Review contributions.

Next steps

11. Depending on member's discussions the LGA and NFCC will work together on next steps.