

FSMC Priorities 2020/21

Purpose of report

For discussion.

Summary

Following the discussion at the September Fire Commission meeting, the draft priorities for Fire Services Management Committee for 2020/21 are outlined for discussion in this paper.

Recommendations

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

Actions

Officers to use the FSMC's comments on the draft priorities to inform the creation of a work programme for the coming year.

Contact officer: Lucy Ellender
Position: Senior Adviser
Phone no: 020 7664 3321
Email: lucy.ellender@local.gov.uk

FSMC Priorities 2020/21

Background

1. The Fire Services Management Committee is asked to discuss the potential priorities set out in this paper. These are based on discussions at the FSMC in June 2020, with Lead Members in August and a paper that went to the Fire Commission in September.
2. The draft priorities set out in this paper show the breadth of work that the fire service is engaged in and the extensive transformation that is expected to happen, and already is happening, within the sector. Transformation is being driven not only as a result of the Government's reform agenda, but also due to the impact of Coronavirus, the Bills on fire and building safety, the impact of climate change on services and our communities, as well as the spotlight that has been shone on racial inequality by the Black Lives Matter movement. The outcomes of the Spending Review and the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Review are also likely to play into the wider transformation agenda as well.

LGA Business plan

3. 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:
 - 3.1. Funding for local government
 - 3.2. Adult social care, health and wellbeing
 - 3.3. Children, education and schools
 - 3.4. Places to live and work
 - 3.5. Strong local democracy
 - 3.6. Sustainability and climate action
4. The 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, funding and climate action.
5. Additionally, this year LGA boards and committees have also been asked to incorporate equalities issues into their work through the designation of an Equalities Advocate. 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 and the transformation of the sector. However, there are a number of cross cutting themes that will have an impact across each of these areas.

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 affecting our communities and services, and the possibility of a second wave would also have consequences for the sector. The findings of the PCC review may also have implications for the sector.
8. Overarching themes of climate change, equalities and the learning from Covid-19 are likely to impact on other aspects of our work and members will wish to consider how these issues can be mainstreamed into the rest of work. The transformation of the sector provides a golden thread throughout each of the themes and cross cutting issues. A refresh of the Fire Vision 2024 over the coming year would provide the FSMC with an opportunity to not only take stock of what has already happened but also to set out how we see the sector changing going forwards.
9. During the Fire Commission meeting members asked if the priorities could be ranked. The first bullet point under each of the headings is therefore the key issue that we see under each heading. We welcome members comments.

9.1. People

- 9.1.1. **Inclusion:** developing the Inclusion and Diversity Member Champions network will be key. We currently have meetings set for October, November and January, with resources available for the wider membership after these meetings have taken place. The wider LGA work around equalities and racial inequality will also need to be considered within this area and we will look at how we can link with other parts of the LGA to take this forward.
- 9.1.2. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service's (HNICFRS'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. The Code is now out for consultation. After the code is finalised, the next stage will be ensuring that it is embedded within services.
- 9.1.3. Fit for the Future work will continue alongside continuing the work of the employers' side of the National Joint Council around workforce development.

9.2. Professionalism

- 9.2.1. **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).

9.2.2. **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.

9.2.3. **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.

9.2.4. **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.

9.3. Governance

9.3.1. 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 has 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.

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

9.3.3. We are producing a suite of online resources for members on governance including videos on:

- 9.3.3.1. The role of members
- 9.3.3.2. Oversight of performance and improvement
- 9.3.3.3. Governance during a crisis
- 9.3.3.4. The officer/member relationship

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

10.1. **Learning from Covid-19.** 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. The feedback from the Fire Commission so far has highlighted a number of learning points from the pandemic including:

- 10.1.1. Several areas highlighted the pandemic has strengthened relationships across their local areas and they are looking to build on this going forwards.
 - 10.1.2. Collaboration happened across a wide number of partners, with examples cited of joint work with ambulance services, police services, councils and others.
 - 10.1.3. On-call availability had improved during the pandemic, though there was an acknowledgment that this could have been a short-term increase.
 - 10.1.4. The positive improvement in the use of technology and agile ways of working.
 - 10.1.5. There was a sense that the move to online meetings had been positive and ensured ongoing and, in some cases, wider participation. The potential for impacting service's carbon emissions was also mentioned.
- 10.2. **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 will wish to consider how we address this within our work further, for example through the use of more online meetings.
- 10.3. **Equality:** Members will also wish to consider how we ensure that equality issues are brought into each of our workstreams going forwards. FRAs have a key role to play as employers, community leaders and as providers of services to promote equality within their own areas.

Implications for Wales

11. 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

12. 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

13. Officers will draft a work programme based on members discussion.