

## **LGA Annual Fire Conference 2021**

### **Purpose of report**

For decision.

### **Summary**

This report outlines to Members the proposed schedule for the Annual Fire Conference 2021, on 1-4 March 2021.

#### **Recommendation**

That members approve the proposed schedule and related activity for the Annual Fire Conference 2021.

#### **Actions**

Officers to incorporate members' views in the work to prepare for the Annual Fire Conference, in March 2021.

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## **LGA Annual Fire Conference 2021**

### **Background**

1. The LGA Annual Fire Conference is held each year in early March. In January 2020, Fire Safety Management Committee members agreed that the 2021 conference would take place from 1-3 March at the Hilton in Gateshead. Due to COVID-19, physical conference activity has now been cancelled for the foreseeable future, due to the public health risk posed by gathering in large numbers. It is not possible to predict whether in-person conference events will resume by March 2021, given Government guidance and local area restrictions are subject to change.
2. The LGA Annual Fire Conference 2021 is to be conducted as a virtual conference. It will replicate the delivery model used during the LGA Annual Conference 2020. This includes plenary sessions and interactive meetings held on different days, with members and non-members registered individually for each session and attendance via Zoom.

### **Proposed format and schedule**

3. LGA officers have progressed the planning process to determine the format, structure and dates of plenary sessions. At the October 2020 FSMC meeting, members were invited to provide feedback on the proposed plenary topics, including: Ministerial address; building safety; finance and the Comprehensive Spending Review; diversity and inclusion; Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICRFS) and the second State of Fire Report; Governance and Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners (PFCCs); COVID-19 – key learnings; and climate change. In November 2020, FSMC Lead Members provided more detailed feedback on the proposed plenary sessions, and the format and structure in which conference activity will be delivered.
4. Based on the feedback received and factoring in the various limitations of delivering a virtual conference, officers propose to deliver Fire Conference activity in the following schedule: four plenary sessions and two interactive meeting sessions across four days, from 1-4 March 2021. The FSMC will then meet as scheduled on 5 March 2021. The proposed topics and schedule of these sessions is outlined in **Table 1**.
5. Fire Conference sessions will be delivered in the following format:
  - 5.1. *Plenary sessions* – delivered in a Webinar format, each session will be 1.5 hour in duration. A panel of no more than three speakers will give a 45-minute presentation on the given topic, and a designated Chair will subsequently facilitate a panel discussion. Attendees will have the opportunity to submit questions to the Chair via the chat function only.

5.2. *Interactive sessions* – delivered in an interactive meeting format, each session will be two hours in duration. Nominated speakers will deliver a (maximum) 30-minute presentation on the given topic, and a designated Chair will then facilitate a question and answer session with the panel. Subject to the speakers and Chair, this may include going to breakout rooms. Attendees will have the opportunity to submit questions to the Chair via the chat function or use the ‘hand-up’ function to pose questions directly.

**Table 1: Proposed schedule for the LGA Fire Conference 2021**

|           | <b>Mon, 1 Mar</b>  | <b>Tues, 2 Mar</b>   | <b>Wed, 3 Mar</b>   | <b>Thurs, 4 Mar</b>                                  | <b>Fri, 5 Mar</b>   |
|-----------|--|--|---|--|---|
| <b>AM</b> | <i>Plenary:</i><br><br>Fire Minister   | <i>Plenary:</i><br><br>Diversity and Inclusion               | <i>Plenary:</i><br><br>Building Safety  | <i>Plenary:</i><br><br>Prevention and Climate Change | FSMC Meeting<br><br>(agenda and papers to be circulated late February 2021) |
|           | Focus – TBD<br>(subject to engagement with Minister’s Office and Home Office colleagues) | Focus – TBD<br>(refer FSMC Paper on Diversity and Inclusion) | Focus – Fire and Rescue Services’ role under new Building Safety legislation. | Focus - TBD  |   |
| <b>PM</b> | <i>Interactive meeting:</i><br><br>HMICFRS   |  | <i>Interactive meeting:</i><br><br>Building Safety                            |  |   |
|           | Focus – TBD<br>(subject to engagement with HMICFRS)                                      |  | Focus – Enforcement under the new powers in the Fire Safety Bill.             |  |   |

6. As the 2021 Fire Conference will be a virtual offering, the LGA will not be preparing a Conference Publication next year. In previous years, a Conference Publication was distributed within the delegate packs at the Conference. Papers for the plenary and

interactive sessions, and any other resources at request of guest speakers, will be circulated in late February 2021.

7. For those topics suggested by Members that do not appear on the proposed conference schedule, officers propose to offer alternative learning opportunities:
  - 7.1. *Finance and the comprehensive spending review* - Given recent decisions to postpone the three-year spending review to allow government to focus on responding to the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, officers are exploring alternative options to provide information on this topic. This would be made available on the LGA's website in the lead-up to the Fire Conference. Please refer to the LGA's [On-the-Day Briefing](#), developed on 25 November 2020 in response to the outcome of the [Spending Review 2020](#).
  - 7.2. *Governance* - The LGA has commissioned Andy Fry, ex-Chief Fire Officer and former HM Inspector of Fire Services in Wales, to deliver a series of instructive videos covering various topics associated with the governance role of Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) Members. These online training and development resources aim to ensure Members are supported to deliver their governance responsibilities. The first webinar, [The Role of Fire and Rescue Authority Members](#), is now available on the LGA website. The remaining three webinars will be released throughout December 2020 and early 2021. We will also be hosting an interactive webinar on governance during 2021 which will cover this topic in depth.
8. Due to the Fire Conference being delivered virtually, there are additional changes to how the conference is being delivered, including:
  - 8.1. *Fees* – For Members of the LGA, or for government officials, there will be no cost to attend. Non-members will be charged £99 plus VAT per session, subject to a package deal being offered once the conference is advertised publicly.
  - 8.2. *Sponsor exhibitions* – there will be no virtual exhibitions provided. Officers are exploring other digital options for sponsors to showcase their exhibitions and will report back to Lead Members in early February 2021.
  - 8.3. *Annual dinner function* – typically held on the first night of the conference, the LGA will not host the annual dinner due to the government restrictions on social distancing and other required safety precautions.

### **Financial Implications**

9. All work will be carried out using existing LGA resources.

### **Next steps**

10. Members are asked to agree the proposed Fire Conference schedule and format.
11. Officers will take forward any decisions as directed and proceed with conference planning.