

Note of last Fire Services Management Committee meeting

Title: Fire Services Management Committee
Date: Friday 11 December 2020
Venue: Online via Zoom

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A** to this note

Item	Decisions and actions
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1	Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest
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The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllr Jane Hugo and Roy Wilsher, NFCC.
Nick Collins was substituting for Roy Wilsher.

There were no declarations of interest.

2	Minutes of the previous meeting
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The minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 October 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.

3	Covid-19 - lessons learned
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The Chair invited Phil Garrigan, CFO Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service, to introduce the report.

Phil explained that in July 2020 the NFCC COVID-19 Committee had commissioned independent research to establish how FRS's had responded to the pandemic between March and September 2020 to draw out key learning points. The research had involved interviews with 47 CFOs, 3 trade unions, LGA, NFCC, Home Office and the AACE.

Phil took members through the themes that had emerged from the research and which were detailed in the report. These were: Planning & the Local Resilience Forum, Leadership, Operations, Fire Protection, Fire Prevention, Working from home, Communications, Data, Role of the NFCC and the Tripartite Agreement.

Phil went into more detail on the Tripartite Agreement and said that CFOs had mixed feelings about its introduction and success. Some had found it to be an enabler but others felt it had hindered their ability to respond. The

divergence of opinion was thought to reflect the context in which CFOs operated such as local governance structure, resources available and the quality of local industrial relations. However, Phil reported that all stakeholders had praised the willingness of the FRS to 'step up' and provide support.

Phil then ran through the key learning points and recommendations from the research. These covered a range of subjects from the relationship FRS's have with their Local Resilience Forums, to arrangements for coordinating a national response to a future nationally significant event. The report's recommendations would be included in the refresh of the Fit for the Future visioning document.

The Chair thanked Phil for his presentation and invited members to comment on the content:

- Pride was expressed in the manner in which the fire sector stepped up during the pandemic and delivered support for the relief effort. It hadn't been a straightforward process but lots of aspects of it had worked well.
- More detail was requested on recommendation 4 about establishing NFCC Committee structures/roles within a National Business Continuity Response Plan. Phil said that this related to the gold command structures put in place early on in the pandemic. These had worked very well and so should be retained moving forward. He added that better use of the NFCC's Central Programme Office could be made in the future.
- Cllr Nick Chard commented on the Tripartite Agreement in his capacity of Chair of the National Employers. He said that the report was well-balanced but, in his view, had downplayed the frustration felt by the National Employers and NFCC over the length of time it had taken to agree some of the additional later work activities.

The Chair thanked Phil for briefing the Committee on this important area of work.

Decision:

- Fire Services Management Committee **noted** the report.

4 Equality and Diversity in the Fire & Rescue Sector

The Chair invited Fiona Twycross, FSMC's Equality & Diversity Champion, to introduce the report.

Fiona said improving equality and diversity was a key focus for the LGA's Fire Vision 2024 which set ambitious targets, including that 30% of new firefighter recruits should be female and that FRS staff should reflect the ethnic diversity of the communities they served. It was also important that this diversity was reflected at senior levels. Fiona said that the first cycle of HMICFRS inspections of FRS's during 2019/20 had highlighted that significant issues remained around diversity and inclusion in the sector.

Fiona reminded members that in late 2019, the LGA established the [Fire](#)

[Diversity and Inclusion Champions Network](#) to bring together FRA members with responsibility for diversity and inclusion to try and address some of HMICFRS's criticisms. Fiona thanked everyone who had been involved so far and, in particular, for bringing an open and honest attitude to discussions. She also thanked Cllr Rebecca Knox who had deputised as Chair of the Network on several occasions. There had been 4 meetings of the Network during 2020 and 2 sessions on racial inequality were scheduled for January and February 2021.

Cllr Knox added that it was important for all FRA Chairs to get EDI on their meeting agendas on a regular basis in order for learning to be shared with all authority members.

Following the introduction, members raised the following points:

- There was strong support for the LGA's work on EDI and the targets in Fire Vision 2024. However, their achievability for FRS's in more rural areas was queried. Fiona said that some FRS's were already making significant progress to achieving the targets which proved it was possible. It was important to share best practice so all FRS's could get up to this standard.
- How did the LGA's work on EDI align with that of the NFCC who had recently issued 3 equality of access statements? Rachael Aldridge, Adviser, said that the LGA worked closely with the NFCC on EDI and that in addition, the Fire NJC had established and leads the Inclusive Fire Service Group, the membership of which included the National Employers, FBU, FRSA, FOA and NFCC.
- Was neurodiversity taken into account in the LGA's EDI work as this was a significant issue in some FRS's? Rachael said that she had spoken with the CFO of East Sussex FRS, where this is a particular issue and would schedule a session on neurodiversity at a future meeting of the Champions Network.
- It was suggested that one route of increasing workforce diversity was through the RDS (on-call) workforce where staff turnover was higher than fulltime. The job marketing also needed to more effectively target potential female and BAME recruits. Fiona agreed with this analysis and said that it was particularly important for services that relied heavily on RDS (on-call) firefighters – often more rural brigades. It was suggested that the NFCC's On-Call Steering Group be relaunched in order to address these issues.

Decision:

- Fire Services Management Committee **noted** the report.

Action:

- Officers to e-mail the agenda report to Cllr Byrom.
- Officers to schedule a session on neurodiversity on Fire Diversity & Inclusion Champions Network forward plan.

5 LGA Fire Conference 2021

The Chair invited Rachael Aldridge, Adviser, to introduce the report.

Rachael explained that the decision had been taken to hold this year's conference as an online event due to the ongoing Covid restrictions. It would take place between 1-4 March with 4 plenary sessions held as webinars during the mornings and interactive sessions in the afternoons. Options were being explored for holding exhibitions on digital platforms. The sessions would be free of charge for LGA members with non-members being charged £99 per session. Rachael outlined the proposed content of the sessions and asked for members' comments:

- Could the EDI session include discussion on the Core Code of Ethics, which should be close to sign off by then? Rachael agreed that this should be explored.
- Should there be a session on learning from Covid? Rachael replied that this would undoubtedly be a theme running through all the sessions.
- Could examples of how small arson incidents are being tackled be included somewhere in the programme?
- It was suggested that LGA members should be charged a small admin fee in order that some costs could be recovered. Rachael said that the LGA's costs would be very low as there was no venue hire or travel to account for.

Decision:

- Subject to the above comments, members **approved** the proposed schedule and related activity for the Annual Fire Conference 2021.

6 Building Safety Bill

The Chair invited Charles Loft, Senior Adviser, and Peter Baker, Director of Building Safety & Construction at the Health & Safety Executive (HSE), to introduce the item.

Charles explained that the Building Safety Bill, which will introduce a stringent new regime for higher risk buildings, would be starting its legislative journey through Parliament early in 2021. A key part of the Bill is the establishment of a new Building Safety Regulator (BSR) in the HSE and Peter Baker was here to explain some of the implications of the new regime for FRAs.

Peter explained the journey that had led to the creation of a new BSR from the Grenfell Tower tragedy and subsequent Inquiry to the Hackitt review and the Building Safety Bill. The Housing, Communities & Local Government Select Committee had recently published its pre-legislative scrutiny report on the draft Bill and MHCLG was currently considering the recommendations.

Peter then ran through the key functions of the BSR including delivering the new regime for buildings in scope and promoting competence and providing oversight for all buildings. He said that the key principle, which underpinned workplace health & safety legislation, but not currently building safety, was that it is the responsibility of those who create risk to manage and control it. This would be a step-change in approach for

building owners and managers and the BSR would play a key role in education and training. A new Joint Regulators Group had been established with representation from the LGA, NFCC and Local Authority Building Control which was working with the HSE to develop and pilot new approaches to regulation, in part with a group of Early Adopters from the sector.

Peter explained the proposed new 'Gateway' approach for in scope residential buildings – Planning, Preconstruction, and Building Completion – which would all need to be signed off before the building could be occupied. Gateway 1 – planning – would start to be implemented in April 2021.

Peter said that FRAs and councils were central to the success of the new regime, not only through the Joint Regulators' Group and the Fire Protection Board but also through multi-disciplinary teams that would be established by the BSR to provide specialist expertise in order to make key regulatory assessments. FRAs would have a key role in ensuring competence and capability in the sector in their areas and there would be an important interaction with new enforcement responsibilities under the reformed Fire Safety Order. Peter added that there would need to be a more sophisticated prioritisation process in terms of risks and consequences rather than one simply based on height. FRAs would also have an important role in encouraging behaviour change and enhancing the existing system before the new regime was formally introduced.

The Chair thanked Peter for his comprehensive presentation and invited members to comment:

- The new legislation was considered pivotal to strengthening regulation and preventing any more disastrous fires such as at Grenfell Tower. The ongoing Inquiry was showing that the current system was completely inadequate.
- FRAs will need to assess what the resource implications would be for them from the new regime. This will need to tie in with the LGA/NFCC work around the Spending Review.
- The expectations on FRS's around enforcement will increase significantly under the new regime. This behaviour change will be challenging for services that have traditionally taken a risk-averse approach, and training will therefore be crucial.

Decision:

- Fire Services Management Committee **noted** the presentation and the LGA's continuing work in relation to the Building Safety Bill.

7 LGA Business plan 2019-22 - 2020 review and update

Decision:

- Fire Services Management Committee **noted** the 2020/21 update of the 3-year business plan as the basis for work programmes over the coming months.

8 Building Safety Update

The Chair invited Charles Loft, Senior Adviser, to introduce the update.

Charles reported that the Fire Safety Bill had been held up in Parliament by the Brexit logjam and would not now get Royal Assent this year. Work on producing the statutory guidance to accompany the Bill was about to begin and would be overseen by a new group chaired by the Home Office and including the LGA, NFCC and Fire Sector Federation. A new group was also being set up with the NFCC to address the issues around the enhanced enforcement expected under the Bill.

Decision:

- Fire Services Management Committee **noted** the LGA's building safety related work.

9 Workforce update

The Chair invited Gill Gittins, Senior Adviser (Workforce and Negotiations) and Clair Alcock, Senior Fire Pensions Adviser, to introduce the update.

Clair reported that a policy decision by HM Treasury on its preferred choice for the age discrimination remedy was expected in early to mid-January 2021. The LGA had been part of the Treasury discussion groups and had made its preferences clear. A stakeholder group of FRA scheme manager representatives was being set up in order to have oversight of the implementation plans and progress of the remedy. Clair asked for an FSMC member to sit on the group, which would also include representation from NFCC and senior fire officer leads in HR and Finance.

Gill spoke about the Tripartite Agreement and reported that for a number of reasons it had not been possible to renew the agreement on 19 November 2020. Instead, a new agreement in relation to Covid-19 support work had been reached within the NJC, building on the Tripartite Agreement. This would be an interim, 1 month agreement (to expire on 11 January 2021) to allow time for an alternative approach to isolation to be identified in respect of some of the additional work activities.

Gill added that the NJC had also issued a statement of intent around providing support for vaccination rollout.

Following the introduction, members raised the following points:

- Cllr Nick Chard volunteered to represent FSMC on the new stakeholder pensions group, to which members agreed.
- In relation to the Tripartite Agreement, members felt it was important that the prime focus should be on what the sector could do to help local communities through the pandemic.

Decision:

- Fire Services Management Committee **noted** the update and **agreed** the nomination of Cllr Nick Chard to the new stakeholder pensions group.

10 National Fire Chiefs Council Update

The Chair invited Nick Collins, NFCC, to introduce the update.

Nick highlighted the importance of LGA engagement in the NFCC's work and agreed to speak to the Chair, Cllr Chard and Cllr Healey about the future of the RDS (On-Call) Steering Group.

Nick reported that the Fit for the Future consultation had now concluded, and conversations were taking place with the National Employers and the LGA about the next steps.

Decision:

- Fire Services Management Committee noted the **update**.

Action:

- Nick Collins to speak to Cllrs Stephens, Chard and Healey about the RDS (On-Call) Steering Group.

11 Fire Standards Board Update

The Chair invited Cllr Nick Chard and Nick Collins, NFCC, to introduce the update.

Cllr Chard reported that feedback from the consultation on the Core Code of Ethics Standard was being considered by the Board. The LGA and NFCC consultation on the Core Code itself had been run at the same time. It was now expected that the Standard would be approved in March 2021 following finalisation of the Core Code.

On the Leadership standard, Cllr Chard said that he had raised the issue of political awareness of officers moving into senior management roles and how this could be improved.

Nick Collins said that the developing standards would be a useful tool for FRAs to use for improvement work within their services.

Decision:

- Fire Services Management Committee **noted** the update.

12 FSMC Update

The Chair invited Rachael Aldridge, Adviser, to introduce the update.

Rachael reported that:

- (i) Lead Members had been briefed by Home Office officials on the implications of the Government's Spending Review for FRAs.
- (ii) The first of Andy Fry's videos covering the governance role of FRAs - '[The Role of Fire and Rescue Authority Members](#)', was

now available on the LGA website.

- (iii) MHCLG had published its [consultation on proposals to extend the Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm \(England\) Regulations 2015](#). The closing date for responses was 11 January 2021.

Decision:

- Fire Services Management Committee **noted** the update.

13 Any other business

No further business was raised.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chair	Cllr Ian Stephens	Isle of Wight Council
Vice-Chair	Ms Fiona Twycross AM	Greater London Authority
Deputy-Chairman	Cllr Nick Chard	Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority
Deputy-Chair	Cllr Keith Aspden	North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service
Members	Cllr Eric Carter	Shropshire and Wrekin Fire & Rescue Authority
	Cllr Mark Healey MBE	Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority
	Mr Roger Hirst	Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex
	Cllr Rebecca Knox	Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service
	Cllr Nikki Hennessy	Lancashire Combined Fire Authority
	Cllr Karen Kilgour	Tyne & Wear Fire & Rescue Authority
	Cllr Les Byrom CBE	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Greg Brackenridge	West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Carolyn Lambert	East Sussex Fire Authority
	Cllr Cleo Lake	Avon Fire & Rescue Authority
Apologies	Roy Wilsher	NFCC
	Cllr Jane Hugo	Lancashire Combined Fire Authority
In Attendance	CFO Phil Garrigan (for item 3)	Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service
	Cllr John Robinson JP	County Durham & Darlington Fire & Rescue Authority
	Peter Baker (for item 6)	Health & Safety Executive
	Cllr Roger Price	Hampshire Fire & Rescue Authority
	Nick Collins	NFCC
	Cllr John Briggs	Humberside Fire Authority
	CFO Chris Blacksell	Humberside Fire & Rescue Service
	Emeka Ibeh	Home Office
	Steven Adams	NFCC/London Fire Brigade

