

Spending Review

Purpose of report

For direction.

Summary

The report seeks members' views on the 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 issues in paragraph 6 and the options set out in paragraph 8.

Actions

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

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Spending Review

Background

1. In 2019 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. This was funded by contributions from Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) and the business case was submitted to the Home Office in August.
2. Originally it was thought that the Spending Review in 2020 would be for three years, however, this was changed to a one year Spending Review. Covid had an impact on the timetable for the Spending Review, which meant that though initially we had envisaged a team undertaking this work, we were only able to employ a Lead for the work, Amy Webb from Devon and Somerset. 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.
3. Looking ahead to this year's Spending Review there is another opportunity for the sector to work with the Home Office to shape the department's submission to the Treasury, using the remaining funds to provide greater data and evidence to underpin the business case.
4. Members agreed to look at options for further work at their October meeting. This paper outlines the areas where more work would strengthen the narrative for the Spending Review submission.

Issues

5. The feedback we have received from the Home Office on the business case was positive, particularly the strength of speaking with a unified voice across the sector.
6. However, following discussions with the Home Office and more broadly, a number of areas have been identified where further data and evidence would be helpful to make the case for the sector stronger. These are:
 - 6.1. Collaboration – Where has the sector made savings from projects such as shared estates, roles and functions with other organisations, not only on the policing side but with the wider emergency services and local government.
 - 6.2. Productivity and efficiency – how is the service using its staff's time, eg the balance between response, protection, prevention and also preparing and training for incidents. This will help the sector to highlight how risk and demand are balanced.

- 6.3. The impact of the service, not only in terms of its statutory duties but looking more broadly at how it contributes to other agendas through partnership working.
7. Members may wish to consider if there are any other areas that they feel would be useful to explore within the Spending Review submission.
8. It is clear that some dedicated resources will be needed to coordinate and bring together the information and evidence need to flesh out these areas further. It is envisaged that this would be done through a combination of:
- 8.1. A task and finish group working on data and supporting the sector to identify and collect data that is currently not being collected universally. The activities of the group would include establishing what data is being collected, establish where there are gaps, help areas to collect data, provide a framework to input data into, and analyse data. The estimated costs of providing this work would be approximately £50,000.
- 8.2. Dedicated financial expertise to support the drafting of the narrative. This would include coordination of different data sets, liaising with the Fire Finance Network, the NFCC and the LGA on the narrative etc. It is estimated that this would be for approximately 1 day a week. The estimated costs for this resource would be approximately £20,000.
9. For any of the funding that is not used for the 2021 Spending Review the NFCC would establish a ring-fenced reserve for further work in future years, including: the maintenance of a continual narrative to demonstrate the wider value of the sector, maintenance and development of productivity data; and, the sharing of ongoing efficiency evidence. This will ensure the case for appropriate sector funding evolves going forward.

Next Steps

10. If members are happy with the areas identified and the accompanying work that would be needed to gather and collate information and evidence from across the sector, the LGA and NFCC will write a joint letter to FRA Chairs and Chiefs setting out the next steps and the proposals for the funds they provided previously.

Implications for Wales

11. 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

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

Next steps

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