

## Note of last Fire Services Management Committee meeting

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**Title:** Fire Services Management Committee  
**Date:** Friday 5 March 2021  
**Venue:** Online via Teams

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### Attendance

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

### Item Decisions and actions

#### 1 Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllr Greg Brackenridge (sub Cllr John Robinson).

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 2 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 December 2020 were agreed as an accurate record. There were no matters arising.

#### 3 NFCC Chair - Roy Wilsher and Mark Hardingham

The outgoing NFCC Chair, Roy Wilsher, reflected on his 4 years in the role and highlighted some of the key achievements, as well as the challenges that faced the fire sector in the future.

Roy's successor, Mark Hardingham, outlined his key priorities for the next 4 years. These included:

- Supporting organisational learning in the fire sector across the UK.
- Leading a portfolio of work through the NFCC plan – people management, risk planning, digital/use of data, procurement, protection, national operational guidance/learning and national resilience.
- Working closely with key stakeholders such as the LGA.

Mark then outlined some of the current issues that the NFCC needed to influence. These included:

- Governance reform (the White Paper)

- Inspections – both thematic and general
- Building safety and the new regulator
- Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme
- Working patterns – on call
- Pensions

The FSMC Chair, and other Lead Members, put on record their thanks to Roy for all his hard work during his 4 years at the helm and, in particular, for driving forward joint working between the NFCC and FSMC.

#### **4 Work of the NFCC's Protection Policy and Reform Unit**

The Chair invited Dan Daly, Head of the NFCC's Protection Policy and Reform Unit (PPRU), to introduce the update.

Dan outlined the history of the PPRU and ran through its core objectives and activities in providing a link between FRSs and Government in relation to fire and building safety post-Grenfell. The importance of developing a consistent approach across the country by sharing learning and best practice was emphasised.

Dan went on to talk about the PPRU's external engagement and consultation activity in relation to the various workstreams and highlighted some of the impacts of this.

Dan then went into more detail about the PPRU's building safety activity in terms of making buildings safe both now and in the future. He highlighted some of the measures being taken around service delivery and improvement, including developing a competency framework, working with the Fire Standards Board to develop professional standards for protection and stakeholder collaboration to share best practice.

Finally, Dan took members through the Government's legislative timetable with the transition to a new regulatory framework due to take place between 2023-28.

Members asked when people could ultimately expect a noticeable difference to the safety of their built environment. Dan said that although progress had been made since the Grenfell Tower fire, there was a long road ahead, not least because issues other than dangerous cladding were being uncovered. There needed to be more focus on buildings under 18m in height and more could also be done now to make buildings safer – for example, more widespread installation of sprinklers.

#### **Decision**

FSMC **noted** the update.

#### **Action**

Circulate the presentation slides to Committee members **Jonathan**

## Bryant

### 5 **Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP) update**

The Chair invited Ian Taylor, Senior User and Business Change Lead (Fire) NFCC and John Black, Programme Director Home Office, to introduce the update.

Ian and John gave members a brief overview of the ESMCP to date and then provided an update on developments since the previous report to FSMC in March 2020:

- New Home Office appointments – in addition to John Black, the new Programme Director, appointed in August 2020, there was a new Senior Responsible Owner, Simon Parr, due to start in March 2021.
- A more realistic Full Business Case, taking into account delays to the project, was being worked on and should be agreed through the various governance channels by the end of May 2021, at which point it would be presented to Government. A version would be available to share with FRAs by the end of March.
- Unfortunately, there would not be an FSMC meeting prior to this but a joint NFCC/FSMC response was proposed. FRAs would also be consultees.
- The NFCC remained confident that ESN was still the best way forward and achievable in spite of some significant challenges.
- Adoption of early ESN products by several FRSs was proving valuable for the development of the programme and associated support packages. Full transition from Airwave to ESN was likely to take place in 2023 at the earliest.
- In terms of costs, the NFCC was discussing the possibility of additional funding with the Home Office for transitional arrangements. FRAs were rightly concerned about future budgeting for ESN and in-life costs that were likely to be higher than for Airwave. It was important therefore that a model was developed to enable FRAs to do this and to remove as far as possible, any financial disincentives to uptake. Overall, however, the cost case for ESN remained positive.
- Options for pump-priming an accelerated transition to ESN were being considered.
- Concerns from FRAs about coverage of the new system and delays in implementation were acknowledged and Ian and John agreed that greater assurance needed to be provided to users and decision makers. This included providing credible timescales and extensive pre-launch testing.
- The remaining LGA vacancy on the Fire Customer Group was flagged up.

In the subsequent discussion, members raised the following points:

- How effective was collaboration with other blue light services on ESMCP? Ian said that there was excellent collaboration at both

higher national and local levels. They had also been working with the Maritime & Coastguard Agency.

- How could members be reassured through the Full Business Case, that the functionality of ESN would satisfy the requirements of FRSs? John said that an extensive exercise had been carried out over the last few months to determine what features ESN would need before going live. These would all be rigorously tested and various stress-testing scenarios played out involving FRSs. John reassured members that ESN would not be rolled out until all the testing had been successfully completed.
- How would the Full Business Case be circulated for comment? This would be widely distributed by Ian to users and other stakeholders.

**Decision:**

- FSMC **noted** the content of the report and **agreed** to draft a joint LGA/NFCC response on the Full Business Case to the Home Office.

## 6 Spending Review Update

The Chair invited Lucy Ellender, Senior Adviser LGA, and John Buckley, Chair NFCC Finance Committee, to introduce the update.

John said that the joint approach to the Spending Review submission for 2020 had worked very well and they were looking to build upon that for what it was hoped would be a 3 year settlement later in 2021. Feedback from the Home Office and other stakeholders had identified 3 particular areas where more in-depth evidence gathering could prove beneficial – (i) collaborative working, for example, in sharing facilities; (ii) productivity and efficiency; and (iii) wider social impact of fire services. John said that data on the sector's covid work would also be included.

In order to achieve these outcomes, John proposed that members agree to (i) establish a task and finish group to support further data collection and analysis using outside expertise – estimated cost £50k; (ii) as the previous project lead, Amy Webb, was leaving, it was proposed to bring in dedicated financial expertise for 1 day a week to help draft the narrative – estimated cost £20k.

John said that, with just £50k spent on last year's submission, and with the proposed new spend, it would still leave £80k from the original FRA contributions. John suggested that this be ring-fenced to fund further work in future years in order to maintain a continual narrative to demonstrate the wider value of the sector.

In the subsequent discussion, members raised the following points:

- Members thanked John and Amy, and Emma Lawrence from the Home Office for all their efforts and stated that the sector was in a far better position because of the work they had undertaken.
- It was requested that the overall Spending Power of FRAs be

determined to give a better picture of resources available.

- As the Grenfell Tower Inquiry progressed, and as the Fire Safety and Building Safety Bill's were taken forward, the demand on FRS' prevention work was increasing. Therefore, keeping the public safe needed to be strongly reflected in the next submission. No stone should be left unturned to demonstrate this and the resources were there to do so.

**Decision:**

- FSMC **endorsed** the proposals set out in paragraph 8 of the report.

**Actions:**

- LGA and NFCC to write a joint letter to FRA Chairs and Chiefs setting out the next steps and the proposals for the funds that were previously provided. **Lucy and John**

## 7 **Police & Crime Commissioner Review**

The Chair invited Lucy Ellender, Senior Adviser, to introduce the update.

Lucy reported that publication of the outcome of the PCC review had been expected before the Fire Conference and it had been hoped that the Fire Minister would address it in his keynote speech. However, unfortunately the publication had been delayed and so there was nothing to update members on at this stage.

Members agreed that a special Fire Commission and/or FSMC meeting should be held once the review was published in order to discuss the implications for FRAs. Jonny Bugg, Head of Fire Strategy & Reform Unit – Home Office, offered to take part in this session in advance of the pre-election period.

**Decision:**

- FSMC **noted** the update.

**Actions:**

- Officers to arrange additional Fire Commission and FSMC meetings for the end of March. **Jonathan Bryant**

## 8 **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 the Government had now published its consultation response on how it intended to remove the age discrimination identified by the courts in the 2015 pension reforms, and she took members through both the prospective and retrospective remedies. The prospective remedy

would take effect on 1 April 2022 and the retrospective remedy (which applies for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2022) effective by October 2023. Employer contributions would remain the same until 2024 but it was difficult to estimate what the additional costs would be after that. It was clear that the remedy implementation process would involve significant additional work for FRAs.

Clair reported that the Fire Brigades Union had already laid claims against some FRAs to retrospectively remedy pensions in payment. LGA would be discussing collective defence of the claims with the nominated contacts at each FRA.

Gill provided an update for members on the draft Core Code of Ethics. Several minor amendments had been suggested by the Home Office since circulation of the draft. None altered the fundamental approach that had been taken to the Core Code. Roger Hirst indicated that PFCCs were happy with the content, which would include changing the principle Community at Our Heart to Putting Our Communities First, and it would therefore go to the next Board meeting for approval. Members were asked to approve the draft before them for the LGA, subject to the minor amendments, and should there be any significant further amendments to delegate agreement of those to Lead Members. The LGA and NFCC were both keen to meet the extended deadline of the end of March to be able to move onto implementation of the Core Code and the Fire Standards Board wanted to progress its Core Code of Ethics Standard.

Members indicated their support for the draft Core Code of Ethics and offered the following comments:

- A query was raised about the possibility of conflict between the Core Code and Codes of Conduct adopted by members' local authorities. Gill responded that, as both were based on the Nolan principles, they should complement each other.
- Jonny Bugg thanked everyone for their efforts in bringing the Core Code to fruition and said that it was a key priority for the Minister. He said that effective implementation of the Core Code would now be key.

**Decision:**

- FSMC **noted** the update and **endorsed** the Core Code of Ethics, subject to any significant changes being considered by Lead Members for approval.

**Action:**

- Officers to progress finalisation of the Core Code with the NFCC and APCC and then work together to implement and embed at local level. **Gill Gittins**

## **9 Building Safety update**

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

Charles reported that the Fire Safety Bill would be going back to the

House of Lords on 17 March 2021 and the LGA was working closely with the Home Office on producing the statutory guidance to accompany it. Discussions were also taking place with the NFCC on enforcement issues arising from the Bill.

**Decision**

FSMC **noted** the update.

**10 NFCC update**

There were no questions from members on the NFCC update.

**Decision**

FSMC **noted** the update.

**11 Fire Standards Board update**

The Chair invited Roy Wilsher and Cllr Nick Chard to introduce the update.

Roy reported that the first 4 standards had now been adopted and a further 2 were out for consultation.

**Decision**

FSMC **noted** the update.

**12 FSMC update**

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

Rachael reported that (i) the HMICFRS national inspection report on how the sector had responded to the pandemic had been published, and briefly outlined some of the key conclusions; (ii) the next meeting of the Diversity & Inclusion Champions Network would be taking place at the end of March and would be discussing racial equality; (iii) the second webinar in the Fire Member Development series, on political oversight of FRS performance, was now up on the [LGA website](#); (iv) work was continuing on developing the Fit for the Future document with the NFCC and National Employers.

Members thanked officers for their hard work in organising the Fire Conference and considered that it had gone very well.

The Chair defended the Tripartite agreement against the criticisms levelled in the HMICFRS report and said that it had been necessary in order to enable FRSs' covid work to begin. He thanked Cllr Nick Chard for the key role he had played in securing this agreement.

**Decision:**

FSMC **noted** the update.

## Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chair	Cllr Ian Stephens	Isle of Wight Council
Vice-Chair	Dr Fiona Twycross	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 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 Carolyn Lambert	East Sussex Fire Authority
Apologies	Cllr Greg Brackenridge	West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Cleo Lake	Avon Fire & Rescue Authority
In Attendance	Cllr John Robinson JP (substitute)	County Durham and Darlington Fire & Rescue Authority
	Cllr Jane Hugo	Lancashire Combined Fire Authority
	Cllr David Norman MBE	Gloucestershire County Council
	Roy Wilsher	NFCC
	Mark Hardingham	NFCC
	Jonny Bugg	Home Office
	John Black (item 5)	Home Office
	Ian Taylor (Item 5)	NFCC/Home Office
	John Buckley (item 6)	NFCC
	Dan Daly (item 4)	NFCC
	Chris Blacksell	Humberside Fire & Rescue Service
	Steven Adams	NFCC/London Fire Brigade