

End of year report and Priorities for 2021-22

Purpose of report

For direction.

Summary

The Paper provides an overview of the work of the FSMC over the last year and provides members with an early opportunity to discuss the FSMC's priorities for the next year.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the work of the FSMC over the last year and discuss proposals for next year's priorities.

Action

Based on members discussions officers will draft priorities and a workplan for discussion at the September Fire Commission and October FSMC.

Contact officer: Lucy Ellender
Position: Senior Adviser
Phone no: 07917 833058
Email: lucy.ellender@local.gov.uk

End of year report and Priorities for 2021-22

Background

1. In October 2020 members agreed the FSMC's priorities under these overarching themes:
 - 1.1. People
 - 1.2. Professionalism
 - 1.3. Governance
2. This report outlines progress against those priorities, as well as proposals for next year's priorities for member's comments.
3. Members will of course be aware that progress over the last against these priorities was impacted by the LGA's continuing work to support local authorities in their response to the pandemic.

Progress against the priorities

People

4. The work of the **Inclusion and Diversity Member Champions** has continued over the last year with meetings in October, January and March. The Champions have covered staff networks, and held two sessions on racial equality with an external facilitator. We are now considering how we can use the learning from these sessions to inform our work in other areas. A session on neurodiversity was held at the Fire Conference in March provided another opportunity to look at inclusion and diversity issues for the sector.
5. Each year the LGA runs two Fire Leadership Essentials programmes to support Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) members with their responsibilities. In March 2021, we held our first virtual Fire Leadership Essentials course over three consecutive days in March. Via experienced facilitators and expert guest speakers, Members were provided with a comprehensive induction to the fire sector and used the opportunity to network with other fire members. In the context of significant change within the sector, the programme delivered sessions that aimed to: develop skills around leadership in fire authorities; provided a thorough overview and practical skills to deliver effective scrutiny in FRAs; and improve knowledge of the key strategic issues facing the sector, including building safety, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection regime and issues around culture, inclusion and diversity in the fire sector. The next Fire Leadership Essentials programme will be delivered in mid-September 2021.
6. In May the LGA, the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and Association of Police and Crime Commissioners published the [Core Code of Ethics](#). It was developed in consultation with the sector following the HMICFRS's first State of Fire report. The Core

Code is designed to help employees of the Fire and Rescue Service to act in the best way towards each other and while serving the public. It sits alongside the Code of Ethics Fire Standard developed by the Fire Standards Board, which we also inputted into the development of.

7. In Autumn last year the LGA, NFCC and National Employers (England) consulted on the barriers to realising the Improvement objectives within **Fit for the Future**. The consultation has provided the three organisations with useful insights into the further development of Fit for the Future and informing our next steps. We are particularly keen to ensure that there is wider engagement on the development of the next iteration of Fit for the Future and we are aiming to produce a report on the consultation exercise and an engagement plan by the end of July 2021.

Professionalism

8. The [LGA lobbied on behalf of councils and fire and rescue authorities on the Fire Safety Bill](#), successfully ensuring that the Bill's commencement will be accompanied by guidance designed to minimise the problems arising from a shortage of fire risk assessors and working with the NFCC and the Home Office to design the guidance. It is impossible to say whether the guidance will completely overcome this issue as the number of buildings affected and the number of assessors available are unknown.
9. The LGA [responded to the Fire Safety Consultation](#) addressing the recommendations of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's first phase.
10. The LGA submitted [evidence](#) to the House of Common's Housing Communities and Local Government (HCLG) select committee's pre-legislative scrutiny of the Building Safety Bill and Lord Porter gave [oral evidence](#). Officer continued to liaise with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) over the development of the new building safety regime, in particular through membership of the Joint Regulators' Group.
11. Lord Porter also gave [oral evidence](#) to the [HCLG select committee inquiry inquiries into remediation of flammable cladding](#) and the LGA gave [written evidence](#) to the [PAC inquiry into the same subject](#).
12. We published a guide for counsellors in supporting residents of buildings with dangerous cladding and a [position statement on leaseholder costs](#).
13. We had two dedicated sessions on building safety at the LGA's Fire Conference in March and we will have another session on building safety at the LGA's Annual Conference on 7 July. Lord Greenhalgh will be speaking, alongside Peter Baker from HSE and Dame Judith Hackitt.

14. The LGA has continued to work with NFCC and MHCLG on the remediation of buildings with dangerous cladding, in particular through its membership of the Fire Protection Board and through hosting the Joint Inspection Team.
15. The LGA is a part of the Fire Standards Board, working with the other members to produce standards for the fire and rescue sector. Standards developed over the year include:
 - 15.1. Code of Ethics
 - 15.2. Community risk management planning
 - 15.3. Emergency response driving
 - 15.4. Operational competence
 - 15.5. Operational learning
 - 15.6. Operational preparedness.
16. We have also contributed to the development of the prevention and protection standards.
17. We have continued to represent Fire and Rescue Authorities on HMICFRS's External Reference Group for Fire inspections. This work has included providing feedback on the Covid inspection and the development of the second round of inspections. We held a session with Sir Tom Winsor at the LGA Fire Conference in March 2020, which was well attended and provided the opportunity for members to question the Chief Inspector.
18. Following our collaborative work on the Spending Review for 2020, Members agreed to continue to work with the NFCC to update the work for the next Spending Review taking place this year. We have also reconvened the Senior Sector Group with the NFCC and Home Office to discuss the approach of the sector in more depth. This work is currently underway.
19. We have continued to provide input into the Emergency Services Mobile Communities Programme through the Fire Customer Group. We have established a working group for members on the ESMCP.

Governance

20. Governance has continued to be one of the key issues for members as the year has progressed. The outcomes from Part 1 of the Police and Crime Commissioner Review were published in March, which included the announcement of a fire reform white paper.
21. Following the release of the outcomes of Part 1, the LGA held a special meeting of the Fire Commission with the Fire Minister in attendance to discuss the proposals. Members outlined their concerns around the mandatory transfers of power. The Chair then wrote to the minister after the meeting to emphasise these points. The LGA has set up a Governance working group to look at governance in more depth which will help input into our response to the White Paper. We will also be running a number of online workshops

on governance and leadership over July and September to support members with their role.

22. We have produced 3 videos with Andy Fry on governance including an overview of the role of fire and rescue authorities, political oversight of fire and rescue performance and effective governance in times of crisis. We will be continuing this work with a webinar on the member and officer relationship, working with the NFCC.

Other issues

23. Members also highlighted a number of other issues for further exploration:
- 23.1. Learning from Covid: we held a session with Phil Garrigan, Chief Fire Officer at Merseyside FRS on the fire sector's Covid response and lessons learned from it.
 - 23.2. Climate Change: we held a session on climate change at the LGA's Fire Conference on community engagement in climate change issues, and the particular challenging facing the fire and rescue service in a changing climate.

Priorities for 2021/22

24. Members will wish to consider their priorities for 2021/22. The priorities for last year were centred around the Government's key themes of people, professionalism and governance and it is likely that these will continue to be of key importance going forward, especially with the publication of the Fire Reform White Paper. Therefore, members may wish to consider if the FSMC's key themes should remain consistent.

Priority areas	Proposed activity
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion and diversity champions network: continue to provide training, information and support to FRA champions. • Provide support to members through the Fire Leadership Essentials programme. • The White Paper is likely to include further information around training and development. • Engagement on Fit for the Future and development of a updated version of the document.
Professionalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobbying on the Building Safety Bill. • Support with the implementation of the Fire Safety Act. • Continuing engagement with the NFCC on future Spending Reviews. • Continuing with our role on the Fire Standards Board. • Represent FRAs on HMICFRS's External Reference Group.
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to the white paper's proposals around changes in Governance.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support members in their leadership and governance role.
--	--

25. Members may also wish to consider wider sector transformation and the role of the sector going forwards. This will likely be affected by the Fire Reform White Paper.

Implications for Wales

26. 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

27. 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

28. Officers will draft a work programme based on members discussions.