

Fire Commission Update Paper

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

The report outlines issues of interest to the Fire Commission not covered under other items on the agenda.

Recommendation

That members of the Commission note the report.

Actions

Officers to continue to provide updates to members.

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Fire Commission Update Paper

Governance Task & Finish Group – Fire Reform White Paper

1. On 16 March 2021, the Home Secretary laid a [Written Ministerial Statement in Parliament setting out the findings from part one of the Police and Crime Commissioners \(PCC\) Review](#). This included a series of recommendations to reform the police service and fire and rescue sector.
2. Government has outlined that findings from this part of the review will inform options for the upcoming White Paper on fire reform. Centred on three pillars of improvement – Professionalism, People, and Governance - the White Paper will outline the roadmap for reform, alongside the comprehensive legislative programme on fire and building safety. The White Paper is now scheduled to be published in Autumn 2021, with a 12-week consultation throughout the Autumn/Winter period.
3. At the Fire Commission meeting in June 2021, Members were advised that a Governance Task and Finish Group would be convened to explore the key issues regarding governance and alternative models for creating stronger executive and scrutiny functions within fire and rescue authorities. The Group has now met twice, on 30 June and 20 July, and all proposals will be brought to FSMC and Fire Commission for consideration.
4. Once the Fire Reform White Paper has been published, the LGA is proposing to convene an extraordinary meeting of the Fire Commission (anticipated to be this autumn).

Part Two of the PCC Review

5. On 27 July 2021, Government [announced its intention to launch Part Two of the Home Office Review into the role of PCCs](#). In a letter to PCCs, the Minister of State for Crime and Policing, Kit Malthouse MP, outlined the focus of the Part Two review, including:
 - 5.1. assessing the Police and Crime Panel Model - specifically the potential benefits of independent members, identifying and securing the right skill sets and options to strengthen panel support
 - 5.2. consider whether the existing mechanisms for investigating complaints and allegations against PCCs are sufficient and examine the role of the IOPC in assessing criminal wrongdoings by PCCs and the issue of vexatious complaints
 - 5.3. work with the Cabinet Office and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government to consider the merits and demerits of introducing recall for PCCs for very serious breaches of behaviour, including what might be a suitable trigger mechanism
 - 5.4. through Part Two of this Review and the upcoming Spending Review, the Home Office will examine how PCCs use data in holding Chief Constables to account for the efficient and effective delivery of policing services in their respective areas,

including how data is fed into central databases and is utilised by the Home Office and relevant policing partners to reduce crime.

6. The Review applies to all PCCs, including Mayors exercising PCC functions, but does not extend to wider mayoral functions. As with Part One, an Advisory Group will guide the work, comprising of senior external stakeholders with expertise in the policing and justice sector.

Member development and support

7. On 7 September 2021, the LGA hosted the first Governance and Leadership workshop for FRA members. In the virtual workshop, experienced facilitators delivered a range of interactive learning and development activities focusing on key issues and best practice related to fire governance and leadership. These workshops aim to strengthen knowledge and understanding of various leadership approaches, including a focus on the practical scrutiny skills required to support effective executive decision-making.
8. The LGA will be hosting two more workshops on 30 September (9.30am-1.30pm) and 12 October (9.30am-1.30pm). These are free to attend, and all FRA Members are encouraged to participate.
9. Also in September, the LGA held its bi-annual Fire Leadership course virtually via Zoom. Over three days (14-16 September), FRA members heard from various speakers covering topics that aim to inform and support their statutory responsibilities, including: HMICFRS Inspections, Government's fire reform programme, building safety, diversity and inclusion, and fire governance and leadership.

Outside bodies update

10. ESMCP (Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme) Full Business Case Working Group: On 21 June 2021, the Working Group convened for the first time at which an introduction to the Emergency Services Network and ESMCP was provided, and full business case discussed. The NFCC's Senior User and Business Change Lead (Fire) for ESMCP, Ian Taylor, delivered an introductory presentation alongside Simon Parr, the Senior Responsible Officer within the Home Office for the Programme. In August 2021, the LGA provided a response to the Competition Market Authority's investigation into the ESMCP.
11. HMICFRS Chiefs and Chairs Event: Held on 26 July, the Inspectorate provided an overview of the Government's Fire Reform programme and next steps for the national inspection programme.
12. Fire Standards Board (FSB): The FSB last convened on 14 July, at which progress on the delivery of Fire Standards and other key activity of the Board was discussed. This included the development of the Safeguarding Fire Standard and the Data Management Fire Standard; and the Fire Prevention Standard was approved for quality assurance. The 1 October meeting has been cancelled and the next meeting is scheduled for 8 December 2021.

13. HMICFRS External Reference Group (ERG): The ERG met on 15 September 2021, where the emerging findings from tranche 1 of round two of inspections were discussed. An update on the State of Fire 2021 report was provided, which included the future structure of the inspection programme. The new Inspector of Fire and Rescue Authorities in England, Roy Wilshir OBE, was also introduced in their new role. The next meeting is scheduled for 11 October.