

Priorities for 2021-22

Purpose of report

For direction.

Summary

The Paper provides members with the opportunity to discuss potential priorities for the next year.

Recommendation

Members are asked to discuss proposals for this year's priorities.

Action

Based on members discussions officers will draft a workplan.

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

Priorities for 2021-22

Background

1. At the first meeting of the Fire Commission in the 2021/22 LGA year members were asked to consider the policy priorities for the forthcoming year, based on those discussions this paper has been updated to reflect the concerns expressed at the meeting.
2. The Fire Reform White Paper has not yet been published, however, the White Paper is expected to cover a wider range of topics all of which will impact on the work of the FSMC. The Government's key themes for reform have previously been outlined as people, professionalism and governance. It is therefore proposed that those remain the FSMC's key themes for the forthcoming year to ensure that each of the reforms proposed under these themes are picked up within the FSMC's workplan.
3. Alongside this the FSMC will also want to consider its input into the wider LGA business plan, working alongside other boards, including the Safer and Stronger Communities Board.

LGA's Business plan

4. The LGA's business plan for 2019-2022 sets out a range of cross-cutting LGA priorities which the work programmes of individual Boards should contribute to:
 - 4.1. Funding for local government
 - 4.2. Adult social care, health and wellbeing
 - 4.3. Narrowing inequalities and protecting communities
 - 4.4. Children, education and schools
 - 4.5. Places to live and work
 - 4.6. Strong local democracy
 - 4.7. Sustainability and climate action
 - 4.8. Supporting councils.
5. The LGA's business plan is currently being updated for the current year, but as last year, the FSMC and Fire Commission's activities will fall within the objectives under the headings of narrowing inequalities and protecting communities and the places for people to live and work.

LGA Business Plan 2019-22

6. The [LGA Business Plan for 2019-2022](#) outlines the organisation's ambitions to support our sector to meet the challenges it is facing, empowered to innovate and create services that are tailored to communities and that it is resilient.

7. On narrowing equalities and protecting communities the Business Plan outlines our work on this area as continuing to play a leading role in the design and delivery of blue light and other services that help to protect local communities as well as addressing inequalities in our communities and building their resilience and cohesion.
8. The FSMC has previously prioritised work around culture, diversity, inclusion and equality within our services. This work has focussed on the inclusion, equality and diversity network to ensure that the culture of the service is inclusive and welcoming, the workforce is reflective of its communities and the services are answering the needs of their communities. The Inspectorate has previously highlighted that equality and diversity within the fire and rescue service needs to improve. Members may wish to consider where else we can consider these issues within our work.
9. Our work on protecting communities has mainly been focussed on responding to the issues highlighted through the building safety programme, and these have been a key part of the FSMC's and LGA's work to protect our communities.
10. The work of the fire service in responding to Covid, facilitated by the tripartite agreement, has shown the wider contribution that the fire and rescue service can make in protecting our communities and making our communities more resilient. The LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board will be undertaking further work on this area. A priority for the Board is to work with councils to review and share learning from Covid-19, to help strengthen community resilience and future emergency responses. Therefore we will ensure that views from the fire sector can be fed into this work as well.
11. Climate change has already had an impact on the sorts of incidents that the fire services respond to. In 2020 the LGA produced a guide to help fire and rescue authorities consider what they were doing on the ground to tackle climate change. Members may wish to consider how we can take this work further in the forthcoming year and supporting councillors in their role.
12. Our work on creating places for people to live and work has concentrated on ensuring that councils and FRAs continue to drive higher safety standards across the housing sector. Identifying high-risk, high-rise residential buildings and lobbying for support for councils to make changes and take remedial action as well as working on the new building safety framework.

Proposed priorities

13. Given the importance of the forthcoming White Paper for the sector the proposed priorities for the next year fit under the same broad headings as the Government's Fire Reform Programme:
 - 13.1. People
 - 13.2. Professionalism

13.3. Governance

14. The impact of the Spending Review on the sector will also have a bearing on the work of the LGA going forwards, as will the findings of the Inspectorate now that tranche 2 of inspections have started. We also expect another State of Fire report in the new year which is also likely to include further recommendations for the sector as previous year's publications have. The sector's ongoing transformation and improvement work will continue to be a key theme.

Priorities for 2021/22

15. 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.

People

16. The Fire Reform White Paper is expected to outline a number of reforms in terms of the training and development of staff as well as looking at inclusion, diversity and equality. The LGA will seek to respond to these proposals once we have further detail of what will be included.

17. We will also:

- 17.1. Continue to provide equality, diversity and inclusion support to members through the Inclusion and Diversity Member Champions Network. In the last State of Fire Report the Inspectorate highlighted that diversity and equality within the sector must be improved.
- 17.2. Support the FSMC's Equalities Advocate in their role.
- 17.3. Provide training for new and leading members of Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) through the Fire Leadership Essentials Programme.
- 17.4. Working with the National Employers (England) and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) we will engage with the sector on Fit for the Future and the implementation of the improvement objectives.

Professionalism

18. The Fire Reform White Paper is expected to include a number of proposals around changes to progression within the sector, as well as looking at leadership. Operational Independence is expected to be a key part of the reform agenda under professionalism. Leadership of FRAs has been a key part of the LGA's workplan, and we have run a number of workshops around this theme. We will be looking at how we can build on the learning that has come out of these workshops.

19. We will:

- 19.1. Continue to undertake work on building safety as the Building Safety Bill continues its progress through Parliament and the Fire Safety Act is implemented.
- 19.2. Work on the Building Risk Review next steps which are to be determined by the Fire Protection Board this Autumn.
- 19.3. Work with the Home Office on the review of the National Fire Framework.
- 19.4. Undertake ongoing work with the Home Office and NFCC on the financial position of the sector. We will be working with the Home Office on creating a new Fire Efficiencies and Productivity Forum to look at these issues in the fire service as well as be a part of the Efficiencies and Productivity working group that supports the Forum.
- 19.5. Continue to input into the Fire Standards Board through our membership of the Board, as well as providing feedback as standards are developed.
- 19.6. Continue to provide input into HMICFRS's External Reference Group and driving forwards the response to inspection.
- 19.7. Support the sector with a sector-led improvement offer.

Governance

20. The Fire Reform White Paper will contain proposals regarding the future of governance of the fire and rescue sector and what good governance looks like. The LGA will be looking to provide a response to the White Paper. We will:
 - 20.1. Provide training and support for members on governance and leadership issues, through training events and online resources.
 - 20.2. Respond to Part 2 of the PCC Review where it touches on the role of Police and Crime Panels.

Implications for Wales

21. 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.

Financial Implications

22. 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

23. Officers will draft a work programme based on members' discussions to bring back to FSMC.