

Fire Services Management Committee Update Paper

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

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

Recommendation

That members of the Committee note the report.

Actions

Officers to continue to provide updates to members.

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Fire Services Management Committee 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. Government has outlined that findings from this part of the review will inform options for the upcoming Fire Reform White Paper. The White Paper is now scheduled to be published in Autumn 2021, with a 12-week consultation throughout the Autumn/Winter period.
2. The LGA has convened a Governance Task and Finish Group 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 for consideration.

Part Two of the PCC Review

3. 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:
 - 3.1. 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
 - 3.2. 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
 - 3.3. 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
 - 3.4. 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.
4. The Review applies to all PCCs, including Mayors exercising PCC functions, but does not extend to wider mayoral functions.
5. The LGA has responded on behalf of the sector collating views of Police and Crime Panels and wider local government stakeholders. There was a discussion at the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board to inform the approach and the final submission was signed off by the SSCB Lead Members.

Member development and support

6. The LGA has now delivered two Governance and Leadership workshops for FRA members, held on 7 September and 12 October 2021. In the virtual workshops, 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.
7. The LGA will be hosting one more virtual workshop on 9 November (9.30am-1.30pm). It is free to attend, and all FRA Members are encouraged to participate.
8. 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.

National Fire Framework

9. The [Fire and Rescue national framework](#) is due to be reviewed. Further information is not currently available on what form the review will take but we will keep members apprised.

Fit for the Future

10. Fit for the Future (FfF) is an initiative developed in a partnership between the National Employers (England), the Local Government Association (LGA) and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) (the Partners). Originating from the joint need to have an evidence-based view of the role of the service going forward, this [initiative outlines a proposal for establishing a common picture for the future of fire and rescue services in England](#).
11. Informed by the comprehensive evidence sources available about fire and rescue services in England – including the recommendations of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry and the outcomes of inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – its purpose is to identify what needs to change, and then determine how that change could be delivered by supporting its implementation across all services.
12. To gauge the nature of the challenge in implementing FfF, a consultation was carried out between October and November 2020. The aim of this exercise was to further familiarise and seek the views of a wide range of stakeholders with the work to date. Based on the feedback received, it was determined that a second round of engagement was required

to further refine the content and inform the approach to delivering the improvement objectives. On 26 August 2021, the Partners wrote to all Chief Fire Officers and Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) Chairs outlining the key issues raised during the consultation and next steps for the ongoing development of FfF.

13. Throughout October and November 2021, the Partners will work collaboratively to deliver a series of strategic and technical workshops that aim to reaffirm the role and purpose of FfF, develop a joint forward-looking narrative linked to the improvement objectives, and agree the approach to actions required across partner organisations to deliver on the improvement objectives. FRA Chairs are encouraged to attend one of the two in-person strategic workshops, scheduled for Friday, 22 October, and Wednesday, 27 October. These will be held at the LGA offices in London. The technical workshops will be convened in late November and December and will be delivered virtually.
14. The purpose of this subsequent engagement process is to ensure that there is consensus amongst all who have responsibility for leading the fire and rescue service at a strategic level. Reaching common agreement about what needs to improve and how the benefits of that improvement can be realised is imperative to the success of Fit for the Future.

HMICFRS State of Fire

15. Sir Tom Winsor wrote to the fire sector over the summer asking for input into the next State of Fire report, due in early 2022. The LGA provided a submission into HMICFRS that was signed off by the FSMC Lead Members following a discussion with them. The submission highlighted the work on Fit for the Future, the challenges facing the sector and how we have responded to the previous recommendations from the inspectorate.

Outside bodies update

16. 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.
17. 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 next meeting is scheduled for 8 December 2021.
18. 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 Wilshire OBE, was also introduced in their new role. The next meeting is scheduled for 8 November.

19. Fire Efficiency and Productivity Forum: The lead members and PFCC Roger Hirst attended the first meeting of the Fire Efficiency and Productivity Forum on 17 September. The Forum has been set up following the submission of the LGA/NFCC work on the Spending Review, which included a number of proposals around efficiency and productivity. The terms of reference for the Forum are still being finalised and it will be supported by an efficiency and productivity working group run by the NFCC that officers will input into.