

Priorities for 2022-23

Purpose of report

For direction.

Summary

The FSMC are asked to discuss the potential priorities for 2022-23.

Recommendation

That the FSMC agree what priorities should be for the forthcoming year and agree that we will have a flexible approach.

Action

Based on member's discussions officers will draft priorities and a workplan.

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Priorities for 2022-23

Background

1. In July 2022 the FSMC discussed potential priorities for the forthcoming year. This paper surmises the key issues discussed at the July meetings as well as examining the role of the LGA, horizon scanning and the potential priorities.

LGA Business Plan

2. The LGA's 2019-22 business plan previously set out a range of cross-cutting priorities with the work programmes of individual board should contribute to:
 - 2.1. Funding for local government
 - 2.2. Adult social care, health and wellbeing
 - 2.3. Narrowing inequalities and protecting communities
 - 2.4. Children, education and schools
 - 2.5. Places to live and work
 - 2.6. Strong local democracy
 - 2.7. Sustainability and climate action
 - 2.8. Supporting councils.
3. The business plan is currently being updated and at the current time, it is not clear what the new priorities will be or where the work of the Fire Services Management Committee will fit within them. We therefore plan on the basis of the broad headings of work which came under the narrowing inequalities and protecting communities/places to live and work headings in the previous plan:
 - 3.1. Councils lead the way in shaping communities where people feel safe;
 - 3.2. Councils continue to play a leading role in the design and delivery of blue light and other services that help protect local government;
 - 3.3. Councils support strong communities through risk-based business friendly regulatory services.

The Role of the LGA

4. In considering the priorities for the forthcoming year members will wish to consider how the LGA can best add value to the work of the fire sector through its activities. As a political organisation, bringing together members from across the country and different governance types, the LGA occupies a unique position.
5. The LGA's work focusses on responding to the political aspects of topics that affect the fire service, particularly around issues such as finance, inspection, building safety and equality, diversity and inclusion. These are issues that will have a national impact on the sector, and in which we can give a collective view as well as helping FRAs to drive

improvements at the local level through activities such as training or the development of resources.

6. It is clear that there will be areas of work where other organisations take more of a lead, such as the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC). However, in those cases the LGA still provides an important role in providing political support and discussion. There may also be times where we might have a different focus to partner organisations on particular issues.
7. As the year progresses members will wish to consider how we can remain flexible in our approach towards the priorities for the year and have the opportunity to re-prioritise throughout the year.
8. The value we add in our activities can be summarised as:
 - 8.1. Responding to the political aspects within issues;
 - 8.2. Highlight where there are national impacts on the fire service and authorities;
 - 8.3. Helping fire and rescue authorities to drive improvements at a local level.

Horizon Scanning

9. In considering the priorities for next year, there are a number of reports, inquiries, reviews or other emerging issues likely to be coming out that may have an impact on the work of the FSMC going forwards. This could include:
 - 9.1. Potentially an emergency budget
 - 9.2. New ministerial team
 - 9.3. Industrial relations and action
 - 9.4. Government response to the Fire Reform White Paper consultation
 - 9.5. Manchester Arena Inquiry
 - 9.6. Grenfell Inquiry
 - 9.7. State of Fire 2022 and third tranche of inspection
 - 9.8. London Fire Brigade's cultural review
 - 9.9. Civil contingencies review

July Priorities discussion

10. The [End of Year Report and priorities 2022-23 report](#) in July outlined that priorities for 2021-22 were centred around the Government's key themes of people, professionalism and governance. Under each of these themes there are strands of work picking up particular issues and activities, building on how the LGA understands its role:
 - 10.1. People
 - 10.1.1. Supporting equality, diversity and inclusion work and members through the EDI champions network

10.1.2. Leadership training for members

10.2. Professionalism

- 10.2.1. Building safety: push back on proposals around building safety that distort the priorities under IRMP and add unfunded burdens or transfer responsibility to FRS from duty-holders.
- 10.2.2. Finance for the sector: lobby for the sector to have council tax flexibility for the future, highlight the issues facing the sector as a result of the cost of the increases in costs of living
- 10.2.3. Inspections and sector led improvement: highlight the important role of members and the role the LGA can play in providing a sector led improvement offer
- 10.2.4. Standards: ensuring that the LGA fulfils its role on the Fire Standards Board

10.3. Governance

- 10.3.1. Supporting members in their governance role and their role in driving change in the sector

11. With the Government's response to the White Paper due in the Autumn it is likely that these will continue to be of key importance for the FSMC as the Government seeks to develop its proposals and priorities further, with a potential new ministerial team coming into place.

12. Alongside these priorities members also identified two other key areas at the two July FSMC meetings:

12.1. **Sector-led improvement:** As members will be aware we do not receive any funding from the Home Office to undertake a specific programme of sector-led improvement activity for fire and rescue authorities. Feedback so far has suggested that the development of a sector led improvement programme would be welcome in the sector. The NFCC are already working in this space and we would see our work as complementary to theirs as well as the work that HMICFRS are doing. We have engaged with the Home Office on this at a high level and plan further engagement. Our colleagues in improvement have explored several options that we could take into further discussions with the Home Office. Whilst we will continue discussions, initial feedback from the Home Office has been mixed. This would be separate to the policy work that we can do to provide training, leadership essentials programmes etc.

12.2. **Climate change:** The wildfires over the summer, the knock-on effect in terms of resilience of the sector and the unintended consequences for fire and rescue services of some environmental policies were a focus of discussion at the 22 July FSMC meeting, and feed into our White Paper response. Given the widespread impact and number of the wildfires, with at least 14 FRAs declaring major

emergencies, and others stretched, as well as the continuing drought this is an ongoing issue that the FSMC may wish to highlight further in its work over the forthcoming year. At the meeting in July a further workshop was suggested to discuss the particular issues facing the fire service as a result of climate change. It is clear this is a key issue of importance across the LGA, with the Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board providing strategic direction and coordination of activity. The LGA Board also has an interest in this work.

Planned Events and activities

13. We also have a number of fixed activities throughout the year including:

- 13.1. Two Fire Commission meetings: October 2022 and June 2023
- 13.2. Five FSMC meetings: September, December 2022, March, May, July 2023
- 13.3. Two Fire Leadership Essentials: November 2022 and Summer 2023
- 13.4. The Fire Conference: March 2023
- 13.5. Three EDI Champions network meetings: dates tbc
- 13.6. Quarterly Fire Bulletins

Workplan

14. Members will wish to consider the workplan for the forthcoming year in light of the considerations set out in this report. Some proposed activities are set out below:

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. • Consider any further resources to support members in driving forwards cultural change within the sector.
Professionalism	<p>Engage with Health and Safety Executive's programme to establish the new building safety regulator and raise awareness amongst Fire and Rescue Authorities of their responsibilities as regulators. As part of this, we will continue to lobby for the funding of new burdens and a proportionate approach to transition to the new regime and new Fire Safety Order responsibilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to support councils in taking enforcement action under the Housing Act 2004 through hosting the Joint Inspection Team. We will continue to support a

	<p>coordinated approach to regulation between fire services and councils.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue our improvement programme to support FRs in their enhanced regulatory role. • Consider any developments around the Grenfell Tower inquiry, including the recommendations of its Phase Two report and respond. • Respond to any recommendations relevant to the Fire and Rescue Service from the Manchester Arena Inquiry. • We will continue to lobby around Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans and improved building regulations. • Working with the NFCC on making a joint case for the funding of the sector. • Continuing with our role on the Fire Standards Board. • Represent FRAs on HMICFRS's External Reference Group. • Continuing to develop the case for an LGA sector-led improvement offer. • Continue to engage with the NFCC on climate change.
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to engage with the Home Office on their proposals around governance. • Support members in their leadership and governance role through appropriate resources and training.

Implications for Wales

15. 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

16. 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.

Equalities implications

17. All board papers are now required to outline the equalities implications of the proposals they put forward, to help embed the equalities approaches the LGA's members are also considering.
18. Officers will therefore consider the equalities aspects of individual elements of the work programme as these are developed. Board members are also encouraged to consider this as an issue they may wish to scrutinise.

Next steps

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