

Meeting: Fire Commission

Date: 14 October 2022



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Priorities for 2022-23

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

The Fire Commission are asked to note the priorities for the LGA's fire policy work for 2022-23.

Recommendation

The Fire Commission are asked to note the priorities and work agreed by Fire Services Management Committee at its meeting in September.

Action

Following the Committee's agreement of its priorities officers are in the process of drafting a workplan to deliver the priorities.

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Priorities for 2022-23

Background

1. In September 2022 the Fire Services Management Committee (FSMC) discussed potential priorities for the forthcoming year. This paper surmises the priorities as discussed at that meeting as well as examining the role of the LGA and horizon scanning.

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 boards 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 looking at the priorities, FSMC has considered 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 governance, 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 Fire

and Rescue Authorities (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 FSMC will 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.

Horizon Scanning

8. 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. These include:
 - 8.1. New ministerial team
 - 8.2. Industrial relations and action
 - 8.3. Government response to the Fire Reform White Paper consultation
 - 8.4. Manchester Arena Inquiry
 - 8.5. Grenfell Inquiry
 - 8.6. State of Fire 2022 and third tranche of HMICFRS inspections
 - 8.7. London Fire Brigade's cultural review
 - 8.8. Civil contingencies review
9. As new issues emerge and policy announcements are made there will be a reprioritisation throughout the year.

September FSMC Priorities discussion

10. The September FSMC meeting discussed and agreed the priorities for 2022-23. The importance of all of the priorities was discussed, however members emphasised the need to prioritise work throughout the year depending on the key issues coming up. For instance prior to the next fiscal event (currently scheduled for 23 November) we will work with the NFCC around lobbying on finances for the sector. Priorities for 2022-23 are centred around the Government's key themes in the Fire Reform White Paper of people, professionalism and governance, as well as looking further at sector-led support and climate change.
11. The [LGA responded to the Government's Fire Reform White Paper](#) over the Summer. There were a number of areas where we will be seeking further engagement with the Home Office to help inform their proposals, as well as looking at wider issues underneath the people, professionalism and governance headings:

11.1. People

11.1.1. Under this heading the Government's white paper made proposals around flexibility, business continuity, the pay negotiating machinery and nurturing new and existing talent. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services' (HMICFRS's) recent reports have also highlighted issues around equality, diversity and inclusion within the sector. We will continue to work with the FSMC Equalities Advocate, Fiona Twycross to support the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Champions Network, including training and resources for members on driving this work forwards.

11.2. Professionalism

11.2.1. The White Paper outlined proposals around leadership of the sector, data, research, ethics and culture, including codes of ethics and the fire service Oath and the introduction of a College of Fire and Rescue. Other issues we work on under this heading include building safety, finance, inspections and standards as well as the implementation of Fit for the Future.

11.3. Governance

11.3.1. The Government's proposals under this heading included the proposals around executive leadership, boundaries, funding, a balanced leadership model, the legal entity of chief fire officers and the distinction between strategic and operational planning. Our work on this area has focussed on supporting members in their governance role and their role in driving change in the sector.

12. Members also agreed two further priorities:

12.1. **Sector-led improvement:** 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, such as the 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 potential for flooding again this winter were discussed by the FSMC, 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 drought having the capacity and capability to respond to such extreme weather events will be an ongoing issue. It is also 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 Executive Advisory 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: 7-8 March 2023
- 13.5. Three EDI Champions network meetings: 23 November, March 2023, June 2023
- 13.6. Quarterly Fire Bulletins

Workplan

14. Proposed activities to meet the priorities of the FSMC are:

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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.• 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 coordinated approach to regulation between fire services and councils.• Continue our improvement programme to support FRSs in their enhanced regulatory role.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Continue to work with the National Employers (England) and NFCC on the implementation of Fit for the Future.
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to engage with the Home Office on their proposals around governance. • Continue to engage with the Home Office as they develop their Balanced Leadership Model. • Support members in their leadership and governance role through appropriate resources and training.
Sector-led Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with colleagues in improvement to make the case to Government for a funded sector-led improvement programme.
Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the NFCC on understanding the impact of climate change on the sector, including around mitigation and adaptation.

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

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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. FSMC members will also be encouraged to consider this as an issue they may wish to scrutinise.

Next steps

19. Officers will draft a work programme based on FSMC's discussions.