

Meeting: Fire Commission

Date: 14 October 2022

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.

Contact details

Contact officer: Rebecca Johnson

Position: Adviser

Phone no: 07887 568807

Email: Rebecca.johnson@local.gov.uk

Fire Commission Update Paper

New Minister for Fire

1. Jeremy Quin MP has been appointed Minister of State at the Home Office with responsibility for Policing, Crime and Fire.
2. The LGA has previously tried to make the case that Fire should be separate from policing and instead aligned with building safety, which continues to sit within the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

Fire Reform White Paper

3. The LGA [submitted a response](#) to Government's Reforming our Fire and Rescue Service White Paper at the end of July. The response welcomed Government's ambition to improve the Fire and Rescue Service and the reform agenda. It also outlined views on where proposals need further consideration and provided practical solutions on how these could be developed to deliver reform. The response also set out potential barriers to reform and areas where the LGA believe change could be achieved more quickly.
4. Government is expected to respond although the timeline for this is unknown and is likely to be impacted by the change in ministerial team.

HMICFRS inspection reports

5. In July His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published reports from the 15 FRs that made up the second tranche of round two inspections. A [summary report](#) of findings as well as the individual service reports are available on the HMICFRS website.
6. HMICFRS found that overall, the sector continues to be well prepared to respond to routine and major emergency incidents.
7. In terms of inspection grades seven out of 15 scored 'good' across the three areas, four were mixed and four scored 'require improvement' across the board (with one of those authorities scoring inadequate in one area). Compared to Round 1 inspections of the same services, the majority (eight) of services had stayed the same, five had improved their scores and two scored worse overall.
8. Many services that received causes of concern in our first round of inspections have taken meaningful steps to improve and act on recommendations and there has been a positive shift in services prioritising protection.

9. However, some services have failed to make enough progress. HMICFRS have serious concerns that some services have failed to act on the causes of concern issued in Round 1 inspections. Six new causes for concern have been issued meaning there is now a total of nine causes across seven of the 15 services inspected.
10. Three areas of particular weakness that HMICFRS has identified, and where new causes of concern have been issued are prevention, values and culture and equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). In two services, cultures found to be toxic.
11. The third tranche of the second-round inspections is expected to be published at the end of 2022/ early 2023.

Wildfires

12. The heatwave over the summer led to a huge increase in wildfires. National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) data shows that up to 13 August 2022 there had been 716 wildfires. Last year the annual total was 247.
13. On 19 July, the hottest day on record with temperatures in some places exceeding 40 degrees, services were under intense pressure dealing with the volume and intensity of fires in their areas. At least fourteen FRSs declared major incident. Major incidents are usually larger, more complex incidents, endanger lives, threaten larger areas, and require additional levels of co-ordination across a range of emergency services and other agencies. London Fire Brigade recoded their busiest day since World War II and 40 homes and businesses across the city were destroyed by wildfires.

Events

14. The LGAs Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition 2023 will be held on Tuesday 7th and Wednesday 8th March 2023 in Nottingham. More details on topics and speakers will follow in due course. Please get in touch with Rebecca Johnson if you have suggestions for the conference agenda rebecca.johnson@local.gov.uk.
15. The next Fire and Rescue Leadership Essentials course will take place between Wednesday 9 November – Thursday 10 November at Warwick Conference Centre. The course is fully subsidised and aims to provide an induction to the fire sector and is a great opportunity to network with other fire members, so new fire authority members as well as existing members are encouraged to attend.
16. The objectives of the course are for delegates to:
 - Develop a comprehensive understanding of the fire sector, including clarity on duties and responsibilities and develop skills around leadership in FRAs.
 - Develop skills around leadership in FRAs.
 - Gain a thorough understanding of scrutiny and governance in FRAs and practical skills to apply that understanding.

- Improve knowledge of the key strategic issues facing the sector, including fire reform, building safety, the fire inspections regime and issues around culture, inclusion, and diversity in the fire sector.
 - Improve knowledge of the key strategic issues facing the sector, including fire reform, building safety, the fire inspections regime and issues around culture, inclusion, and diversity in the fire sector.
17. For more information or to book, contact Grace Collins - 020 7664 3054 or grace.collins@local.gov.uk
 18. The Fire Diversity and Inclusion Champions Network is due to meet on 23 November between 10am and 12pm. This will be a virtual meeting held on Teams and will be chaired by Dr Fiona Twycross who has been reappointed as FSMC Equalities Advocate. The topic of the next session will be on the role of scrutiny in driving improvement.
 19. The network brings together elected representatives who are responsible for diversity and inclusion issues on their fire and rescue authorities to develop skills to challenge their services to improve in this area. We encourage authorities who are in the process of reviewing outside appointments post elections to make sure that they have a representative on the Committee's Member Champions Network.
 20. Please let Rebecca Johnson know if you would like to be added to the Champions Network mailing list by emailing rebecca.johnson@local.gov.uk.

Outside body updates

21. The Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP) continues to undertake significant work with key Programme suppliers building the Emergency Services Network (ESN). Until this work is concluded, more definitive information around timelines for delivery, resourcing and the broader ambitions of the Programme cannot be provided. The challenge that this uncertainty poses for FRAs and FRSS is recognised by the Programme and its participants. At the most recent ESMCP Programme Board in September, the Home Office re-affirmed its commitment that Airwave will continue to be available until ESN is fit for purpose and the three emergency services (3ES) no longer need Airwave.
22. The interim report of the Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) investigation into the mobile radio network is due in September, with the final report in December. This investigation was initiated because of concerns:
 - 20.1. that the market for the supply of the mobile radio network used by all emergency services in Great Britain might not be working well, resulting in a more expensive service for customers and, ultimately, the taxpayer, and;
 - 20.2. that due to Motorola's dual role [in owning both the Airwave service and being a key ESN supplier], Motorola has an incentive to delay or shape the roll-out of the ESN to its advantage, given the significant profits it currently receives from operating the Airwave network.

23. Cllr Eric Carter currently represents the LGA on the ESMCP Fire Customer Group and ensures the views of the LGA's FSMC and FRA's are considered within the overall endeavour. It is intended to provide a fuller update at the October Fire Commission meeting.

Implications for Wales

24. None.

Financial Implications

25. None.

Equalities implications

26. HMICFRS's inspection reports highlighted a range of issues that impact on equality, diversity and inclusion within the fire and rescue sector. The LGA's Fire Diversity and Inclusion Champions Network has been specifically established to assist authorities in improving equality, diversity and inclusion in fire and rescue services.