

## End of year report

### Purpose of Report

For information.

Is this report confidential? No

### Summary

The paper provides an overview of the work of Fire Services Management Committee over the last year and provides members with an early opportunity to discuss the Committee's priorities for the next year.

LGA Plan Theme: **Championing climate change and local environments**

### Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to note the work of the FSMC over the last year and discuss proposals for next year's priorities.

Based on members discussions officers will draft priorities and a workplan for discussion at the September Fire Commission and October FSMC.

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## End of Year Report

### Background

#### Priorities for 2022-2023

1. At the September 2022 FSMC meeting members agreed five overarching priorities for the year:
  - People
  - Professionalism
  - Governance
  - Climate Change
  - Sector led improvement
2. This paper provides an overview of the achievements delivered against these themes and seeks an initial steer from the Board on its priorities for 2023/24.
3. Feedback from members on their priorities for next year will subsequently be developed into a full paper for consideration at the first meeting of the 2023/24 Board cycle in September.
4. As discussed at the meeting in September, the priorities have remained flexible and adaptable to new issues arising, such as the issues coming out of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services' (HMICFRS) spotlight report that were added to our work around people.

### Summary of key issues and work

#### People

5. Ensuring that the service has an inclusive and diverse culture has been a long-standing priority of the FSMC. This work has primarily taken place through the Diversity and Inclusion Champions Network and the Equalities Advocate for the Committee. In March 2023 HMICFRS published their spotlight report on culture and values within the service. The LGA provided a [media response to the HMICFRS spotlight report](#). As a result of this a wider piece of work was agreed at the FSMC to respond to the issues highlighted in the report and to support our continue work on this issue.

6. The LGA's Annual Fire Conference took place on 7th – 8th March in Nottingham with over 150 delegates in attendance. The theme for the Conference was 'Building Resilience for the Future of the Fire Service'. Chris Philp MP delivered the keynote address, updating on the Government's Fire reform programme and Andy Cooke, HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary and Chief Fire & Rescue Services talked about key findings in the latest round of inspections. Workshops covered the core code of ethics, sector-led improvement, research Shropshire FRS has done on 'on call' and Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs), with plenary sessions focussing on people, efficiency, and effectiveness.
7. In June 2023 we held an additional conference on culture in the fire and rescue service, jointly with workforce colleagues. We had presentations from the inspectorate, the Fire Brigades Union, Unison, the Asian Fire Service Association, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, Kent FRS, Lancashire FRS, Dorset and Wiltshire FRA, West Midlands FRA and Derbyshire FRA as well as hearing from media and employment law specialists.
8. The feedback from the culture conference will help to inform what other pieces of training we will look to develop for members around issues on culture, diversity and inclusion.
9. We also held two EDI Champions network meetings in November 2022 and April 2023. In November the session focused on exploring how scrutiny can be used as a tool to drive improvement in EDI. The session was chaired by Baroness Twycross, Deputy Mayor for Fire & Resilience in London and led by Andy Fry (Vale Consulting Solutions), a governance expert. The April meeting, chaired by Cllr Jane Hugo, was well attended with speakers including HMICFRS who updated on their spotlight review and both Gloucestershire and Lancashire Fire and Rescue Services who shared experiences around driving change in culture and EDI.
10. We have continued to support members in their governance role through the Fire Leadership Essentials Programme. The programme has continued to be a success this year, with two programmes run in November 2022 and March 2023. We had sessions on equality, diversity and inclusion, governance, leadership, building safety, climate change and being a leading member. The Home Office and HMICFRS both also spoke at the events. Feedback from both events was very positive.

## Professionalism

11. Work under the professionalism strand has been wide ranging, incorporating building safety, inspections, finance and standards.
12. An on-going strand of work this year has been about the establishment of the new building safety regime under the Building Safety Regulator (BSR). The LGA responded to a number of associated consultations, including around personal emergency evacuation plans, the in-occupation regime for high-rise residential buildings under the Building Safety Act, the fees and charges under the same Act (including those that Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) can charge), and the building control regime associated with the Act.
13. Key objectives have been to provide FRSs with the clarity they need about their regulatory role as part of the BSR's multi-disciplinary teams, and that they have the funding needed for their new role with no additional unfunded work being created for services. We have also raised concerns about the definition of a building in regulations implementing the Building Safety Act and how these work in the context of a mixed-use building, which will require coordination between the relevant Fire and Rescue Service and the Building Safety Regulator.
14. The LGA also responded to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) consultation on changes to Approved Document B. Our response supported some long standing FSMC objectives, in particular around the provision of automatic fire suppression systems in all new care homes, and maintaining the provisions related to the use of combustible material in external wall systems.
15. The LGA has continued to host the Joint Inspection Team (JIT) to support councils in taking enforcement action under the Housing Act 2004. To date the team has inspected over 70 buildings, and is working alongside local Fire and Rescue Services as part of each inspection. Discussions have started with the DLUHC on the funding for the team beyond March 2024.
16. We held a number of building safety related webinars over the last year on the Building Safety Act regime and the updates to the Fire Safety Order.
17. We have supported members in their building safety role through the Building Safety Leadership Essentials Programme. The programme was successful this year, with two sessions being held in Warwick, in October 2022 and February

2023. We had sessions on Large Panel Systems Buildings, good governance, Ronan Point, the post-Grenfell regulatory regime and good resident engagement. The first event went well despite a drop in attendance due to a COVID spike. The February event, however, had a very strong turnout and responses to both programmes were incredibly positive.

18. FSMC also considered the recommendations from the Manchester Arena Inquiry reports. Many of these focused on improving interoperability of the emergency services, and work is already underway to strengthen JESIP, and further embed its models and principles in all three emergency services. The government has reinstated meetings of the JESIP joint ministerial oversight board on which the LGA and NFCC are represented, with an immediate focus on assurance and joint exercising.
19. This year we worked successfully with the NFCC to ensure that the sector was able to secure council tax flexibility for standalone FRAs, supporting the NFCC in highlighting the inflationary pressures experienced by the sector. We helped to coordinate a series of letters to the minister's highlighting the issues facing the sector, and provide a consistent message about the flexibility that was needed.
20. Councillor Nick Chard sits on the Fire Standards Board (FSB) for the FSMC to represent members views. We have maintained our support to the FSB, and provided speaking sessions both at the Fire Conference and the Fire Commission. They provide regular updates to the FSMC and Fire Commission through their papers to the meetings.
21. We have continued to have very positive engagement with the Inspectorate. Members sit on the External Reference Group for HMICFRS to provide feedback on their work and the development of the next round of inspections. We have also provided feedback HMICFRS on their state of fire report, previous recommendations. However, our work with the inspectorate has also expanded to include work around attending the Fire Performance Oversight Group. Cllr Biederman has attended the Fire Performance Oversight Group to provide support to our members engaged in the enhanced monitoring process and highlight the ways in which the LGA can provide support to the sector. Officers continue to engage regularly with the Inspectorate.

## **Governance**

22. We have not yet received the Government's response to the White Paper or the proposals around governance. We however are in regular contact with the Home Office on this issue and have continued to emphasise the importance of local determination in governance change. We have continued to support members in their governance role through the Fire Leadership Essentials programme.

## **Climate change**

23. Officers continue to play an active role in the NFCC's sustainability and environmental work and provided feedback on the toolkit the NFCC have produced. We have also given the NFCC the opportunity to input into our work on climate change to ensure that our work is complementary.
24. Members discussed issues around wildfires in December 2022 and wider climate change issues in May 2023, when further activities were agreed.
25. We have continued to build networks both in government and with the sector on the issue of climate change and the particular risks facing fire and rescue services and will be holding an evidence session to look at these issues in more depth.
26. We will shortly be publishing our updated climate emergency handbook on our website with contributions from a number of Fire and Rescue Authorities including Avon, Greater Manchester and London as well as the NFCC and Environment Agency.

## **Sector led improvement**

27. Developing a sector led improvement offer is a joint piece of work across the LGA's policy and improvement teams, and we have continued to work closely together to make the case for a funded offer for the sector. Officers have met with the Home Office a number of times to discuss a sector-led improvement offer and continue to engage with partners to develop the case for a fire specific offer. We hope to be running a pilot soon.

## Priorities for 2023/24

28. Members will wish to consider their priorities for 2023/24. The priorities for this year were centred around the Government's key themes of people, professionalism, and governance as well as sector led improvement and climate change. It is likely that these will continue to be of key importance going forward, especially with anticipated government response to the Fire Reform White Paper.
29. Therefore, members may wish to consider if the FSMC's key themes should remain consistent or if any changes are necessary, for instance, including culture within the people priority more explicitly.
30. Members may also wish to consider whether there are any further reports or issues we can expect in the coming year that will impact their priorities for the FSMC. For instance, we expect the next phase of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry to report.

## Implications for Wales

31. 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

32. 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

33. These will be considered as individual workstreams are developed.

## Next steps

34. Officers will draft a priorities paper and work programme based on members discussions.