

Fire Commission Update

Purpose of Report

For information.

Is this report confidential?

No

Summary

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

LGA Plan Theme: Championing climate change and local environments

Recommendation(s)

That the Commission notes the report.

Contact details

Contact officer: Marshall Scott

Position: Policy Adviser (Fire)

Phone no: 07884 312232

Email: Marshall.Scott@local.gov.uk

Fire Commission Update

Disposable Vapes

1. The LGA has [called for the sale and manufacture disposable vapes to be banned by 2024](#). Our press release states that they are a hazard for waste and litter collection as they cause fires in bin lorries.
2. The lithium-ion batteries within the device can overheat rapidly and create an intense heat when damaged. As the collection system for residual waste often includes crushing or compacting, this increases the risk of fires started by disposable vapes.
3. [Research by insurer Zurich Municipal](#) revealed bin lorry blazes have surged 62 per cent in two years while house fires sparked by vapes have soared 108 per cent in the same period.
4. This comes at a cost to the council taxpayer through fire damage to equipment and the specialist treatment needed to deal with hazardous waste. [Greater Manchester Combined Authority](#) (the largest joint waste disposal authority in the country) has supported our call to ban disposable vapes. Due to an increase in fires, GMCA has had to spend an additional £100,000 on thermal cameras to monitor fires in its facilities.
5. The Welsh government has also [called for a ban on disposable single-use vapes](#). It does not have the power to prohibit the vapes but is calling on the UK government to do so.
6. The LGA is very pleased that the UK Government has acted on our call and is [preparing to ban single-use vapes in the UK](#). The LGA has provided media lines in response, noting the hazard they pose to bin lorries. These lines have been reported by the Times, Sky News and Independent.

E-bikes and e-scooter fires

7. The BBC [reported the London Fire Brigade's \(LFB\) announcement that there have already been more e-bike and e-scooter fires](#) in the capital in 2023 than in the whole of any previous year. By the end of August, LFB crews had fought 123 such fires, compared with 116 in 2022 and 78 in 2021. Three people have died this year in fires thought to have been caused by a failure of a device's lithium battery. LFB is calling for regulation on the sale of the products and research into the causes of the fires associated with them.
8. The NFCC has [published fire safety guidance](#) for e-bikes and e-scooters, alongside The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) and Fire England who have [published further information for consumers](#). These resources include advice for charging, storage, purchasing safe e-bikes and proper disposal.
9. The LGA is planning to issue a press release regarding our view on e-bikes.

Fire Conference 2024

10. The next LGA Annual Fire Conference is to be held on 12-13 March 2024. The event is an important part of the annual fire industry calendar. In recent years, the conference has attracted an average of 230 delegates and a range of exhibitors and sponsors.
11. With an upcoming general election, we are seeking member's views on whether, in addition to the Fire and Policing Minister, we should invite the shadow ministers. We welcome discussion on this point.
12. The Fire Conference will cover a range of pertinent issues to the sector, including culture, building safety, workforce, climate change and more. Last year's conference was dominated by discussions around culture within the sector. We encourage members to share their ideas regarding the theme for this year.

Efficiency and Productivity

13. As part of Spending Review 2021, the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and LGA have committed the fire and rescue service sector in England to increasing the productivity of wholetime firefighters by 3 per cent, and to increasing the efficiency of fire and rescue services by 2 per cent. These targets relate to the three-year Spending Review period (2022/23-2024/25), at the end of which HM Treasury will be expecting to see evidence of fire and rescue services' progress on these targets.
14. In January 2022, the NFCC and Home Office set up the Fire Productivity and Efficiency Forum, which the LGA and APCC both sit on. When the Forum's work commenced, there was no agreed benchmark or metric for measuring fire productivity and efficiency, and so the Forum's work has largely focused on addressing the lack of evidence and data around fire productivity and efficiency. The Forum has done this by commissioning external work on a fire productivity metric, analysing fire productivity and efficiency plans, and launching a firefighter utilisation survey. Short summaries of these workstreams are explained below.
15. An external consultancy has now produced a metric to measure productivity. The underlying model for the metric is now owned by the Home Office, who are assessing next steps. Work is ongoing to update the metric for 2021/22, and to consider how it could be improved.

Local Government White Paper

16. At LGA Annual Conference this year, Councillor Shaun Davies (LGA Chair), announced our intention to produce a Local Government White Paper ahead of the next election. Work is now underway on the white paper, which will set out a central-local partnership in which local government can work to its full potential for our people, our places and our planet.

17. The LGA is consulting member councils, professional associations, stakeholders and the public to inform the White Paper. The White Paper be underpinned by the LGA's Make It Local campaign, which outlines how local government is key to delivering solutions to the biggest issues for the public.

Events

Fire and Rescue Leadership Essentials

18. We are holding a Fire and Rescue (Leadership Essentials) course between Wednesday 1 November and Thursday 2 November 2023 at Warwick Conferences. Sessions will include information on culture, climate change, governance and building safety.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Champions Network

19. Cllr Jane Hugo, EDI Champion for FSMC, will chair an EDI Champions Network meeting on Friday 22 September 2023.

20. We encourage all authorities to make sure that they have a representative on the Committee's Member Champions Network. Please get in touch with Marshall Scott for further information (Marshall.Scott@local.gov.uk)

Implications for Wales

21. None

Financial Implications

22. None

Equalities implications

23. None

Next steps

24. The Committee note the report.