

Priorities for 2023-24

Purpose of Report

For decision.

Is this report confidential? No

Summary

This paper summarises draft priorities and potential activities for Fire Commission and Fire Services Management Committee for the year ahead, as well as the LGA Business Plan and horizon scanning. The Committee is asked to agree its priorities for the year ahead.

LGA Plan Theme: Championing climate change and local environments

Recommendation

That the Committee discuss and agree the draft priorities set out in the paper.

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Priorities for 2023-24

Background

1. At the July 2023 FSMC meeting members discussed potential priorities for the forthcoming year. This paper summarises the draft priorities and potential activities as discussed at that meeting, as well as the LGA Business Plan and horizon scanning.

LGA Business Plan

2. In October 2022 a new 3 year business plan was signed off by the LGA Board. The [LGA business plan 2022-2025](#) sets out our vision to be the **Voice of Local Government** and our purpose to **Promote, Improve and Support** local government. These themes are contained within the draft priorities members discussed at the July FSMC meeting.
3. The LGA plan is in three parts.
4. Part 1:
 - 4.1. sets out the LGA's overarching vision and the golden thread that runs through the plan - to be the **Voice of Local Government**;
 - 4.2. sets out our purpose - to **Promote, Improve and Support** local government. These form the three pillars of all our external facing work, including the work of the policy boards and the Improvement and Innovation Board.
 - 4.3. emphasises our commitment to work more collaboratively across the whole of local government to strengthen our voice on behalf of the sector.
5. Part 2:
 - 5.1. Promoting local government sets four policy and campaigning priorities:
 - 5.1.1. A sustainable financial future
 - 5.1.2. Stronger local economies, thriving local democracy
 - 5.1.3. Putting people first
 - 5.1.4. Championing climate change and local environments.
 - 5.2. Improving local government sets out our main grant-funded commitments.
 - 5.3. Supporting local government highlights the excellent technical and professional support and services we deliver to councils in fields such as workforce, pensions, legal, communications and procurement and a range of place-based services.
6. Part 3:
 - 6.1. Our business – sets out our internal organisational priorities, including actions to support our political leadership and enhance our membership, increase our financial resilience and our commitment to Net Zero.

7. The Business plan particularly highlights the LGA's ambition to ensure that the Government's fire reform agenda is shaped to ensure that FRAs have the resources they need to address the challenges facing them, including those from climate change.

Draft Priorities 2023-24

8. At the July FSMC members discussed the priorities for the forthcoming year as:

- 8.1. People and culture
- 8.2. Professionalism
- 8.3. Governance
- 8.4. Climate Change
- 8.5. Sector-led improvement

9. These priorities mirrored the priorities for 2022-23, with the addition of culture into the people priority. There are a number of activities that are expected to follow under these priorities. There is also ongoing engagement with issues such as the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP) and on-call through FSMC Member's engagement with outside bodies.

10. People and Culture

- 10.1. At the July meeting Members agreed that **culture** should be included explicitly within this priority to reflect its importance within the FSMC's work.
- 10.2. At the [March 2023 FSMC meeting](#) Members agreed a number of actions to address **culture** issues within the sector. These were subsequently updated for the [May 2023 FSMC meeting](#). These are activities are ongoing.
- 10.3. The LGA will continue to provide support for members through the **Diversity and Inclusion Champions Network** to share good practice, discuss key issues for the sector and undertake training. The terms of reference of the Network are currently being reviewed.
- 10.4. **HMICFRS**: the LGA will continue to input into the Misconduct thematic review as it develops and continue to respond to the recommendations in the spotlight report on values and culture.

11. Professionalism

- 11.1. **Building safety**: we will continue to work on building safety with the new Building Safety Regulator coming into force, and the second Grenfell Tower Inquiry report due out towards the end of 2023. A number of other issues under building safety have also been highlighted including:
 - 11.1.1. The role of fire and rescue services in planning
 - 11.1.2. RAAC
 - 11.1.3. fire safety at Asylum Centres

11.1.4. the potential toxicity of some building materials.

11.2. **Finance:** we will continue to work with the NFCC to input into the next local government finance settlement and Spending Review, lobbying for the sector to have council tax flexibility for the future and highlight the issues facing the sector as a result of the inflationary pressures and wider rises in the cost of living.

11.3. **Inspection:** respond to inspection issues and consultations from the inspectorate and support the inspection process through membership of the External Reference Group.

11.4. **Standards:** continuing to support the role of the Fire Standards Board through our membership on the Board.

11.5. Work around the White Paper proposals on a new **College of Fire** would come under this strand.

12. Governance

12.1. The **White Paper** on fire reform contained a number of proposals around governance. Members will be able to consider what further work we do around governance once the Government's response to the White Paper has been published. The LGA will continue to support members with their Governance role, particularly through the **Fire Leadership Essentials Programme**.

13. Climate change:

13.1. Climate change continues to be an issue for the sector, with the impact of **extreme weather** continuing to be felt. The FSMC held an evidence session with a small number of members to hear from a range of experts on issues affecting fire and rescue services and consider further activities as a result.

13.2. It is clear that further work with other Boards within the LGA will be needed to highlight the potential impact on the fire service of climate change.

13.3. There are also issues related to the development of **new technologies**, such as lithium-ion batteries and their impact on the fire service that will be considered. Issues around planning linked with battery infrastructure projects were highlighted at the September Fire Commission meeting.

14. Sector-led improvement:

14.1. We have now had confirmation from the Home Office that there is no funding available to undertake peer challenges and/or peer support for the fire sector. Whilst there is discretionary work happening at a regional level on improvement in the sector, there are further conversations needed internally to see the direction of any future fire improvement work.

Horizon scanning

15. 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:

- 15.1. A general election
- 15.2. The Government's response to the fire reform white paper consultation
- 15.3. The outcomes of HMICFRS's Misconduct review
- 15.4. State of Fire 2023 and any associated recommendations
- 15.5. Grenfell Tower Inquiry

Implications for Wales

16. 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

17. None.

Equalities implications

18. Following member's discussions officers will develop a work programme, which will consider the equalities implications of the priorities.

Next steps

19. Members are asked to discuss and agree the draft priorities set out in the paper. Officers will then put together a workplan for discussion with Lead Members.