

Fire Services Management Committee Update

Purpose of Report

For information.

Is this report confidential? No

Summary

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

LGA Plan Theme: Other service specific support

Recommendation(s)

That the Committee comment on proposals around the Fire Conference, including suggestions for sessions and potential themes.

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Fire Services Management Committee

HMICFRS Spotlight Report

1. The LGA has responded to HMICFRS's Spotlight report on culture and values. The LGA was particularly asked for feedback on Recommendation 2, regarding the use of Independent Reporting Lines. Alongside the NFCC and National Employers, who were also named in the recommendation, we conducted a survey to ascertain how many services had independent reporting lines in place and if not, when they expected to have one set up by. We heard back from all authorities in England, the majority of whom (32) had already got an independent reporting line in place, with the rest working towards having one, with the latest being expected to be in place by December 2023.
2. We will continue to engage with the Spotlight Review's recommendations and wider culture work.

Fire Conference 2024

3. The next LGA Annual Fire Conference is to be held on 12-13 March 2024 at the Delta Hotels (Bristol Marriott) City Centre. 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.
4. 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.
5. Lead Members have had an initial discussion on potential sessions for the conference. These included:
 - 5.1. Community risk planning into the longer term
 - 5.2. Toxicity in building materials and building safety
 - 5.3. Funding of the sector
6. Lead Members emphasised the importance of making plenary sessions interactive, with more opportunities for questions and discussion with attendees. We are seeking members views for other issues that would be of interest for the sector.
7. Last year's conference was dominated by discussions around culture within the sector. We encourage members to state if they would like a theme for this year's conference and if so, share their ideas for a theme. A blank programme is included at **Appendix A**.

Audit in the fire and rescue service

8. In July 2023 the Government published a [ministerial statement on financial reporting and audit in local authorities](#). The statement outlines the deterioration in

the timeliness of local audit since 2017/18, and how the National Audit Office, CIPFA, the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities will work together to address the backlog.

9. The LGA has been responding to this work through the Economy and Resources Board who held a discussion on it at their meeting in September and will continue to engage with DLUHC and the FRC as this work progresses. The NFCC has engaged with it through Mark Hemming and other finance officers within the sector. The Department are planning further engagement on this issue.

LGA Local Government White Paper

10. 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.
11. The LGA is consulting member councils, professional associations, stakeholders and the public to inform the White Paper.
12. At its September meeting the LGA's Executive Advisory Board (EAB) considered how the White Paper is developed. It agreed the aim of the White Paper should be to *demonstrate how stronger and more empowered local government could deliver the public's priorities more effectively and strengthen the value that the public place on the UK's democratic structures.*
13. The EAB also agreed that each of the LGA's boards use their policy work to make specific offers from the sector to a new/returning minister in their policy area. In particular the EAB wants boards to consider and make proposals on:
 - 13.1. How public services should be reformed in their policy areas to deliver the ambitions set out in paragraph 5; and
 - 13.2. How local government, and central government should change to deliver the public's priorities in their policy areas.
14. Officers will therefore work up a range of proposals setting out how a stronger and more empowered fire and rescue sector can deliver more effectively than central government on the public's priorities around fire safety. This will then be used to bring some proposals to the Committee for discussion at its next meeting.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Champions Network

15. On Friday 22 September the EDI Champions Network held its first meeting of this political cycle. Cllr Jane Hugo, in her role as Equalities Advocate for the FSMC, chaired the meeting.

16. Rob McDougall, People, Culture and Leadership Lead for the NFCC, presented on the work of the NFCC in responding to cultural issues, including their culture action plan. Members asked a number of questions around the action plan and sought further joint work between the LGA and NFCC on these issues. Officers will continue to engage with the NFCC.
17. Members also discussed the terms of reference for the group and future work. The next meeting of the group is scheduled for 17 January 2024.
18. 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)

HMICFRS External Reference Group

19. Members continue to be a part of the External Reference Group for HMICFRS. The most recent meeting, which took place in August, was given the opportunity to discuss the Misconduct Review that HMICFRS are currently conducting.

The Firefighters Memorial Trust Annual Service of Remembrance

20. On 4 September 2023, Councillor Frank Biederman (Chair of FSMC) attended the Firefighters Memorial Trust's annual service of remembrance and wreath laying at the National Memorial Arboretum.

Fire Performance Oversight Group

21. On 19 October 2023, Councillor Frank Biederman (Chair of FSMC) is due to attend the Fire Performance Oversight Group (FPOG) to provide support to our members.

Events

Fire and Rescue Leadership Essentials

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

Implications for Wales

23. None

Financial Implications

24. None

Equalities implications

25. 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.

Next steps

26. Members to discuss the Fire Conference 2024, including any conference sessions and themes. Members are asked if they would wish to invite the Shadow Ministers for Crime, Policing and Fire to speak at the Conference.

Appendix A

LGA Fire Conference 2024

Tuesday 12 March – Wednesday 13 March 2024

Tuesday 12 March 2024

09.00 Registration, refreshments and exhibition viewing

10.30 **Conference opening and Chair's welcome**

10.35 **Keynote session 1. Ministerial address**

11.20 **Keynote session 2.**

12.05 Refreshments and exhibition viewing

12.30 **Workshops – session 1**

An opportunity to attend a workshop from the list below. These sessions will be repeated.

1. **Workshop 1**
 2. **Workshop 2**
 3. **Workshop 3**
 4. **Workshop 4**
 5. **Workshop 5**
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1.15 Lunch, exhibition viewing and networking

[Lunchtime fringe sessions to be announced]

2.20 **Plenary session 3.**

3.15 **Workshops – session 2**

An opportunity to attend a workshop from the list below. These sessions will be repeated.

1. **Workshop 1**
 2. **Workshop 2**
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3. Workshop 3

4. Workshop 4

5. Workshop 5

4.05 Refreshments and exhibition viewing

4.35 **Workshops – session 3**

An opportunity to attend a workshop from the list below. These sessions will be repeated.

1. Workshop 1

2. Workshop 2

3. Workshop 3

4. Workshop 4

5. Workshop 5

5.30 **Political group meetings**

Conservative Group Meeting

Labour Group Meeting

Liberal Democrat Group Meeting

Independent Group Meeting

7.30 Drinks reception

8.00 Conference dinner

Wednesday, 13 March 2024

08.45 Registration for new delegates, refreshments and exhibition viewing

09.30 **Welcome to day two**

9.35 **Plenary Session 4.**

10.35 **Plenary Session 5.**

11.35 Refreshments and exhibition viewing

12.00 **Plenary Session 6.**

1.00 **Conference close**

1.15 **Lunch, exhibition viewing and networking**

