

Minutes of last Fire Services Management Committee meeting

Fire Services Management Committee

Wednesday, 6 December 2023

Hybrid Meeting - 18 Smith Square and Online

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as [Appendix A](#)

Item	Decisions and actions
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1	Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest
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The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

Thanks and best wishes were recorded for Jonny Bugg, who was leaving his role as Head of Fire Strategy and Reform at the Home Office.

Apologies were received from Cllr Roger Price.

There were no declarations of interest.

2	Minutes of the previous meeting
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The minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

Matters arising:

- An update was requested on progress with Lead Member discussions on how to take forward work on toxicity in fires. LE said that Lead Members were still in the process of prioritising work streams for the year and work on toxicity was being considered as part of this.
- In relation to item 8 – RAAC update – Cllr Theobald reported that a private leisure centre in Hove had recently been forced to close after RAAC was discovered in the building. Mark Norris, Principal Policy Adviser, said that this was becoming an increasing issue with private sector buildings and he would respond to Cllr Theobald directly.
- The Chair requested that the action agreed on item 4 – Climate Change – on the planning process and enforcement of product safety standards, be progressed as a priority.

3	Fire Framework
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The Chair invited Jenna Marsh (JM), Deputy Head of the Fire Strategy and Reform Unit at the Home Office, to give the Committee an update.

JM reported that the Home Office was in the early stages of reviewing and updating the 2018 National Fire Framework to reflect emerging threats and other recent developments. Discussions with external partners and stakeholders had begun and further themed discussions and a public consultation were planned. Finance, culture, flooding and data sharing were key issues to emerge from the early discussions.

Members' comments and questions:

- The expansion of new technologies – e.g. the electric vehicle market -was considered to be a key issue that needed to be reflected in the revised Framework. Research into these issues should be carried out as part of the remit of a new College of Fire. JM agreed that this was a crucial issue to reflect in the Framework and highlighted the work of the Academic Collaboration, Evaluation and Research Group, convened by the NFCC, in this area.
- It was suggested that the Framework needed to be more joined up with the HMICFRS and better reflect their work and informal guidance.
- The future of centrally funded programmes, such as Fire Kills, needed to be addressed in the revised Framework.
- Members discussed the Fire Reform White Paper and whether issues in this that had cross-party agreement, such as the College of Fire, could be taken forward separately from the more contentious areas such as governance and the NJC, where discussions could continue. JM regretted that the White Paper response and decision on the College of Fire had not yet been published and this was largely due to recent ministerial changes in the Home Office. Work which didn't require notifying Parliament would be progressed in the meantime.
- Improved facilities for firefighter training would be required, particularly in the light of the wide range of new and emerging threats.

The Chair thanked JM for attending the meeting and stressed that FSMC were keen to remain involved in the review.

Decision:

Fire Services Management Committee **noted** the presentation.

4 999 Outage

The Chair invited Jeremy Smitham (JS) and Sian Penny from BT to give their update.

JS briefly ran through the causes of the outage of 25 June and apologised to members for the inconvenience that this had caused to fire services and local residents. He then ran through the steps that had been taken by BT

to reduce the risk of it happening again. These included:

- The software bug which caused the outage has been fixed and alarms put in place for future warning.
- Worked with the National Cyber Security Centre to get external challenge.
- Training for staff to make back up procedures more robust.
- Strategic back up solution put in place on 7 Dec 2023.
- Communication strategy reviewed and updated.
- Reviewing cross-government communication with external organisations, such as NFCC.
- Investigating AI supported solutions through 999 Liaison Committee to improve resilience.
- Investigating automated call back systems.

Members welcomed the update and the reassurances provided.

Decision:

Fire Services Management Committee **noted** the update.

5 Leadership

The Chair invited CFO Wayne Bowcock (WB), lead officer on the Leadership programme for the NFCC, to give his presentation.

WB explained that the Leadership Programme was a key strand of work overseen by the NFCC's People, Culture and Leadership Coordinating Committee and was closely aligned with Fit for the Future and the new Cultural Action Plan. He then explained the various strands of the NFCC's Leadership Pathway offer – Executive Leadership Programme; Strategic Masterclasses; Middle Leadership Programme; Supervisory Leadership Programme; and Direct Entry – and proposed future projects. WB finally ran through the role that elected members could play in developing leadership within the sector and asked how members wanted to be involved in advice and scrutiny of the programme now that the Executive Leadership Programme Board was no longer meeting.

Members' comments and questions:

- Members broadly welcomed the NFCC's refreshed leadership offer as outlined in the presentation.
- Concerns were raised about the value of the Direct Entry scheme given the amount of resource being put into it versus the relatively small number of new recruits. The importance of leadership training and pathways for existing staff was emphasised, particularly in relation to social mobility. WB responded that direct entry was never intended to resolve all the sector's problems but is a valuable new route into the service for people from all backgrounds and will help to create greater diversity in leadership roles.
- The issue of graduate entry was raised and it was suggested that any changes in this regard would need to have the agreement of FSMC. It was further suggested that a graduate toolkit might be

- more beneficial than a full graduate programme.
- The importance of political training for senior officers was raised.
 - The distinction made by WB between 'leadership' and 'management' was welcomed but it was suggested that all of the NFCC's pathways appeared to be management related, rather than focussed on broader leadership.
 - In response to a query about the role of elected members in the process, WB confirmed that the points set out in the presentation were very much 'asks' of members, and not instructions to them.
 - A breakdown of data by EDI characteristics on the High Potential Programme was requested. WB said that this information would be collated but wasn't yet available.
 - The low attendance at 2 of the strategic boards was queried. WB said in-person attendance didn't necessarily reflect overall interaction as the meetings were recorded and could therefore be viewed at a later date.
 - It was agreed that officers liaise directly with WB about future engagement by FSMC, in place of the Executive Leadership Programme Board.

Decision:

Fire Services Management Committee noted the presentation.

Action:

LGA officers to liaise with CFO Wayne Bowcock about future FSMC engagement over leadership.

6 LGA Fire Conference 2024 update

The Chair invited Marshall Scott (MS), Policy Adviser, to introduce the report.

MS outlined the initial proposals being put forward for sessions at the Conference and said that, following feedback from last year's event, there would be more emphasis on delegate interaction and involvement. Members' comments on the proposals were invited.

Members' comments and questions:

- On the proposed mental health session, it was suggested that sharing of best practice in post-incident scenarios would be helpful.
- Responding to emerging technologies should be a key focus of the conference and highlighting the risks and associated costs. This should include how best to do horizon scanning and scenario planning and where members could be involved.
- It was suggested that AI and the Fire Standards Board should both be plenary sessions.
- An update for members on ESMCP was suggested, either as part of the conference or at the FSMC meeting beforehand.
- It was suggested that the HMICFRS item might be better as a workshop to encourage more open and honest feedback.
- The role of shadow ministers at the conference was discussed and

where they would best fit in.

Decision:

Fire Services Management Committee **noted** the report and delegated final decisions on conference sessions to the Lead Members.

Action:

Schedule additional Lead Member meeting before Christmas to finalise conference sessions.

7 **Local Government White Paper**

The Chair invited Mark Norris (MN), Principal Policy Adviser, to introduce the report.

MN invited members' comments on proposed fire & rescue related content for the LGA's Local Government White Paper.

Members' comments and questions:

- Local leadership and empowering local leaders was considered a key area for inclusion. In particular, around partnership working and a greater role for political leadership in Local Resilience Forums, especially on prevention. This would enable the whole of an area to work better than the sum of its parts. Concern was expressed that HMICFRS was becoming a regulator and eroding local leadership and discretion.
- It was suggested that the time may now be right to push for broadening the role of the fire service.
- It was suggested that air quality could be an issue for FRA's to input into.

It was agreed that MN amend the wording of the submission to reflect members' views and circulate to Lead Members for final agreement.

Decision:

Fire Services Management Committee:

(a) **Noted** the key areas set out in paragraph 5 of interest to the LGA as well as the emerging themes in paragraph 6; and

(b) Subject to comments made during the discussion, **agreed** on the proposed approaches set out in paragraphs 8 to 13, and that following final sign off by Lead Members, **agreed** that these are then submitted by the Committee as its contribution to the Local Government White Paper.

Action:

MN to amend White Paper submission and clear final wording with Lead Members.

8 **Pensions update**

The Chair invited members to take the update as read.

Decision:

Fire Services Management Committee **noted** the update.

9 Workforce update

The Chair invited members to take the update as read.

Decision:

Fire Services Management Committee **noted** the update.

10 Building Safety update

The Chair invited members to take the update as read.

Decision:

Fire Services Management Committee **noted** the update.

11 National Fire Chiefs Council update

The Chair invited members to take the update as read.

Decision:

Fire Services Management Committee **noted** the update.

12 Fire Standards Board update

The Chair invited members to take the update as read.

Members' comments and questions:

- Cllr Hugo, as the Committee's Equalities Advocate, asked whether it could be made more explicit how EDI runs through the standards as a golden thread and if this could be part of the Conference session. Lucy Ellender, Senior Adviser, said that the Board had done a lot of work on this since the HMICFRS Spotlight Report. There had been debate at the FSB on whether to introduce a separate standalone EDI Standard but it had been concluded that EDI should run as a thread through all the standards. It was agreed that there should be a standing item on EDI at future Lead Member meetings and that the Equalities Advocate should attend for this.

Decision:

Fire Services Management Committee **noted** the update.

Action:

Equalities Advocate to be invited to future Lead Member meetings.

13 FSMC update

The Chair invited members to take the update as read.

Members' comments and questions:

- It was queried whether the FSMC was still subordinate to the Safer and Stronger Communities Board and, if so, whether this was still appropriate or whether it should become a standalone Committee. MN confirmed that this was still the constitutional arrangement and said that it was not currently on the LGA's agenda to change as far as he was aware, but he would take it up with the leadership.
- Cllr Knox gave a brief update on the lessons learned from the recent independent review of Dorset & Wiltshire Fire Service.

Decision:

Fire Services Management Committee **noted** the update.

Action:

MN to raise FSMC governance arrangements with LGA leadership.

Action Log

Action	Owner	Deadline	Status
MN to contact Cllr Theobald about RAAC in leisure centre	MN		
Bring a report on the planning process and product safety standards to the next FSMC meeting	LE	11/3/24	Complete
LGA officers to liaise with CFO Wayne Bowcock about future FSMC engagement over leadership	LE	11/3/24	Complete
Schedule additional Lead Member meeting before Christmas to finalise conference sessions.	JB	25/12/23	Complete
Amend White Paper submission and clear final wording with Lead Members	MN	2/1/23	Complete
Invite Cllr Hugo to future Lead Member meetings	JB	13/2/23	Complete

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chair	Cllr Frank Biederman	Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Rebecca Knox	Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Authority
Deputy-Chair	Cllr Greg Brackenridge	West Midlands Fire & Rescue Authority
Deputy-Chair	Cllr Carolyn Lambert	East Sussex Fire Authority
Members	Cllr Karen Kilgour	Tyne & Wear Fire & Rescue Authority
	Cllr Nikki Hennessy	Lancashire Combined Fire Authority
	Cllr Jane Hugo	Lancashire Combined Fire Authority
	Cllr Les Byrom CBE	Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority

	Cllr Nick Chard Mr Roger Hirst	Kent & Medway Fire & Rescue Authority Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex
	Cllr Mark Healey MBE Cllr Carol Theobald Cllr Ben Nutland Cllr Dr Wendy Maples	Somerset County Council East Sussex Fire Authority Avon Fire & Rescue Authority East Sussex Fire Authority
Apologies	Cllr Roger Price	Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Authority
In Attendance	Cllr Ludwig Ramsey Cllr Rachel Bailey Cllr John Shuttleworth	Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Authority Cheshire Fire & Rescue Authority Co Durham & Darlington Fire & Rescue Authority
	Mark Hardingham Susannah Hancock Jenna Marsh CFO Wayne Bowcock Jeremy Smitham Sian Penny Steven Adams	NFCC NFCC Home Office NFCC (for item 5) BT (for item 4) BT (for item 4) NFCC
LGA Officers	Mark Norris Lucy Ellender Sarah Ward Claire Johnson Marshall Scott Aurora Petrova Jonathan Bryant	Principal Policy Adviser Senior Adviser Principal Adviser (Workforce) Senior Pensions Adviser Policy Adviser NGDP Graduate Member Services Officer