



Priorities for CFOA

CFOA's charitable aim and strategic objectives:

CFOA's aim is to "To reduce the loss of life, personal injury and damage to property and the environment by improving the quality of fire fighting, rescue, fire protection and fire prevention in the United Kingdom."

We look to accomplish this by:

- Leading and firmly influencing the future direction of the UK FRS on professional, managerial and leadership issues which affect the Service
- Being the focal point for professional advice that drives and contributes to the development of policy impacting upon the UK FRS
- Effectively communicating views and priorities
- Supporting our members to achieve individual and collective improvement

Overarching Priorities for 2015 and beyond

The current CFOA Presidential team have agreed to focus on the same core priorities, as we recognise that the association needs consistency. Many of the issues that affected us last year will affect us well into the future, and while there will always be short term concerns, our central objectives will remain the same.

Building Relationships

The relationships that CFOA has with our partners and stakeholders are critical to everything that we do. Be that the close and positive relationship we have with the LGA, the constructive links with government or our involvement with the wider fire and emergency services sector.

Strengthening existing bonds is coupled with a need to identify and build ties with a much broader range of parties. While we have always worked closely with colleagues in health, in particular the ambulance service, we have worked hard this year to involve ourselves much more widely in the health agenda. This was epitomised in the recognition received from NHS England's Chief Executive Simon Stevens at the LGA conference earlier this year.

It is of course perhaps even more important that we maintain strong relationships with our members, both the individual senior officers but also the fire and rescue services that are our professional partners. CFOA is working hard to improve how we communicate with all our members and looking at what additional value we can bring through new projects, products, events or research. Even taking the relatively simple step of moving our meetings and events around the country is an indication of our commitment to involve all fire and rescue services as closely as possible.

Supporting Transformational Change

It is well recognised that the fire and rescue service, as with local government in general, faces huge financial and political challenges in the future. Not only are services expected to find savings while protecting frontline services, we are under pressure to collaborate, transform and innovate like never before.

Fire and rescue services are tackling these challenges head on, but require support from other professional leaders and from their association. This might be through the excellent Peer Challenge system, which we are looking to improve and refocus, or through the representations that CFOA makes on behalf of services to government. We have pushed for greater flexibility in local taxation, more capital

support and help to simplify the process of local mergers – in particular the issue of council tax equalisation.

You will be aware of the work undertaken to create a central procurement hub, following jointly commissioned research which identified significant scope for savings. We already have 30 fire and rescue services on board and are looking at creating further hubs for areas such as HR.

Promoting the Wider Role of the Fire and Rescue Service

The significant role that the fire and rescue service can play within society is often overlooked or under-recognised. Some recent polling carried out for CFOA¹ showed that only 21% of those asked thought the fire and rescue service should be contributing to wider social issues. Clearly much more needs to be done to make the case for the wider role of the service.

Within the fire and rescue service we have come to recognise the links between the causes of fire death and various other social issues. Mental health problems, obesity, physical disability, old age, smoking, drink and drugs are all major contributory factors to both your chances of having a fire and dying as a result. These same factors are also major issues for our health and social services and our economy as a whole.

We know that firefighters have a unique ability to cross the threshold, enjoying widespread public trust and support. This often means we can reach those that others struggle to engage. Commonsense tells us we should be working with other agencies to exploit this, to improve outcomes for the public and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of these interventions, whoever carries them out.

Specific Priorities for the coming year

While these are our overarching priorities, there are of course shorter term issues which are a focus of attention.

Industrial Action

The industrial action taken by the FBU over changes to pensions is a dispute between the government and trade unions, but of course our members have been required to deal with many of the consequences. We have remained clear that strike action is not the way to resolve the dispute, and have urged both sides to negotiate. It was disappointing that talks broke down, and that the government was unable or unwilling to make changes to their offer after weeks of further consideration and talks.

CFOA has done what it can to help find a resolution to the dispute, commissioning independent research on firefighter fitness from Bath University, challenging some of the actuarial assumptions within the scheme and meeting with both sides to encourage negotiation. Services are increasingly stretched and if there is further long term strike action this might begin to put contingency arrangements under pressure.

Adrian Thomas Review

The Adrian Thomas review will undoubtedly open up some interesting discussions about the way the fire and rescue service is structured, and the need for greater flexibilities. We have raised our concerns about the length of time given to the review and the lack of support, and have offered our own expertise to Mr Thomas.

CFOA believe that there could be greater flexibility within the grey book and the negotiation arrangements to allow services to implement new ways of working, new shift systems and so forth. Senior officers are not looking to degrade terms and conditions and history shows that firefighters often prefer the new systems that are put in place, and are often better off financially as a result. So many of the changes that have been made at a local level have been made *despite* the grey book, not because of it.

The review also includes questions about senior officer pay and conditions, a matter CFOA are looking forward to discussing in an open and frank manner.

¹ Populus Polling, September 2014 – 2,010 GB Adults