

Thomas Review

Purpose of the Report

To update the Fire Services Management Committee on the current position.

Summary

This paper briefly describes the background and current position.

Recommendation:

Members are asked to note that Adrian Thomas will address the meeting.

Contact officer:	Gill Gittins
Position:	Principal Negotiating Officer
Phone no:	020 7187 7335
E-mail:	gill.gittins@local.gov.uk

Thomas Review

1. Sir Ken Knight's '*Facing the Future*' Review, commissioned by DCLG, highlighted a number of areas in the fire service which he felt could be reformed, arguing that the conditions of service of firefighters could be an actual or perceived barrier to change although he also recognised that there could be political or management self-limitation at local level.
2. DCLG responded to the Review in July and announced that it was setting up an independent review into conditions of service. In August the Government opened the Review and announced that Adrian Thomas (a HR professional) would undertake the Review.
3. In summary the objective of the Review is to look at the conditions of service of chief fire officers and firefighters and the processes by which they are determined to consider whether they present barriers to reform, improvement and efficiency. Its terms of reference can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/minister-opens-independent-review-of-firefighter-conditions>

4. Mr Thomas is due to report in February 2015. Initial evidence gathering sought information from fire authorities and staff through a number of questionnaires. Since then Mr Thomas has visited a number of fire authorities and met with representatives of the various trade unions. The LGA submitted a response to Mr Thomas which can be found here:

http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/fire-and-rescue-services/-/journal_content/56/10180/6579795/ARTICLE

5. He has also met with the National Employers' Chair, Cllr Heaster, on two occasions to date. At the most recent meeting Mr Thomas was clear that as he is still in the evidence gathering stage his views may be subject to change. However he did touch upon issues such as: employer/employee interaction at local level; management of change: extent of employee buy in to the wider corporate team; management capability and recruitment (internal/external); are there clear restrictions in the Gold/Grey Books etc. which hinder efficiency? He also confirmed that elected members were invited to all his meetings with authorities. The expectation is that there will be a further meeting with Cllr Heaster and we are aware that Mr Thomas is also due to meet with the Independent Chair of the NJC for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services, Linda Dickens.
6. Members will be aware that Adrian Thomas is attending today's meeting of the FSMC and he will no doubt share with you some of his thoughts at the present time which will influence the questions you wish to ask. However, members may wish to consider in advance of the meeting any questions/issues that they may wish to raise. For example:

- What action does he anticipate will happen following publication of his recommendations? Does he expect it will be for fire authorities to consider whether or not to take forward any/all of the recommendations?
- Has DCLG expressed a view on what it would expect to see as the direction of travel?
- As part of the evidence gathering have the differing types of fire authorities and different approaches to delivery of the service been taken into account?
- In respect of evidence gathering are any examples of flexibility available at local level sought as well as any examples of restriction?
- Has he formed a view yet on expansion of the use of retained duty system personnel as suggested in the Knight Review?