

Fire Services Management Committee Update Paper

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

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

Recommendation

Members to note the update.

Action

Officers to progress as appropriate.

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Fire Services Management Committee Update Paper

Councillor Jeremy Hilton

1. In October the Government released their latest update of the future control room services scheme. Cllr Hilton responded to the report saying that the report highlighted the work that fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) have been doing to strengthen their control room operations. The report showed that partnerships were effective in developing and implementing improvements on time and within budget and that savings of £129 million are expected to be delivered by 2024.
2. Cllr Hilton has also provided quotes on a number of other press releases including the announcement of the fire transformation fund winners, the Government's award of £1 million for continuation of the National Operational Guidance programme and a call for safety warnings to be displayed on e-cigarettes. The press release on e-cigarettes was widely discussed in the media and featured on the BBC news website, the Daily Mail, the Telegraph, Sky News, the Independent as well as many other news outlets. In response the Government launched a number of tips to help consumers use e-cigarettes safely and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills commissioned a number of Trading Standards departments to investigate whether current e-cigarette safety information is sufficient and widely available enough to consumers. Cllr Hilton has also written a *first* article on the fire transformation bids to highlight the work of the sector.
3. On 25 November Cllr Hilton, Cllr David Acton and Cllr Kay Hammond met with Lyn Brown MP, shadow fire minister. They discussed Lyn Brown's speech to the Fire Sector Summit where she advocated for a national fire service in order to meet funding challenges; sector-led improvement; and the progress of the sector with co-responding, collaboration, and merger; a statutory duty for flooding and the RDS pensions issue. A follow up letter and additional information was agreed by all Lead Members.
4. On 3 December Cllr Hilton, Cllr Acton and Cllr Hammond held a very positive meeting with Clive Betts MP, Chairman of the Communities and Local Government Select Committee, to discuss key issues facing the fire and rescue sector, including the Adrian Thomas terms and conditions review and the sector's response to the Knight Review. Members highlighted the importance and value that Fire and Rescue Authorities place in the peer review process and also stressed the need for more local flexibilities to allow for closer working with the other blue light services. In response, Clive expressed an interest in seeing examples of interoperability in action and getting a better understanding of the barriers to additional joint working.
5. Invitations from Cllr Hilton have gone out to speakers at the LGA's Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition. Clive Betts MP is confirmed as speaking at the conference along with Peter Dartford, Kieran Timmins, Adrian Thomas and Matt Wrack. We hope to be able to confirm the other speakers shortly.

6. The programme for the next Fire Leadership Essentials Programme was discussed by Cllr Hilton at a meeting with officers. The new programme will focus on the leadership challenges that the sector is facing as it changes and transforms services for communities. You can book a place for the next Leadership Essentials Programme happening between 3 – 4 February by emailing grace.collins@local.gov.uk.
7. Cllr Hilton also attended a meeting on the peer challenge toolkit, along with a number of other Members to discuss the update of the peer challenge toolkit and make suggestions for further changes, including a refresh of the peer pool.

Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015 Regulations

8. On 28 October the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015 regulations were laid before Parliament by the Fire Minister, Penny Mordaunt MP. She also announced the commencement of a consultation in incorporating firefighter fitness assessments and standards in the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England. The LGA response, cleared by Lead NJC members, can be found via the link in paragraph 5 of item 6 (Industrial Relations Update).
9. During her ministerial statement the Minister made a number of points including:
 - 9.1. The Government is proceeding with the enhanced early retirement terms for those who retire from age 55, not just from age 57.
 - 9.2. The accrual rate (i.e. the rate at which you build up your pension) will also be at a faster rate than the 2006 scheme and calculated on a career average arrangement.
 - 9.3. A firefighter who suffers ill-health will receive a larger ill-health pension under the final scheme than the Fire Brigades Union's preferred scheme.
 - 9.4. The consultation on putting fitness principles into the statutory Fire and Rescue National Framework for England was announced. This will require fire and rescue authorities to put in place local fitness policies and procedures to support firefighters to maintain their fitness. If a firefighter loses their fitness through no fault of their own, it will also require the authority to consider initiating the process for an unreduced pension.
 - 9.5. The minister said that the Government also reduced the cost to authorities of early retiring firefighters on an unreduced pension, making it a more cost effective option should they wish to do this.
 - 9.6. Firefighters will be able to take partial retirement (sometimes known as flexible retirement), meaning that they can, when they reach 55, continue to work and draw a pension at the same time.

- 9.7. Those transferring to the 2015 scheme will see a reduction in the employee contribution rate of 2 percentage points in 2015- 16.
10. The Minister's statement can be found: <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-vote-office/2014-October/28th%20October/3.DCLG-Reform-firefighters-Pensions.pdf>. The Minister has also written a series of open letters to firefighters outlining the changes and these can be found on the Government's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/firefighters-pension-scheme-reforms.

Future Control Room Services Scheme

11. The Government's latest update of the future control room services scheme shows the progress being made by the 22 control room projects. The projected savings of the schemes now stand at £130 million, which is £1 million more than reported in the last update in March 2014 and, significantly, £2 million more than the original early estimates.
12. The document can be found on the Government's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-control-room-services-scheme-summary-national-picture-of-fire-and-rescue-authority-improvement-plans-october-2014-update

Procurement

13. Following Ann Millington's attendance and presentation to the Fire Commission in June to discuss joining up procurement within the fire sector, CFOA consulted on the draft procurement strategy. That consultation has now closed and so far 30 FRAs have said they would be willing to start the process of joining up on procurement. The project has received funding to set up a back office function to coordinate procurement activity. This will be based in Devon and Somerset.
14. The project will be looking to get smaller categories of procurement sorted as well as procurement for larger items such as fire engines. The spending categories are currently being finalised, the next step will be to agree which authority acts as the technical lead and how the procurement will be done, which could either be via a Professional Buying Organisation (PBO) or another authority.
15. The project has written to all the Professional Buying Organisations (PBOs) and explained that in future, when the service needs them, an appropriate process will be in place to choose which organisation works on what categories or projects dependant on their expertise, costs etc. The project will continue to work with the PBOs to find the best and most solution for the services' needs.

Blue light collaboration: National Overview

16. At the beginning of November the Cross Emergency Services Blue Light Integration Working Group published *Emergency Services Collaboration – the current picture*. The

document provides an overview of the collaboration work already underway in the blue light services to provide a better service for communities and save money.

17. The overview will provide a baseline for the Emergency Services Collaboration Working Group to commission research into those areas of collaboration that appear to provide the most potential for improving services. This research will provide a firm evidence base for those services wishing to pursue their own transformational projects and for future policy development.
18. The full document can be found on the Public Services Transformation Network's pages: <http://publicservicetransformation.org/media-zone/news/513-emergency-services-collaboration-the-current-picture>

National Operational Guidance

19. The Government's contribution towards the future funding of the National Operational Guidance Programme has been agreed in principle. On 20 November officers from the programme attending the Department for Communities and Local Government's Investment Sub-Committee to discuss the programme's bid for £1 million per year of government funding. The sub-committee agreed to recommend that funding for 2015/16 be approved. The recommendation may be subject to the Secretary of State's approval, and the programme team is working with DCLG officials to support that process. The committee also agreed with the principle, that the funding is required for a three-year programme, however it is not possible at this stage to commit to funding beyond the current Comprehensive Spending Review.

Fire Kills – Annual Report

20. The Annual Fire Kills Report was released on 25 November. The report details the work undertaken by the Fire Kills campaign in 2013 to 2014. The campaign, run in partnership with local fire and rescue authorities, aims to raise awareness of key fire safety messages to the general public.
21. In the 2013/14 campaign the phrase "Tick, tock test" had been used for the first time to reinforce the clock change message. The Government had used smaller more targeted interventions, using local news, social housing newsletters as well as the tradition radio and tv. The evaluation survey found that 12% of people checked the alarms in October 2013 and 14% tested in March 2014.
22. The full report can be found here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-kills-campaign-annual-report-2013-to-2014.

Autumn Statement

23. On 3 December the Chancellor gave his Autumn Statement. He announced new employer contribution rates will be introduced for the Armed Forces Pension Scheme, the Firefighters' Pension Scheme, the Judicial Pension Scheme and devolved public

service pension schemes in Scotland and Northern Ireland from April 2015. (P.68, paragraph 2.13 here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/autumn-statement-2014>)

24. There is uncertainty from the announcements about whether the average employers' contribution rates will reduce or increase for firefighters' pensions, only that new rates will be introduced. We also do not know what impact, if any, this will have on funding. We will continue to update Members as new information becomes available.