

Note of last Fire Commission meeting

Title: Fire Commission
Date: Friday 17 October 2014
Venue: Committee Room 14, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
1	<p>LGA Fire Commission membership, Terms of Reference and meeting dates</p> <p>Cllr Jeremy Hilton (Chair), introduced the report and informed members that the Fire Commission was to meet twice a year and not four times a year as stated in the Terms of Reference.</p> <p>Members raised a concern over the timing of the next meeting in May, as this was close to the next elections, which would not give all authorities the time to make appointments to their local Fire and Rescue Authorities. It was agreed that officers would canvass the lead members to move the date back to June.</p> <p>Action:</p> <p>Officers to look at moving the next meeting in May to June – Now agreed 5 June 2015.</p> <p>Decision:</p> <p>Members agreed the membership of the Commission and the Terms of reference with the alteration to two meetings a year.</p>	
2	<p>Priorities for 2014/15</p> <p>Clive Harris, Senior Adviser, introduced the report setting out the key priorities for the Fire Services Management Committee (FSMC) and the Fire Commission. These were based on a combination of ongoing work, recent policy announcements and a forward look with the general election in May 2015.</p> <p>Members welcomed the report and commented that the Fire Commission and FSMC should be leading the way and advising Fire and Rescue Authorities on what they needed to plan for in the run up to the next general election.</p> <p>Decision:</p> <p>Members agreed the priorities for 2014/15.</p>	

3 Attendance by the Fire Minister

The Fire Minister, Penny Mordaunt MP, informed Members that she welcomed the opportunity to speak to the Fire Commission. She welcomed Cllr Jeremy Hilton as the new chair of the Fire Commission and thanked Cllr Kay Hammond for her work as the previous chair. She explained that the fire and rescue service was a vital part of the front line emergency services, which was evidenced in the reduction in the number of deaths caused by fire. She recognised the difficult job all Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRA's) were facing with reductions in budgets, industrial action and actions short of a strike.

She informed members that the firefighter pension scheme regulation was nearing implementation. In addition there would be a joint working group looking at ways of supporting firefighters fitness issues.

There were areas that needed greater improvement and investment, most notably around leadership and collaboration. This would, in the future, provide a better return on investment and drive further efficiencies within the fire service.

The Government had recently announced an Independent Review of Conditions of Service for Operational Staff in the Fire and Rescue Service. This was to be led by Adrian Thomas in response to the Knight Review on terms and conditions. The terms of reference had been drafted by government; however it will be up to Adrian Thomas to decide on what to report back. Members were informed that Adrian Thomas was now in post and that there had been over 2,500 responses to the questionnaire. It was hoped that this independent review would shape the future of the fire service and bring about more collaborative working between the emergency services.

Members were informed that the £75 million transformation fund had now been allocated on a range of services and products. Members were encouraged to view the DCLG website to see what had been allocated.

Members thanked the Minister for speaking to them and raised a number of questions, which the Minister responded to, including:

- It was not possible to recall all the projects that had been successful in bidding for money from the transformation fund, but encouraged Members to check the DCLG website.
- It was important to visit as many FRA's as possible over the coming months and Members were reassured that the Minister would visit as many FRA's as possible.
- There was a lot of work to do around interoperability, there needed to be more in depth conversations with relevant government departments to ensure emergency services work closely together in the future.
- It was re-iterated that the Independent Review was independent and the Government had no say in the final recommendations from Adrian Thomas.
- The Firefighter Pension Scheme had taken into account the view of FRA's and had been consulted on.

- The increased figures in payments to retained firefighters were not yet known. This was dependent on the number of retained firefighters taking up the option of the pension scheme.

Decision:

Members thanked the Minister for attending and responding to questions raised.

4 Independent Review of Conditions of Service for Operational Staff in the Fire and Rescue Service

Sarah Messenger, Head of Workforce, introduced the report and informed members that a joint submission from the FSMC and LGA lead members on the Employers' Side of the National Joint Council (NJC) had been submitted on 29 September. Members were informed that Adrian Thomas was keen to emphasise that the review was independent and that he had no pre-conceived ideas. The review was expected to report to the Secretary of State at DCLG in February 2015.

Sarah commented that she had made a number of observations including:

- The LGA response makes clear that there may be scope to make some changes that will enhance the balance between national activity and local flexibility.
- Although there had been challenges with industrial relations, there are a number of examples of good industrial relations at a local level, including those supported nationally.
- One of the challenges is to ensure that the recommendations are as flexible as possible, as well as ensuring the fire service make the best possible use of resources.

Decision:

Members **noted** the report.

5 Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme

Dave Webb, CFO Leicestershire, and Darryl Keen, ACFO, Hertfordshire introduced the presentation and explained that this was the largest cross service work ongoing anywhere. Members were informed that the airwave provision worked across all emergency services and was controlled by contracts owned by the Government which were due to expire between 2016 and 2020.

The Emergency Services Network proposed would be used by all emergency services and would be more flexible than the current system. The advantage of this system was that FRA's could ask for the service to provide for what it required, which would be more affordable in the long term. It was not economically viable to change the use of airwaves; therefore the best option was to transfer the existing system on to a more updated platform.

The timetable to achieve the transition was optimistic and it was agreed that a transitional programme was put in place to counter any slipping in the timetable.

Darryl Keen informed Members that although the fire service only made up 5% of the total order they were being treated as an equal partner in the process. The programme encompassed four key areas, namely Delivery Partner, User Services, Mobile Services and Extension Services. The programme ensured that the cost of this programme was less than a commercial alternative.

Members were informed that the cost implications for the fire sector was being discussed and views of the fire service were being fed into discussion at the main sounding board. The funding and finance group had oversight of everything that had gone in and out of the finance group.

Members welcomed the report and raised a number of questions to which Dave Webb responded including:

- Mobile phones were not an option, this was because mobile networks crashed and some areas of the country still did not have a mobile network signal. It was important to remember that the airwaves used by the emergency services were much stronger and more robust than mobile networks.
- It was hoped that each authority would be asked if the service works for them and to ensure any add-ons were done quickly, thus avoiding costs getting out of control.
- Everything will be done to ensure that the service is fully operational as soon as possible. This had been identified as a key risk, although there was no set solution if the timings slipped.

Decision:

Members **noted** the presentation and thanked Dave Webb and Darryl Keen for their time.

**6 The fire and rescue service's proposition to the next Government:
The First 100 Days**

Helen Murray, Head of Programmes, introduced the report and informed Members that the 100 days document set out the key ideas for the next government. This was a good opportunity for the fire sector to include campaigns and ideas which can be put forward to the next government. Members were informed that the 5 hills campaign had been going for a number of years and that this might be an opportunity to revamp a similar campaign.

Members welcomed the report and agreed to send any ideas to officers at the LGA.

Decision

Members **noted** the report and agreed to send any ideas to officers.

7 Fire Commission Industrial Relations report

Gill Gittins, Principal Negotiating Officer, introduced the report and informed Members that following increased levels of discussion between DCLG and the FBU the expectation was that the draft Regulations would be laid the week commencing 27th October. It was not known whether those discussions would impact upon the content.

The NJC's commitment to joint working on pay terms and conditions for the future would now move into the work streams phase covering areas such as emergency medical response; multi-agency response; environmental challenges; youth and other social engagement work; and inspections and enforcement.

Decision:

Members **noted** the report.

8 Fire Commission update report

Decision:

Members **noted** the report.

9 Notes from the previous meeting

Members **agreed** the minutes from the previous meeting on 13 June 2014.