

9 March 2015

LGA Fire and Rescue Authority Perceptions Survey

Purpose

For update and discussion.

Summary

The LGA recently carried out a perceptions survey of Fire and Rescue Authority and Fire and Rescue Service members to understand their views of the LGA and shape the future offer. Juliet Whitworth (LGA Research and Information Manager) will attend the meeting to provide an oral update on initial findings from the survey.

The current LGA offer to Fire and Rescue Authorities is included at **Annex 1**.

Recommendation

Members are invited to discuss the issues set out in the paper.

Actions

- a) LGA offer to be refreshed over the coming months in light of the survey results.
- b) Survey findings to be considered at the next FSMC in June 2015.
- c) Officers to progress any other actions as appropriate.

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LGA Fire and Rescue Authority Perceptions Survey

Background

- 1.1 The LGA carries out an annual telephone survey of councillors and senior officers in its member councils to quantify their understanding of the LGA and what the LGA currently offers.
- 1.2 This year, it was also decided to carry out a perceptions survey of fire and rescue authority/service (FRA and FRS) members and senior officers to understand their views of the LGA and help shape the future offer.

Who carried out the survey?

2. For the past two years the LGA has commissioned BMG Research, an independent research company, to undertake the main LGA telephone survey. They were also commissioned to carry out the FRA/FRS telephone survey.

What did the survey cover?

3. The survey covered a range of issues including:
 - the LGA, its offer and current provision for fire and rescue services / authorities;
 - the LGA's current role and priorities and how these can be developed;
 - LGA communications and respondents' preferred methods of engagement; and
 - views of sector-led improvement within fire and rescue authorities/services, the support offered by the LGA to assist its members in this and how that can be developed/improved.

When did it take place?

4. The survey was conducted between the 26th January and the 13th February 2015.

Who took part in the perceptions survey?

5. Telephone interviews were undertaken of LGA's key FRA/FRS stakeholders:
 - 157 senior officers and senior councillors were contacted
 - 20 senior officers were surveyed
 - 47 senior councillors were surveyed
 - This was a response rate of 43 per cent

Who was excluded from participating?

6. In order to ensure that the interviewees were not biased towards the LGA, board members were excluded from the survey.

Analysis

- 7.1 A full report and data tables will be provided by BMG shortly, with an analysis of both councillors and officers separately where possible.
- 7.2 As many questions were the same as those in the main LGA survey of councils, it is also intended to benchmark the perceptions of FRA/FRS members against the perceptions of other council respondents.

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**Annex 1
LGA offer to Fire and Rescue Authorities**

Benefits of Membership	
Political Group Offices	<p>Access to the four political groups at the LGA – Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat and Independent – who influence, liaise and network with government, shadow teams and party administrations, and help to sustain wider LGA campaigns, policy, media and public affairs work.</p> <p>Please find below the contact details for the group offices: Morgan McSweeney, Head of the Labour Group Office, Email: Morgan.McSweeney@local.gov.uk Telephone: 020 7664 3268 Will Brooks, Head of Conservative Group Office, Email: william.brooks@local.gov.uk Telephone: 020 7664 3281 Rob Banks, Political Adviser for the Liberal Democrat Group, Email: rob.banks@local.gov.uk Telephone: 020 7664 3204 Maggie Sullivan, Head of the Independent Group Office, Email: Maggie.sullivan@local.gov.uk Telephone: 020 7664 3206</p>
Fire Services Management Committee (FSMC)	<p>Members of FRAs are appointed to the 14 member Fire Services Management Committee (from all types of FRA and with country-wide geographical coverage) to lead policy development and improvement work and to lobby Government on specific issues.</p> <p>It meets 4 times a year and papers and positions on issues are available on the website. The meeting is extended to all Chairs when the Fire Minister attends and there are a group of LGA Advisers available to Committee Members to provide professional expertise.</p>
Fire Commission	<p>The Commission is an important sounding board and excellent opportunity for all Chairs to discuss matters of common concern, share ideas and exchange good practice. This is also an opportunity to shape policy development and to influence Members of the Fire Services Management Committee.</p> <p>The Fire Commission meets twice a year and membership is open to all fire and rescue authorities in full or corporate membership which indicate in writing their wish to join. Additional members from fire and rescue authorities are appointed as necessary to ensure political balance.</p>
Appointments to specialist working groups	<p>The FSMC makes appointments to a range of national bodies including the Pensions Committee, the National Resilience Board, the Fire Service College Advisory Board and others.</p> <p>Representatives have access to LGA policy support, administrative support if needed and meeting space in Local Government House.</p>
Welsh FRAs	<p>Welsh FRAs are in membership through the WLGA's corporate membership of the LGA. Welsh FRAs have access to the whole range of services provided by the LGA. Welsh FRAs are in membership of the Fire Commission.</p>
Account Manager	<p>A single point of contact at senior management level for all FRAs to discuss issues of concern, provide support on individual issues, and to signpost to other expert organisations.</p>

Media	As the national media office for local government, we offer advice and support to all our members on national media relations and are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. This includes a media adviser covering fire issues.
Communications	<p>Our free fortnightly magazine, <i>first</i>, regularly profiles fire issues and successes. Our daily e-mail bulletin summarises all news stories relevant to local government in the national media, and our weekly roundup gives members a digest of the news, guidance and good practice over the week. There are also specialist bulletins on Community safety, finance, and localism amongst others.</p> <p>We issue a quarterly fire bulletin, summarising policy developments and issues of interest to our members as well as publicising forthcoming events. Members can sign up to receive this and our other bulletins via our website (www.local.gov.uk). We also keep Chiefs, Chairs and Directors of Human Resources up to date on national pay/terms and conditions negotiations and any subsequent agreements through regular circulars. This includes seeking views to inform negotiations where appropriate.</p>
Social media	<p>We host an exclusive online Knowledge Hub forum for our Fire members including case studies and other information, called “Fire and Rescue Service Notable Practice”. This platform is an opportunity for our members to share thoughts and ideas, connect with other members and view the latest LGA Fire policy news. It is a safe environment for elected members and chief fire officers to engage in free debate and is not open to the public. To join, please go to: Fire and Rescue Service – Notable Practice. Here you can follow a short and simple registration page.</p> <p>We also have a Twitter account to keep our members up to date with our activities – follow us @lgafirerescue</p>
National Operational Guidance	The programme is a partnership between the London Fire Brigade, the Chief Fire Officers' Association and the LGA to develop a new catalogue of national operational policy for the UK fire and rescue service to deliver three core benefits: to provide the foundation for safe systems of work for firefighters; to provide the foundation for interoperability between fire and rescue services; and to provide the foundation for interoperability between the UK fire and rescue service and other emergency services.
Self regulation and Improvement	All FRAs have access to LG Inform – the LGA’s data service which brings together a range of data and information about an area and allows users to compare it with other FRA areas. We are working with FRAs to develop a core set of metrics around cost and performance, which they can use for benchmarking; as well as identify new metrics on efficiency and productivity, outcome and achievement that authorities can, if they so choose, then collect, publish and use for comparative purposes.
Peer Challenge	<p>Every FRA is entitled to receive one free Operational Assessment and fire peer challenge every 3 years covering elements of corporate leadership alongside operational issues. All 46 FRAs in England either have or are taking up the scheme.</p> <p>The well-respected FRS Diversity Challenge is discounted by 30% for members.</p>
Leadership	Chairs of FRAs and other senior members on Fire and Rescue Authorities can attend the Fire Essentials Leadership Programme for free. We have run three

	<p>such events now in September 2013, February 2014 and September 2014 and feedback has been very positive. The next one is taking place in February 2015 and you can sign up by emailing Grace Collins on grace.collins@local.gov.uk. We can also organise specific programmes for FRAs who are interested for a small charge.</p>
Pay and Negotiations	<p>We provide the secretariat service to the Employers' Sides of the National Joint Councils for Grey Book staff and Brigade Managers. This includes providing specialist expert advice on pay and conditions of employment and the employment contract to both councillors on the Employers Sides and to individual fire and rescue authorities. The Employers' Secretariat also undertakes pay/terms and conditions negotiations and consultation (as appropriate) with the fire service unions at national level on behalf of fire FRAs. We provide free, specialist assistance to FRAs at times of industrial unrest to facilitate resolutions, and can also provide general industrial relations training both from an employer perspective to FRA management teams only and/or jointly with local trade union representatives in order to review and where necessary improve upon the relationship at local level.</p>
Workforce	<p>We will support FRAs in meeting a range of workforce challenges including driving productivity, service transformation, and modernising pay and reward through action learning sets, advice and guidance and in-house consultancy.</p>
Events	<p>There is a £360 charge for attendance at the prestigious LGA Annual Fire Conference and the LGA's Annual Conference and Exhibition. This represents a discount of £100 for members, for non-members the charge to attend is £460. This includes an opportunity for members of different FRAs to hold a dedicated meeting at the conference. The LGA's Annual Conference is priced at £495 for members, a discount of £145.</p>
Local Government Challenge	<p>Opportunity to enter candidates and host real life challenges for The Local Government Challenge, our competition to find local government's future top executives, with the winner receiving the prestigious Bruce-Lockhart scholarship. The scholarship is presented at the LGA's Annual Conference.</p>
Website	<p>By registering on the members-only site, members can access up-to-the-minute news, briefings and statements from the LGA. The site also offers downloadable publications, access to the LGA public affairs network containing briefings and legislative updates on local government bills, and the LGA's webcast microsite, which broadcasts speeches, ministerial addresses, highlights of events and key announcements. There are also collections of case studies to facilitate the sharing of good practice as well as comprehensive information related to employment issues.</p>
Facilities	<p>Local Government House is a resource for the benefit of LGA member councils. Councillors can use Open Council for an informal meeting space with self-service refreshments, additional workstations and a flat screen television. The Members' Lounge is ideal for quiet work, with further workspace, a flat screen television and access to the Bruce Lockhart roof terrace.</p>
Free Room Hire	<p>Meeting rooms in Local Government House are available free of charge to FRA member authorities, between the hours of 9am-5pm Monday to Friday. These range from small quiet rooms for two to three people, to the Westminster Suite (with sweeping views of Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament) and Bevin Hall which can accommodate up to 100 people with breakout rooms for larger events. A charge is made for any refreshments.</p>