

End of Year Board Report

Purpose of report

For information and discussion.

Summary

This report provides an overview of the issues and work the Fire Services Management Committee (FSMC) and Fire Commission have overseen during last year. It sets out key achievements in relation to the priorities for the FSMC and Fire Commission in 2014/2015, and looks forward to next year's priorities.

Recommendations

Members are invited to:

1. Note the achievements against the priorities in 2014/2015
2. Discuss the programme of work for 2015/16; and
3. Agree the programme of meetings for 2015/16.

Action

Officers to action as appropriate.

Contact officer: Lucy Ellender
Position: Adviser
Phone no: 020 7664 3321
E-mail: lucy.ellender@local.gov.uk

End of Year Board Report

Background

1. The LGA's Business Plan for 2014/15 set out two overarching priorities for the Fire Services Management Committee and Fire Commission; improving the ability of fire and rescue authorities to protect people and places from harm, as well as increasing collaboration across blue-light services. The FSMC and Fire Commission expanded these when setting its priorities in September to include:
 - 1.1. Press for a fair finance settlement for FRAs
 - 1.2. Work to assist resolution of the current industrial action
 - 1.3. The Independent Review of Terms and Conditions
 - 1.4. Political engagement
 - 1.5. Transformation and blue light interoperability

Press for a fair finance settlement for FRAs

2. The LGA has continued to press for a fair finance settlement with Ministers. In our welcome letter to Mark Francois MP, the new Fire Minister, we outlined the potential difficulties facing fire and rescue services if faced with further reductions in funding.
3. We responded to the Independent Finance Commission jointly with the Fire Finance Network. Our response outlined the importance of funding the fire and rescue service to risk rather than demand, funding national resilience assets adequately as well as giving FRAs more local flexibility. The full submission can be found on the LGA's website:
www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/12157/LGA++CFOA+submission+to+LG+finance+commission.pdf/5ab7d4c1-3b4d-44d3-bdce-6b302875fd9b. In its final report the Independent Finance Commission championed the fire sector's position on council tax referendum limits.
4. We are currently finalising our spending review submission, which will seek to highlight the difficulties facing the fire and rescue service and the wider local government family. The submission will be looking at the financial challenge facing FRAs and the need for government to recognise the wider role the sector is developing to meet a range of priorities including those in health and social care. Wider local government messages around a multi-year settlement, flexibilities for local authorities and business rates retention will be included alongside our ideas for future funding which will apply equally to the fire sector. The spending review submission has been cleared by the LGA's Executive and Leadership Board and will be published on 30 June at the LGA Annual Conference.

Work to assist resolution of the current industrial action

5. Whilst this dispute is between the Fire Brigades Union and Government, we have worked with the parties both separately and jointly to assist in finding a resolution wherever it has been appropriate to do so, largely utilising the auspices of the National

Employers. For example, union concerns around fitness have been a key factor and, through the NJC, national employer and employee interests reached agreement in principle on a number of issues. These went on to be used by DCLG in drafting the addendum to the National Framework. The joint DCLG/NJC working group referred to within those principles (which includes other interested parties), has met and is working towards creation of a best practice document to assist FRAs in supporting employees to maintain, and where necessary regain, appropriate fitness levels.

The Independent Review of Terms and Conditions

6. The FSMC and the LGA's representatives who sit on the Employers' Side of the National Joint Councils (NJC) jointly responded to the Independent Review of Terms and Conditions carried out by Adrian Thomas. In December, Adrian Thomas came to speak to the FSMC regarding the findings of his review, and he also had the final speaking slot at the LGA's Annual Fire Conference alongside Matt Wrack from the Fire Brigades Union. Our full response is available on our website: www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/12157/LGA+response+to+Independent+Review+-+FINAL.pdf/4342594c-ba80-4110-8753-3d9be2029334. We will need to respond once the report is published.
7. There is also wider work underway around values that the LGA is participating in. We held a roundtable on equality in the fire and rescue service with senior officers in the fire and rescue service, exploring the challenges that the service will be facing in the coming years and how the service should meet them. We will be holding a further discussion in November to see how this work has progressed.

Political Engagement

8. As part of the LGA's 100 Days campaign the Fire Services Management Committee and the Chief Fire Officers Association jointly produced *The Fire and Rescue Service: Making the Nation Safer*. This fire specific document set out our shared perspective on what the service offers to the government, and included proposals with the potential to save £500 million. Jointly with CFOA we wrote to the Fire Minister setting out our proposals. We also wrote to the Shadow Minister, Clive Betts MP, and to the Chairs of a number of all-party parliamentary groups on the proposals relevant to their work.
9. As a part of this work we successfully lobbied for the introduction of regulations making it mandatory for landlords to install smoke alarms in private rented properties. The Regulations made under section 150(1) of the Energy Act 2013 will, subject to Parliamentary approval, come into force on 1 October 2015.
10. Members have met with the former Fire Minister at the October Fire Commission, the Shadow Fire Minister, Lyn Brown MP and Clive Betts MP, Chair of the Communities and Local Government Select Committee. We also responded to Lyn Brown's consultation on the structure of fire and rescue services, reiterating our support for transformation to be locally-led to respond to local needs and priorities.
11. In Councillor Hilton's welcome letter we have requested that the Minister meet with lead members. We are currently following this up with his office.

Transformation and blue light interoperability

12. Cllr David Acton and Cllr John Bell have represented the LGA on the blue light collaboration working group, which has undertaken a piece of research to understand the current picture of collaboration across the country and highlight a number of collaboration projects that are already underway.
13. We showcased good practice on collaboration at the LGA's Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition including Greater Manchester's Community Risk Intervention Teams, Northamptonshire's joint working with the police and the merger in Dorset and Wiltshire.
14. The FSMC and the Community Wellbeing Board have jointly produced a set of case studies looking at the fire and rescue service's role in improving the public's health. This includes contributions from Kent FRS, Greater Manchester FRS, Suffolk FRS, Norfolk FRS, West Midlands FRS, Merseyside FRS and Staffordshire FRS. This is part of a wider piece of work that the LGA is engaged in with CFOA, Public Health England and the NHS on exploring how the fire and rescue service can expand its prevention role.
15. We also have a regular section of our bulletin to share good and notable practice from the fire and rescue sector. Members can contribute through emailing lucy.ellender@local.gov.uk.
16. Members have represented the LGA on a number of different boards and outside bodies, including the blue light integration working group and the strategic resilience board.

Events and Media

17. We held our Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition in March this year. We had 100% overall satisfaction rate with the event and we were joined by approximately 200 attendees and 19 exhibitors. All but three of the FRS in England and Wales were in attendance at the conference, only West Sussex FRA, South Wales FRA and the Isles of Scilly did not attend.
18. We issued press releases and statements on topics covering smoke alarms in the private rented sector, the drink driving limit, e-cigarettes, the transformation fund, the National Operational Guidance Programme and the Future Control Services Scheme. We also included an article on the transformation bids in *first* magazine, as well as promoting fire sprinklers week in the magazine.

Fire Peer challenges and Improvement

19. Every Fire and rescue authority has now had a peer Challenge. In the last 15 months, since April 2014, 16 Peer Challenges have been undertaken. The take up of peer challenges shows the commitment by the sector to improvement. The LGA continues to provide Fire Peer Challenges as part of its core offer with the expectation that fire and rescue authorities will be reviewed every three years. In last year's overview we

noted that the peer challenges focused on understanding their community risk profile, ensuring their resources are targeted effectively, with the appropriate skills and training in place. These remain the key issues.

20. We have also undertaken two fire leadership essentials programmes with 22 members attending. These have been well-received and we will be holding another one between 13-14 October 2015 at the Warwick Business School. It is an opportunity for chairs and senior members on FRAs to network with other members, as well as hear good practice and develop their leadership styles. Please contact grace.collins@local.gov.uk if you would like to attend.

LGA Annual Conference

21. The FSMC will be holding a fire specific workshop at the LGA's annual conference in Harrogate on Wednesday 1 July 2015 at 5.20pm. The workshop is titled "There's more than one way to rescue someone: the role of the fire and rescue service in public health".

Programme of work 2015/16

22. The LGA's Business Plan for 2015/16 includes a number of overarching priorities that are directly relevant for the FSMC and Fire Commission:
 - 22.1. **Future spending reviews deliver fair, timely and flexible local government finance settlements** – we will lobby for fair funding for England and English local government, including multi-year funding settlements and a localised distribution system that appropriately balances needs and incentives. We will ensure that the financial consequences for local government of central government reforms are understood and adequately funded. In particular in the areas of welfare reform, adult social care, school places, children's services and fire funding.
 - 22.2. **Councils work effectively with partners to build and sustain resilient and sustainable communities** – we will press government to finance properly the delivery of the counter-terrorism strategy and support councils in meeting their new duties to prevent extremism and working with partners on reducing crime. We will work to build greater collaboration across the blue-light services and influence the independent review of firefighters' terms and conditions. We will support police and crime panels in their scrutiny of police and crime commissioners.
23. These build on the work that the FSMC and Fire Commission have already been engaged in this year. We will also wish to develop our workplan when we have more visibility around the Minister's priorities. We will need to develop a LGA position around Police and Crime Commissioners' role in the fire and rescue service if that debate continues to develop. Members may also wish to consider the role of fire and rescue services in combined authorities and devolution deals. The LGA's Executive will also be considering what significant policy issues it wishes to see work on, which may have implications for the Board's programme of work in 2015/16. Detailed proposals for consideration will be submitted for the September FSMC meeting and October Fire Commission meeting.

Board Cycle

24. The following dates are proposed for the Fire Commission and Fire Services Management Committee in the 2015/16 cycle:

Fire Commission

11.00am, 20 October 2015

11.00am, 25 May 2016

FSMC

1.00pm, 25 September 2015

11.00am, 11 December 2015

4.00pm, 7 March 2016 (@ Fire Conference, Bristol)

11.00am, 24 June 2016

Financial Implications

25. All work programmes are met from existing budgets and resources.

Appendix A

Fire Service Overview

Summary

1. The fire and rescue service continues to perform successfully in the face of reducing budgets. It has achieved this through innovation and collaboration across the sector and with other blue light services.
 - 1.1. In 2013/14 there were 524,000 incidents, an increase on the previous year (see Figure 1). This increase arises from a higher number of secondary fires in comparison to the previous year which was particularly wet.
 - 1.2. The sector continues to transform, supported by the Fire Transformation Fund, the Transformational Challenge Award and the Police Innovation Fund.
 - 1.3. Funding and consequentially the size of the service, continue to fall, with expenditure down 2.4 per cent between 2013/14 and 2014/15 (see Table 1).

Transformation

2. The Fire Transformation Fund has allocated £75 million to 37 projects, which collectively are projected to save £300 million¹. Research commissioned by Emergency Services Collaboration Working Group has shown that there is no 'one model' for collaboration and that it works on an area by area basis that reflects local need and is dependent on a shared vision between partners at a local level with local political endorsement being a critical factor.
3. Medical co-responding with the Ambulance service is an important element of blue light integration. In 2013/14 there were around 12,000 incidents of co-responding in England. Just nine fire and rescue authorities were responsible for 97 per cent of these incidents.

Statements of assurance

4. Statements of assurance are produced by all fire and rescue authorities and give an indication of the scale of the assurance processes to which fire and rescue authorities are subjected. These indicate that fire and rescue authorities are meeting their financial and operational targets. The National Audit Office is undertaking a study of the financial sustainability of the fire and rescue sector focusing on the extent to which the Department for Communities and Local Government understands the impact of its decisions. This will be an opportunity for the sector to restate the concerns set out in the Fire 100 days document and elsewhere about the importance of the fire and rescue sector being funded on a risk rather than a demand based model.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/fire-services-improvement-fund-public-get-a-win-win-better-local-services-and-at-lower-cost>

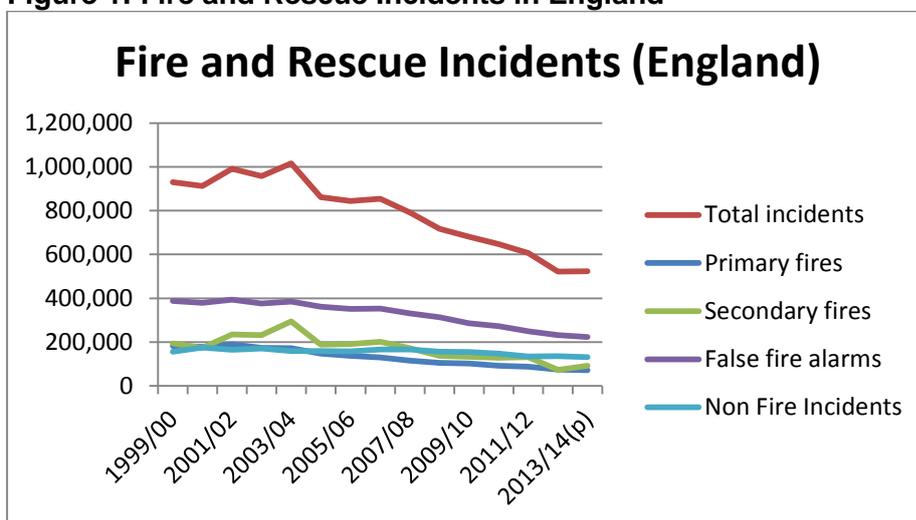
Fire Finance

5. Between 2011/12 and 2015/16 government funding for the fire and rescue service has declined by £318 million.

Table 1: Budgeted revenue expenditure by service 2013-14 and 2014-15

Fire and Rescue	Net Current expenditure	Net Current expenditure	%
	2013-14	2014-15	Change
	2,174	2,123	-2.4

Figure 1: Fire and Rescue Incidents in England



6. Overall fire and rescue incidents are still on a downward trend which is testimony to the success of the prevention work that fire and rescue authorities are undertaking. The fire and rescue service undertakes over 600,000 Home Fire Safety Checks and 67,000 inspections of businesses.

Staff in post

7. Between 2009 and 2014, the number of staff employed by the fire and rescue service has declined by 6,100 (12 per cent). In that time whole time firefighters have declined by 13 per cent, retained firefighters have declined by 7.5 per cent and the number of fire control staff has declined by 20 per cent, as demonstrated by figure 2.

Figure 2: Staff in post 2009-2014

