

Fire Commission update paper

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

The report outlines issues of interest to the Commission 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 Commission update paper

1. On 5 February, the Government announced that the cap for council tax referendum will again be 2%. Last year an exception was made for billing authorities which were in the lowest quartile of council tax in their category (i.e. local authority, fire authority, or Police and Crime Commissioner), which were only required to hold a referendum if they planned an increase over 2% *and* over £5.00. We will therefore be lobbying for this exemption again. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/council-tax-referendum-principles-report-2014-to-2015>

Operational Guidance on Breathing Apparatus

2. On 14 January 2014, the Department published Operational Guidance on Breathing Apparatus. This guidance supports the operational competency of personnel that are required to wear, manage or train others in the use of breathing apparatus. The new guidance is available on the Government's website:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/operational-guidance-breathing-apparatus

Fire Kills

3. Fire Kills has launched a new secondary national campaign to supplement the twice yearly clock change advertising. This new campaign aims to increase the frequency of smoke alarm testing, by encouraging people to test their smoke alarms on the '1st of the Month'. A new online video will be launched just before the first of every month, and will feature amusing and alternative ways in which smoke alarms might be tested. The videos aim to engage social media users and encourage sharing.
4. On 8 January the Government published its annual report on the work undertaken on the Fire Kills campaign. The report includes information on the smoke alarm national advertising campaign and the work of the campaign both nationally and locally. The report can be downloaded from the Government's website:
www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/270014/35817_Fire_Kills_Annual_Report_Accessible2.pdf

Which? Smoke alarm test: Guidance for Fire and Rescue Staff to deal with inquiries from the public

5. CFOA have recently issued guidance to deal with queries regarding the recent Which? Test of 15 different smoke alarms, in which two smoke alarms made by FireAngel, were listed as "Don't buy". Further information will be published on the CFO website shortly.

Flooding

6. Over the last few weeks the UK has been experiencing a number of flooding incidents following bad weather and the coastal surge. On 29 December the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) confirmed that the Bellwin Scheme had

been activated. This scheme enables fire and rescue authorities and councils to get financial assistance depending on local circumstances, and covers certain clearing up costs when local authorities spent more than 0.2% of their calculated annual revenue budget on works that have been reported to DCLG as eligible for grant.

7. On 17 January Brandon Lewis MP announced a further funding package of £6.7 million for local authorities affected by recent flooding and severe weather, building on the Bellwin Scheme funding already available to councils.
8. Half the extra funding is from DCLG, which will be allocated to areas with properties affected by flooding and allocated through normal funding mechanisms. The remainder from the Department for Transport will be available to repair infrastructure damaged by flooding and will be subject to a bidding process.

Fire Sprinklers

9. The first national Fire Sprinkler Week took place in the first week of February, between 3 – 9 February. The aim of the week was to highlight the benefits of sprinklers across the built environment and to encourage the sector to further use the LGA's sprinkler toolkit to help promote the wider use of sprinklers. The LGA wrote to all Chairs and Chief Fire Officers of FRAs to highlight the week.

Fire and Rescue Authorities transformation funds for 2015 to 2016: bidding process

10. In the 2013 spending round the Government announced a £30 million resource funding was available to the fire sector for 2015-16 to support transformational change and deliver savings. A further £45 million capital fire efficiency incentive fund was also announced to further assist fire and rescue authorities in achieving efficient and effective service delivery. The consultation on the bidding process ended on 14 January and the LGA submitted a response.

Government updates to the fire service emergency cover toolkit

11. The Government has recently updated the Fire Service Emergency Cover toolkit, which models the impact of the fire and rescue service's emergency response times on the rate of death of people involved in fires and a range of other incidents including road traffic collisions. Further information about the updates can be found on the Government's website.

Leadership Academies

12. The LGA will be running another Leadership Academy between 10 - 11 September. Members will have the opportunity to develop their skills to ensure they are better able to address challenges and take advantage of opportunities in their authorities. The Leadership Academies also provide a chance to share ideas and network with leading members from other fire and rescue authorities. More information can be found on the fire section of the LGA's website (www.local.gov.uk/fire-and-rescue-services) and you can book a place by emailing grace.collins@local.gov.uk.

LGA's Annual Fire Conference

13. The LGA's next Annual Fire Conference will be taking place at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff between 11 – 12 March. The Conference is an excellent opportunity for fire and Rescue Authorities to join in national discussions on issues like fire finance, blue light integration and community budgets, as well as the chance to hear from the Fire Minister, Brandon Lewis MP, and Lyn Brown MP, the shadow communities and fire minister. The Conference programme and booking details can be found on the LGA's website: http://www.local.gov.uk/events/-/journal_content/56/10180/5427762/EVENT

Incident Recording System Procurement of replacement system

14. The Incident Recording System project team has secured approval from DCLG and Cabinet Office for the procurement documentation to be finalised and released to the market, so that a supplier can be appointed through the Government Digital Services Framework.
15. Discussions on how the Incident Recording System might change can be found on the Incident Recording System Requirements website at the following link: <http://irs-hub.fepd.gov.uk/irs-hub/wiki/Welcome+to+the+new+IRS+Hub>. The Government is encouraging FRAs to join the website and see what is being discussed.

Operational Fire Statistics 2012 -13

16. Towards the end of last year the Government produced its annual statistics about fire and rescue authorities' staff, numbers of injuries to firefighters, fire safety audits of buildings and community fire safety. The full statistical report is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-and-rescue-authorities-operational-statistics-bulletin-for-england-2012-to-2013>

The Firefighters International Service of Remembrance & Wreath Laying Ceremony - Sunday 14 September 2014

17. All Chairs and Chief Fire Officers of Fire and Rescue Authorities are invited to attend the Firefighters International Service of Remembrance & Wreath Laying Ceremony. This will be taking place at St Sepulchre-without-Newgate, in London on Sunday 14 September 2014. Badges of Office and Decorations are to be worn. Further information will be posted on the Firefighters Memorial Trust website: <http://firefightersmemorial.org.uk>

Fire Service College Customer Advisory Board - Councillor John Edwards

18. The last meeting of the Fire Service College Customer Advisory Board (CAB) was held on 8 January. Attendees discussed a wide range of issues including training transformation to meet customer needs, the development of e-learning and opportunities for training partnerships with the wider sector. Other issues discussed were:

- 18.1 Governance issues for customers as the College moves towards an emergency services academy.
 - 18.2 Developing the role of the College in blue-light interoperability training.
 - 18.3 Peripatetic training developments to deliver a 'training closer to home' option.
 - 18.4 A possible College role in developing a single portal access for fire sector sites.
 - 18.5 Capital investment in College accommodation improvements, Breathing Apparatus facility and catering.
 - 18.6 The Firefighter development programme.
 - 18.7 The Future of the heritage collection.
 - 18.8 A College familiarisation programme for fire sector customers.
 - 18.9 CFOA endorsement of training 'products'.
19. The CAB asked for a regular overview of the College financial position to give the sector assurances on viability to come to the meeting in the future. There were also discussions on the arrangements to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the College in May of this year.

Arson Prevention Forum – Councillor Roger Price

20. Councillor Price is the LGA's representative on the Arson Prevention Forum, which is an independent cross sector forum involving organisations from the emergency services, forensic science and insurance. The Forum is currently developing a report looking at ways of reducing the number of incidents involving arson.