

LANCASHIRE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

Meeting to be held on 14 September 2020

REPORTS FROM MEMBERS ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Contact for further information:

Mark Nolan, Clerk and Monitoring Officer - Telephone 01772 866720

Executive Summary

The Chairman has agreed that as appropriate, Members who sit on outside bodies provide a report to the full Authority to feedback on key topics discussed in other forums such as Local Government Association (LGA) meetings.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note and endorse the report.

That Members receive a presentation by the senior pension advisor of the LGA.

Information

County Councillor Nikki Hennessy has attended the following Local Government Association meetings:

Fire Fighters Pensions Scheme Advisory Board (SAB)

- **Fire Fighters Pensions Scheme Advisory Board – 09/01/2020 (rescheduled from 12/12/2019)**
- **Firefighters Pension Scheme Advisory Board 31 March 2020 at 11 am**
- **Firefighters Pension Scheme Advisory Board 11 June 2020 at 11 am**

Background Information

The Firefighters Pension Scheme (England) Scheme Advisory Board (the "Board") is a body set up under Section 7 of the Public Service Pensions Act 2013 and The Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Amendment) (Governance) Regulations 2015.

The purpose of the Board is to be both reactive and proactive to carry out the following functions: provide advice in response to a request from the Secretary of State on the desirability of making changes to this scheme and any connected scheme; provide advice to scheme managers and local pension boards in relation to the effective and efficient administration and management of this scheme and any connected scheme.

It will seek to encourage best practice, increase transparency, and coordinate Technical and standards issues, and build positive relationships with stakeholders and industry bodies – such as the Home Office, the Pensions Regulator and the Government Actuary's Department.

County Councillor Hennessy does have access to confidential papers and conversation.

Key Points Raised

Following the court of appeals ruling on 20th December 2019 there was to be technical discussions and public consultation on the unlawful discrimination identified in the public service pension schemes following the Court of Appeal's rulings on McCloud v Ministry of Justice (Employment judges) and Sargeant v London Fire & Emergency Planning Authority & Others (Firefighters) cases.

The SAB formed a working group to respond and to fully understand the impact of the informal proposals on the stakeholders addressing unjustified age discrimination in transitional arrangements to the 2015 pension schemes.

The Home Office has confirmation from Her Majesty's Treasury that the consultation will be published on Thursday, 16 July.

The Fire Commission

- **Fire Services Commission on 24 January 2020 at 10.30 am**
- **Fire Commission 15 May 2020 at 11 am (CFO phoned in)**

Background Information

The Fire Commission provides a forum for all authorities in voting membership or associate membership of the LGA with a responsibility for fire and rescue to come together to:

- discuss matters of common interest and concern;
- represent the views and concerns of the fire community in relation to fire service modernisation;
- take the lead on day-to-day policy issues affecting fire authorities;
- exchange good practice; and
- Influence the priorities and activities of the LGA.

All fire authorities in full or associate membership of the LGA have the right to representation and voting on this commission in accordance with paragraphs 21-24 of the LGA Governance Framework.

Additional members from fire authorities are appointed as necessary by the political groups to ensure political balance on the Fire Commission.

The Fire Commission is led by the Fire Services Management Committee which reports to the Safer and Stronger Communities Board.

Key Points Raised

The 24th January meeting was a Special meeting on Grenfell inquiry Phase 1 report. In attendance was

- London Fire Brigade Commissioner Andy Roe

- Assistant Commissioner Andy Bell – London Fire Brigade Grenfell Tower Investigation (GTI) and Review Team
- Deputy Mayor for Fire & Resilience, London Assembly Dr Fiona Twycross
- Chair National Fire Chief's Council Roy Wilsher

The independent inquiry into the Grenfell Tower fire under Sir Martin Moore Bick published its Phase 1 report on Thursday 30 October 2019. The report focusses on the night of the fire. It is approximately a thousand pages long. The LGA have responded to the report.

Mr Bell described his role heading up the Grenfell Tower Investigation and Review Team. He said that the London Fire Brigade (LFB) was fully committed to the Duty of Candour by supporting the Inquiry and the criminal investigation by providing documents, information and witnesses. He talked about the scale of the commitment from LFB in providing this support, including providing over 70,000 documents to the GTI, 710 voluntary witness statements to the Police and a statement and interview under caution and the impact on staff wellbeing.

Mr Bell went on to explain the impact that the Grenfell fire had had on LFB staff. He said that in total, 1074 staff attended the incident over a period of 13 days with 139 needing counselling support for anxiety/depression and PTSD.

Mr Bell then spoke about the GTI's 46 recommendations and how LFB was responding to them. He gave an understanding on the impact of criticism that they had to endure and answer. The report directed recommendations at all Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) and LFB.

Mr Roe explained LFB Transformation plan and he talked through a few minutes about the night. He went through the Strategic Framework that had been drawn up in order to transform the culture and working practices within LFB post-Grenfell. He explained that behind each of the 4 strategic pillars ("the best people and the best place to work"; "Seizing the future"; "Delivering excellence"; and "Outward facing") there was a detailed action plan which he was happy to share. Mr Roe added that the key to transformation was good leadership and he acknowledged that lack of leadership training had been a significant failing for LFB.

Mr Roe asked that we ensure we support national colleagues and he commented on the good relationship with FBU and as well as Leadership training.

Dr Twycross talked about how to respond to Grenfell as politicians. She gave credit to Danny Cotton for talking about mental health. She also said we need to address culture. Get diversity a way of thinking. And she agreed we get that challenge from new blood.

Mr Wilsher paid tribute to colleagues in London and his support for the LFB.

Mr Wilsher said that he had written to all the Chief Fire Officers (CFOs) urging them to hold off making any local reforms in their services until the sector had taken stock nationally and decided upon a way forward.

Mr Wilsher said that the sector was still grappling with just how these dangerous materials came to be on so many buildings and cited the recent Cube fire in Manchester as another example of the failings of the building control system.

Mr Wilsher said that the Government's recent announcement that it intends to lower the height threshold for sprinkler requirements in new buildings from 30 meters to 11 metres was a really positive move and a testament to the effective lobbying by the sector.

Mr Wilsher concluded by saying that leadership nationally will be key and that this must include working closely with partners such as the LGA, the Home

The 15th May meeting was held virtually for the first time. The CFO was available and he dialled into the meeting.

The new Fire Minister – Lord Stephen Greenhalgh attended. The Minister set out his three key priorities for the sector; people, professionalism and governance. He explained that he was formally seeking an update on the LGA's response to the four HMICFRS State of Fire & Rescue recommendations. This response has since been provided by the LGA in consultation with the FSMC (Fire Service Management Committee.).

County Councillor Hennessy invited Lord Greenhalgh to come visit Lancashire when it was safe to do so and he did seem genuinely keen to come visit.

Mr Wilsher commented on the FRS response to the COVID-19 pandemic and that the main focus of work for the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) for the last 7 weeks, whilst maintaining as much business as usual, e.g. the Protection Board. A NFCC Gold Group was quickly established to provide overarching support and leadership to the sector through this challenging time and meet regularly to coordinate the response to this pandemic and has met virtually every Tuesday.

Mr Wilsher gave details of the NFCC Strategic intentions that were issued in mid-March and the briefings and documentation that had been produced. These were COVID testing statistics to 30 April 2020 for numbers of FRS personnel tested and the supply chain with any on-going issues.

The Fire Service Management Committee

- **Fire Service Management Committee 24 January 2020 at 1.00 pm**
- **Fire Service Management Committee 9 March 2020 at 4 pm**
- **Fire Service Management Committee 19 June 2020 at 11am**

Background Information

The role of the Fire Services Management Committee (FSMC) is to represent as an LGA body the views and concerns of the fire community ensuring that local circumstances have a voice in the national context. FSMC will take the lead on behalf of the LGA: on the future direction of the fire and rescue service; improvement within the sector; and on all other day-to-day issues (e.g. technical or operational matters) affecting fire authorities.

Board Objectives:

- Advise and assist fire and rescue authorities around increased accountability and transparency in the governance of the fire and rescue service including helping them prepare for the new inspection regime and influencing the development of a new standards body.
- Support the continuing development of the fire and rescue service by helping authorities to increase the flexibility and diversity of the workforce and make the best use of on-call roles.
- Contribute to the LGA's work to improve fire safety following the fire at Grenfell Tower.
- Work to transform service delivery, including greater collaboration across blue-light services, and support the National Fire Chiefs Council programme to improve procurement practices.
- Make the case for risk-based funding of the fire and rescue service

Key Points Raised

Meeting held on 24th January

HMI Zoe Billingham presented the findings of the State of Fire & Rescue Report to the Committee.

Ms Billingham explained report and was based on inspections carried out between June 2018 and August 2019. She detailed that only 16 services had been graded as 'good' for all 3 pillars with the 'effectiveness' pillar being the strongest for most services and the 'people' pillar the weakest. Ms Billingham added that for the next round of inspections, there would be a greater focus on the 'efficiency' pillar.

The good practice that they had found - in particular, strong response to emergencies and good collaboration between services. The areas where services needed to improve such as compliance with fire safety regulations, workforce diversity and a toxic culture in some. There were some serious barriers to change faced by services.

The reports 4 recommendations – (i) Home Office to define the role of Fire & Rescue Services; (ii) Home Office, LGA and NFCC to consider reforming pay negotiation machinery; (iii) Home Office to consider legislating to give Chief Fire Officers operational independence; (iv) NFCC and LGA to produce a code of ethics for Fire & Rescue Services.

Members agreed that it would be beneficial to have a wider airing of the report's recommendations at the LGA Fire Conference in March.

The comprehensive spending review was on the agenda and Climate change which was brought to the Fire Conference in March.

Meeting 9th March

Emergency Services Mobile Communications Project (ESMCP)

Ian Taylor, Senior User and Business Change Lead for the National Fire Chiefs Council introduce his report.

Mr Taylor explained that the Emergency Services Network (ESN), the product of ESMCP, would replace the existing Airwave service as the next generation of communications for the emergency services in Great Britain, providing secure and resilient mobile broadband capability with near universal coverage across the country. He said that ESMCP was a cross-Government Programme led by the Home Office. He added that governance arrangements were in place locally and were predominantly officer-led but there was a vacancy on the Fire Customer Group for two LGA members.

Mr Taylor also said that two years ago, the programme was in a state of flux but, after a reset, it was now back on track with a revised Full Business Case due out for consultation in Spring 2020. It was hoped that the full roll out of ESN would take place by 2024.

County Durham and Darlington FRS became the first users of an ESN service in July 2019 and other FRS's were keen to take early capability.

Mr Taylor reported that £21.6 million of Local Transition Resource Funding had recently been agreed with the Home Office for implementation of ESN contingent upon greater levels of assurance on spend.

Mr Taylor said that work was still being done on the Airwave system to ensure that it remained working up until the time of switch over.

Mr Taylor acknowledged that fire and rescue authorities had concerns about potential additional costs of introducing ESN due to the loss of the 60 per cent Government grant funding they currently received for Airwave. He assured members that the NFCC was working on quantifying these costs and potential business benefits.

Inclusion and Diversity

In October 2019, members agreed to make Inclusion one of the three main priorities for the year. The HMICFRS had identified a range of problems around diversity and inclusion in their first tranche of inspections and highlighted the fact 25 services received 'Requires Improvement' judgements and two were graded 'Inadequate' in the 'People' pillar.

The LGA had set targets for diversity in recruitment and retention 2 years ago in its Fire Vision but latest Home Office workforce statistics showed that much work still remained to be done if the targets were to be met.

A key piece of work was being done by the LGA to establish a Diversity and Inclusion Champions' Network which met for the first time in January. The aim of the network was to disseminate good practice and to drive change in FRS's locally and the LGA was encouraging all FRA's to appoint a Champion.

The LGA is continuing to work with its key partners on improving inclusion and diversity, in particular the NFCC through their People Programme and via the National Joint Council-led Inclusive Fire Service Group (IFSG).

The Champions' Network would discuss possible future training resources for members.

The Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR). It would be a 3 or 4 year financial settlement and so it was vital that the Fire & Rescue Service sector was able to put up a good case to the Treasury to increase funding.

Meeting 19th June

The Minister for Building Safety, Fire & Communities – Lord Stephen Greenhalgh, attended.

The Minister said that he had written to Chairs of FRAs, CFOs and other stakeholders (including the LGA) requesting a formal response to the State of Fire & Rescue recommendations and was awaiting these with interest.

The Minister then outlined his 3 priorities for positive change in the fire and rescue sector:

1. Professionalism – he stated that he wanted to see the changes that had taken place in policing 6 years ago to be introduced in the fire & rescue sector through the Executive Leadership Programme.
2. People – lots of different areas of expertise were needed in the sector, particularly in order to adopt best practice on prevention. Therefore, services needed to think about the talents of individual employees and make best use of them.
3. Governance – he stated that police governance reform had worked well, particularly in London. Reform of fire and rescue governance needed to learn from the police model but not lose local government expertise. He added that better use needed to be made of the fire estate.

The Minister finished by emphasising the importance of joining up reform of fire and building safety and his job role and remit reflected that.

Peter Baker – Director - Building Safety and Construction at the Health & Safety Executive gave a presentation.

Mr Baker outlined the HSE's role in the transition to the new building safety regime and what the future role of Fire & Rescue Services and their governing bodies would be.

Mr Baker explained that the detail of the new system would be contained within a new Building Safety Bill which would be laid before Parliament in draft form before the summer recess with the aim of receiving Royal Assent by the middle of 2021.

Covid-19 – an NFCC Perspective

Roy Wilsher, NFCC Chair

Roy highlighted several points from the report to members:

- The structure put in place by the NFCC with a gold group providing overarching support and leadership to the sector during the crisis had worked very well.
- The fact that it had been a national approach, with the tri-partite agreement, was very important.
- The NFCC had linked in effectively with other professional organisations such as the National Police Chief's Council and Public Health England.
- Daily calls were taking place with key Home Office officials.
- NFCC secured early recognition of all Fire and Rescue Staff as 'key workers' to enable access to school places and allow travel to work where necessary.
- Workforce absence had remained remarkably low at 5.4%.
- The NFCC was now looking at the transition to recovery and returning to business as usual but also being prepared for a possible second wave.

Financial Implications

None

Sustainability or Environmental Impact

None

Equality and Diversity Implications

None

Human Resource Implications

None

Business Risk Implications

None

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact
None		
Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate:		