

LANCASHIRE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

Meeting to be held on 28 June 2021

REPORTS FROM MEMBERS ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Contact for further information:

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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 meetings.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note and endorse the report.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion is a standard agenda item of the Combined Fire Authority in order for learning to be shared with all authority members.

Information

County Councillor Nikki Hennessy has attended the following Local Government Association meetings, is privy to confidential conversations and would like to draw Members' attention to the following:

Fire Services Management Committee; Friday, 11th December, 2020

Key points raised

Covid-19 - lessons learned

Phil Garrigan, CFO Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service, introduced the report.

July 2020 the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) COVID-19 Committee had commissioned independent research to establish how Fire and Rescue Services (FRS's) had responded to the pandemic between March and September 2020 to draw out key learning points. The research had involved interviews with 47 Chief Fire Officers, 3 trade unions, the LGA, NFCC, Home Office and the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives (AAACE.)

The themes that had emerged from the research and detailed in the report. These were: Planning & the Local Resilience Forum, Leadership, Operations,

Fire Protection, Fire Prevention, Working from home, Communications, Data, Role of the NFCC and the Tripartite Agreement.

The key learning points and recommendations from the research;

- The relationship FRS's have with their Local Resilience Forums.
- Arrangements for coordinating a national response to a future nationally significant event.
- The report's recommendations would be included in the refresh of the Fit for the Future visioning document.

Comments;

- Pride was expressed in the manner in which the fire sector stepped up during the pandemic and delivered support for the relief effort. It hadn't been a straightforward process but lots of aspects of it had worked well.

Equality and Diversity in the Fire & Rescue Sector

Fiona Twycross, Fire Service Management Committee's (FSMC) Equality & Diversity Champion, introduced the report.

Ms Twycross explained that improving equality and diversity was a key focus for the LGA's Fire Vision 2024 which set ambitious targets, including that 30% of new firefighter recruits should be female and that FRS staff should reflect the ethnic diversity of the communities they served. It was also important that this diversity was reflected at senior levels. Ms Twycross added that the first cycle of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspections of FRS's during 2019/20 had highlighted that significant issues remained around diversity and inclusion in the sector.

Ms Twycross reminded members that in late 2019, the LGA established the Fire Diversity and Inclusion Champions Network to bring together FRA members with responsibility for diversity and inclusion to try and address some of HMICFRS's criticisms.

Cllr Knox added that it was important for all FRA Chairs to get EDI on their meeting agendas on a regular basis in order for learning to be shared with all authority members.

Comments:

- There was strong support for the LGA's work on EDI and the targets in Fire Vision 2024.
- Achievability for FRS's in more rural areas was queried.

- It was important to share best practice so all FRS's could get up to this standard.
- Neurodiversity - a session on neurodiversity at a future meeting of the Champions Network.

LGA Fire Conference 2021

The decision had been taken to hold this year's conference as an online event due to the ongoing Covid restrictions. It would take place between 1-4 March with 4 plenary sessions held as webinars during the mornings and interactive sessions in the afternoons. Options were being explored for holding exhibitions on digital platforms. The sessions would be free of charge for LGA members with non-members being charged £99 per session.

Building Safety Bill

Charles Loft, Senior Adviser
Peter Baker, Director of Building Safety & Construction at the Health & Safety Executive (HSE)

The Building Safety Bill, which will introduce a stringent new regime for higher risk buildings, would be starting its legislative journey through Parliament early in 2021. A key part of the Bill is the establishment of a new Building Safety Regulator (BSR) in the HSE.

Mr Baker explained the journey that had led to the creation of a new BSR from the Grenfell Tower tragedy and subsequent Inquiry to the Hackitt review and the Building Safety Bill. The Housing, Communities & Local Government Select Committee had recently published its pre-legislative scrutiny report on the draft Bill and MHCLG was currently considering the recommendations.

Comments:

- The new legislation was considered pivotal to strengthening regulation and preventing any more disastrous fires such as at Grenfell Tower. The ongoing Inquiry was showing that the current system was completely inadequate.
- FRAs will need to assess what the resource implications would be for them from the new regime. This will need to tie in with the LGA/NFCC work around the Spending Review.
- The expectations on FRS's around enforcement will increase significantly under the new regime. This behaviour change will be challenging for services that have traditionally taken a risk-averse approach, and training will therefore be crucial.

Workforce update

A policy decision by HM Treasury on its preferred choice for the age discrimination remedy was expected in early to mid-January 2021. The LGA had been part of the Treasury discussion groups and had made its preferences clear. A stakeholder group of FRA scheme manager representatives was being set up in order to have oversight of the implementation plans and progress of the remedy. There was a request for an FSMC member to sit on the group, which would also include representation from NFCC and senior fire officer leads in HR and Finance.

The Tripartite Agreement was reported that for a number of reasons it had not been possible to renew the agreement on 19 November 2020. Instead, a new agreement in relation to Covid-19 support work had been reached within the NJC, building on the Tripartite Agreement. This would be an interim, 1 month agreement (to expire on 11 January 2021) to allow time for an alternative approach to isolation to be identified in respect of some of the additional work activities.

The NJC had also issued a statement of intent around providing support for vaccination rollout.

Comments:

- Cllr Nick Chard volunteered to represent FSMC on the new stakeholder pensions group, to which members agreed
- In relation to the Tripartite Agreement, members felt it was important that the prime focus should be on what the sector could do to help local communities through the pandemic.

National Fire Chiefs Council Update

Nick Collins, NFCC, introduced the update.

Mr Collins highlighted the importance of LGA engagement in the NFCC's work and agreed to speak to the Chair, Cllr Chard and Cllr Healey about the future of the RDS (On-Call) Steering Group.

Mr Collins reported that the Fit for the Future consultation had now concluded, and conversations were taking place with the National Employers and the LGA about the next steps.

Fire Standards Board Update

Cllr Nick Chard and Nick Collins, NFCC, introduced the update.

Cllr Chard reported that feedback from the consultation on the Core Code of Ethics Standard was being considered by the Board. The LGA and NFCC consultation on the Core Code itself had been run at the same time. It was now expected that the Standard would be approved in March 2021 following finalisation of the Core Code.

On the Leadership standard, Cllr Chard said that he had raised the issue of political awareness of officers moving into senior management roles and how this could be improved.

Mr Collins said that the developing standards would be a useful tool for FRAs to use for improvement work within their services.

Fire Commission Friday 26 March 2021 2.00 pm

Minister for Building Safety & Communities, Lord Greenhalgh attended.

Minister was keen to listen to all issues raised about the PCC involvement of Fire Authorities.

Fire Service Management Committee Friday 25th May 11am

This meeting was attended by Cllr. Jane Hugo as substitute member.

Building safety

Information and discussion about the Providence Wharf fire.

Andy Roe explained that the fire authority need more powers to prevent these situations from happening. He also said more emphasis was needed by government on the housing of vulnerable people as in the case of Grenfell 78% of the residents didn't have English as their first language.

Comments:

The question of planning enforcement and building control
How effective are we at ensuring buildings are implementing the safety measures?

Equality, diversity and inclusion

A presentation - The slides featured “what good looks like” and members urged to send examples of good practice to Rachael.aldridge@local.gov.uk

Member induction

There will be white paper workshops in July and two more on-line for the Fire Leadership Essentials.

Mobile communications

70% of the work is done, the hardest 30% that is yet to do.

Workforce report

Core code of ethics was completed and a recent public launch.
A useful new website has been launched for fire employees to check their pensions.

NFCC update

Justin Johnston is a new vice chair along with Phil Garrigan from Merseyside.

Fire Standards progress report

Check local approach is aligned to the Core Code.

FSMC update

No exact date for the White paper. Should be summer with 12 weeks for consultation.

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:		