

Lancashire Combined Fire Authority

Meeting to be held on 17 February 2025

Reports from Members on Outside Bodies

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Executive Summary

The full Authority receive appropriate reports from Members who sit on outside bodies to provide feedback on key topics discussed in other forums such as Local Government Association (LGA) meetings. The Authority's Chair and other members have attended several meetings of noteworthy relevance for the Authority to consider when discharging its functions.

Recommendation

The Authority is asked to note the report for information.

Information

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

Fire Services Management Committee (FSMC)

- Friday 19 May 2023

On-call Fire Fighters presentation received from Deputy Chief Steve Healey.

Wildfires and Climate change - Given the critical importance of this issue for Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs), both operationally and financially, it was suggested that a regular update be brought to every Fire Services Management Committee (FSMC) meeting.

Culture and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICRFS) spotlight report on culture and values in the fire and rescue service. Draft Culture action plan by the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) was presented.

- Friday 7 July 2023

Culture - Feedback on the recent Culture in the Fire and Rescue Service conference held at 18 Smith Square on 27 June. Feedback from the conference had been positive with a range of suggestions for future events and training.

Spending Review and finance update - The proposed ask was for government grant increases in line with Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation (as of September 2023) and band D precept flexibility of £5 or 3%. The evidence base was currently being strengthened by a survey of Chief Fire Officers (CFOs) on non-pay inflationary pressures.

Building Safety update - The issue of recruiting and retaining building safety inspectors to support the new building safety regime was raised. An update on Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) was requested. Home Office, confirmed that the PEEP proposals, and the Fire Reform White Paper response, were both currently in the advanced stages of cross-Government clearance with a view to release either before, or shortly after recess. The information on Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) was welcomed.

- Monday 11 March 2024 Bristol Fire Conference

The Planning Process and Fire – Members were reminded that the research being presented resulted from concerns previously expressed that the voice of fire and rescue was not being sufficiently heard within the planning process, particularly considering the increased risks from impacts of climate change and recent advances in technology to try and mitigate these risks.

Fit for the Future update - The 3 partners, Local Government Association (LGA), NFCC and National Employers had agreed that a light touch review of Fit for the Future be carried out over the coming months given recent changes in the policy environment and lobbying efforts.

- Friday 19 July 2024

New Government Priorities – Officers spoke on the commitments of the Labour Government in their manifesto as well as the asks of the Fire Brigades Union of the new Government. Bills that came out of the King's Speech, such as the Employments Rights Bill, the English Devolution Bill, the Product Safety and Metrology Bill, the Crime and Policing Bill and the Planning and Infrastructure Bill. Discussion on future priorities with reference to the King's Speech which outlined the new Government's priority bills. Members were asked to comment on the proposal for the priorities to remain the same for the next Board cycle, namely people and culture, professionalism (encompassing finance, inspection, fire standards and building safety,) and governance, climate change and sector-led improvement. The Chair outlined the Board's focus so far on culture, and the drive of members to make change, however there was acknowledgement that culture takes a long time to change. There was a request for the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) manifesto to be discussed. There was disappointment that the Fire and Police Minister role remained combined. It was highlighted that alongside the NFCC, National Employers, the LGA sent a letter to the Minister regarding Fit for the Future and highlighted the LGA were involved in the new national body. The LGA would also be writing separately from the FSMC and LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board on key issues for both structures. Chair of the NFCC, reiterated the support for re-establishing a national advisory body, seeking clarity on a standards body and how that will focus on emerging energy technologies.

Role of the Fire and Rescue Service in Planning - There were concerns FRAs are not being consulted regarding new technology. It was raised that there should be a reference to Section 186 regarding funding considering some of the issues will create a burden on resources. A member highlighted the need to build in protections for the proposed planning changes. There was concern over infrastructure and safety, particularly regarding storage for e-bikes and e-scooters. The fundamental importance of planning for future service delivery and community safety was emphasised, there is a

need to monitor critical changes with limited staff and resources rather than being involved with every planning application.

- Friday 11 October 2024

Priorities for the year ahead - Capital needed to be increased from central government if fire service workplaces were to be updated in line with changing workforces. A proposed new College of Fire and Rescue would need specific funding. Recommended that the guidance that international research could offer UK fire services was included more in FSMC discussions. There was agreement that sector led improvement was a key priority. A member questioned if this would include peer-to-peer support, particularly on governance. The Home Affairs Select Committee Inquiry into Culture in Fire and Rescue Services was discussed. Committee discussed what its focus on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) should be going forward. If national standards for fire were introduced, these would need to be properly funded for enforcement.

Grenfell report - Further funding would be required from the Government to achieve these recommendations. The LGA should be recognised as an organisation that had pushed PEEPs. Recruitment in fire services for inspectors and those with fire engineering skills remained a challenge. Members agreed to add a point into this paper that there should be work with the Safer, Stronger Communities Board on areas of joint interest. Members asked officers to reflect on how this could be done in an effective way.

Governance support, including IMPROVES tool - There should be more opportunities for online training for fire authority members. Inspectors looking at governance structures in fire authorities might not have experience in this area, so members needed to work alongside the inspectorate as governance professionals.

Fire Service Management Committee

Friday 9 June 2023

Topics that have come through the FSMC are discussed in the committee with the wider audience of the fire authorities and officers.

CC David O'Toole and CC John Shedwick were also in attendance.

Business risk

None.

Sustainability or Environmental Impact

None.

Equality and Diversity Implications

Involving EDI as a priority within discussions remains key, following last year's protests and disorder and concerns about misinformation on social media platforms.

Data Protection (GDPR)

N/A.

HR implications

None.

Financial implications

None.

Legal Implications

None at present. The Employments Rights Bill, the English Devolution Bill, the Product Safety and Metrology Bill, the Crime and Policing Bill and the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, whilst referred to in the King's Speech, await either full Royal assent or enacting secondary legislation, with aspects of the Employment Rights Bill not being introduced until late 2026, at the earliest. The Authority's clerk will keep a watching brief on the development of this legislation and will report back as necessary or when required.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**List of background papers**

Paper: papers referred to herein, above.

Date: various

Contact: n/a

Reason for inclusion in Part 2 if appropriate: N/A