

MEMBER FEEDBACK FROM CONFERENCE/SEMINAR/FIRE RELATED EVENT

Attendees	Cllr Hodgson, DCFO Bage
Event	Local Government Association (LGA) Fire Conference: Gateshead
Date	07 - 08 March
Overview of event	
Annual LGA Fire conference with a Ministerial address from Brandon Lewis MP and a range of keynote sessions covering a range of topics such as: workforce reform; partnership working with health; professionals standards body; governance; inspection.	
TOPIC	Chairs welcome
Speaker	Organisation
Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Local Government Association
<p>Talked of major change starting with move to Home Office and he thinks this is a good thing for the fire service. He thanked Dan Greaves for his work, David Lamberti will be taking over from Dan Greaves but it is a combined Police / Fire role. Talked of PCC taking over fire but the need for a fully consulted business case has to be produced, he is working with the HO on how disputed business cases will be resolved; working on it being an independent panel involving fire, police LA and government representatives. Said it should only be approved if it improves quality and is agreed at a local level and that has always been the LGA view. LGA of the opinion that there should remain a national body for terms and conditions although accepting there needs to be some change of NJC.</p>	
Implications for Service	
The Service had several conversations and shared correspondence with Dan Greaves and it will try and form a relationship with David Lamberti to ensure the opinions of this Service are heard at the Home Office.	
TOPIC	Workforce reform: National Joint Council (NJC) and Thomas Review
Speakers	Organisation
Cllr Nick Chard Matt Wrack (FBU)	Chair of the employers side of NJC Secretary of the employees side of NJC
<p>Nick Chard – posed the question is the NJC a barrier to reform or an enabler? NJC just one part of the reform programme. He believed that reform is being called for at all levels – Government to employees. Why reform? – he believed that the sector was too slow to change and respond to change, providing the examples of issues with emergency medical response (EMR) trial and fire service response to marauding terrorist fire arms attack (MTFA). He also believes the NJC needs to be more transparent for the audience it is communicating with.</p> <p>Explained how the NJC is starting to use a workshop process to progress issues more quickly with the first one being held later that week to look at the EMR trial.</p> <p>He acknowledged the perception that the 'Grey Book' and NJC are a barrier to change; to counter this they are to produce a document – 'What has the NJC done for us?'</p>	

this will set out the good work of the NJC. Irrespective of good work done he made it clear that there needs to be change or it will be forced by the government. His view of reform was to take what he believed employers want: eg a national pay bargaining body that sets national pay for firefighters but with flexibility for local needs and agreements. This he stated would provide local determination within a clear national framework.

He recognised that the employers are the fire authorities but he believed there needs to be more involvement between LGA and officers through the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC).

Regarding progress of change; NJC is acutely aware of the government's desire for change 'at pace' and in response NJC have had 3 task and finish group meetings in January and February to look at change but the plan is for evolution not revolution.

He stated that it was not the intention to change terms and conditions of firefighters but that the 'Grey Book' should be slimmed down to one that provides a clear framework with scope for local variances.

Matt Wrack – he explained how in a survey about the NJC, 10,000 FBU members responded to say that the NJC should be retained as the negotiating body.

He was defensive of the NJC in terms of it being a blocker to EMR – employers side have never asked for a discussion on EMR since 2005 so how can it be a blocker on EMR when they have not pursued it. He believed the current trials have been successful but NJC shouldn't be focussed on doing this quickly but doing it properly. He highlighted issues from the report, such as training, call management policies, mental health saying these need addressing before rushing ahead.

With regard to MTFA; he stated there were still issues to be tackled as he does not think the government have answered the FBU questions on in relation to insurance / compensation for firefighters involved in this work.

He stated what the FBU want from reform. Firstly he thinks pay should be national pay along with all other terms and conditions. He believes it would be wrong to have a wide and differing range of conditions of service across the country when firefighters work together across county boundaries doing the same job side by side.

He talked about the government's drive for equality, pointed out that the 'Grey Book' covers maternity; yet it is not covered in the proposed slimmed down version.

Believes current arrangements are working well – issue is worse conditions for firefighters.

Implications for Service

Any alterations to the Grey Book will impact on the Service although members should note that changing the grey Book does not mean the existing contracts of firefighters change. If changes to what national pay covers and what pay is negotiated locally do come into force the internal mechanisms for doing this will need to be developed, which would put additional demand on the Services limited resources.

TOPIC	Ministerial address
Speakers	Organisation
Brandon Lewis MP	Minister for Policing and Fire Service, Home Office
<p>By video link</p> <p>He could not make the conference so a pre-recorded video was shown. He stated he wants faster and further reform to achieve efficiencies and maximise collaboration with 2017 to be the big year for reform in the fire and rescue service. He talked about how the public hold the fire and rescue service in high regard and the Thomas review recognised the fact that the workforce is proud of what it does although not everyone who works in it were treated fairly, highlighting the Thomas review which states bullying and harassment is an issue in FRS; Services need to support a culture where this is challenged and stamped out. Therefore, he stated that the sector needs a modern diverse workforce with a positive experience for all who work in it, working to more flexible terms and conditions. He highlighted how the retirement profile will give opportunity to improve diversity; stating that the current lack of diversity in the fire and rescue service was unacceptable. He talked of London's bold aim of increasing the number of women by 7-18%. The under-representation of the BME community was an area he wants Services to address.</p> <p>He sees the CFOA workforce strategy (currently in draft) as key to the reform and he wants to see individual Service strategies to have core elements of this in their own strategies.</p> <p>He believes the public want to see a more professional fire service; therefore it needs talent management to ensure the right managers receive development so they can shape the FRS of the future.</p> <p>He stated that he is happy with the task and finish group working on reform of Grey book and the direction it is taking but it must not stall now. He was also encouraged on what he has seen with FRS working in health agenda. But he also stated that the FRS cannot use its expanding role as the only rationale for not looking at staff efficiencies and new ways of working to increase performance.</p> <p>With regard to professional standards he stated there is still no decision on where the standards body will be based or how it will function; but that the fire community will be fully consulted before any decision is made.</p> <p>He stated that there will be a full public consultation this summer on the National Framework with the revised framework being introduced by the end of the year.</p>	
Implications for Service	
<p>The diversity issue has been difficult for the Service to address due to the wholetime recruitment phase; however, the recent apprenticeship recruitment has resulted in a 50% male, 50% female starters. With the wholetime recruitment the figure is 20% female (subject to medicals).</p> <p>With regard the Workforce strategy; the Service has considered this in its own Workforce development Strategy which is due to be published.</p>	

TOPIC	Professional standards body
Speakers	Organisation
Mark Hardingham Nerys Thomas	Chief fire officer (CFO) Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Head of Knowledge, Research and Practice College of Policing
<p>Mark Hardingham – explained wants to ensure that any standards that are established work and are as equally relevant for a small FRS with large RDS workforce as they were for London. He described a tripartite arrangement between the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC); the Inspectorate and the Professional Standards Body (PSB).</p> <p>He described the role of the PSB as aimed at two levels; individual standards and organisational standards incorporating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professionalising a professional service • Existing and new standards • Cradle to grave • Promote consistency in design and application • Support inspectorate – sector improvement • Clear professional pathways • High standards of public service delivery • Accountability and integrity <p>He stated the business case on how this will look will go to the Minister in September this year.</p> <p>He highlighted how the National Operational Guidance programme are already producing guidance so the sector is not starting from scratch when developing a standards programme</p> <p>Nerys Thomas – stated that at the outset the fire service need to ensure it is clear on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are we trying to achieve • Who owns the standards • If recommending a standard how do we know it's right practice <p>She described how they ensure standards are adopted and consistency of implementation across Police forces by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies (HMIC) inspecting against standards and then providing feedback on how guidance is implemented.</p> <p>An issue was raised from the audience that when previous standards were removed it was said that they stifle innovation. Concern is that the standards could be the lowest common denominator and Services become satisfied that they are hitting that level as that is what the Inspectorate will measure and as a result the Service loses the drive to introduce innovative practice. Nerys Thomas stated that good performance comes out of good standards so if a Police force is performing well and doing things in a different way that can become the basis of a new standard.</p>	
Implications for Service	
<p>The Service will through working groups etc try and influence standards where possible and ensure that when published they are incorporated into revised Service documentation where appropriate.</p>	

TOPIC	Emergency service collaboration
Speaker	Organisation
C. Supt Steve Neill	Operations department, Northumbria Police
<p>Steve Neill – covered off the collaboration framework between Northumbria Police, Tyne and Wear FRS and Northumberland FRS. With regard to governance this included a strategic and delivery group; the result was a number of shared stations where the Police had moved into fire stations. There was also collaboration from an operational perspective with sharing of equipment and staff.</p>	
Implications for Service	
<p>This Service are undertaking many of the collaboration projects discussed by Northumberland. The governance structure in place is a mirror of that between this Authority, Durham Constabulary and Durham’s Police Crime and Victims Commissioner.</p>	
TOPIC	Governance and devolution
Speakers	Organisation
Tony Lloyd Cllr David Fuller Roger Hirst	Interim Mayor and Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), Greater Manchester Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority PCC, Essex
<p>Tony Lloyd - after elections in May the Mayor will have total responsibility for fire but can delegate to a committee or the Chief Fire Officer. The Mayor can choose whether to have a fire committee or not, but the recommendation is that it will have one with representation from across Greater Manchester (GM). The Home Office proposal is for between 0-10 members, but he stated he felt this was not acceptable so they have agreed to 15 members which is more reflective of the political balance in (GM). Each LA nominates 2 members and from the 20 members the Mayor will choose 15.</p> <p>David Fuller - discussed a review of Hampshire’s Fire Authority which resulted in 2 options 18 members + PCC or 10+ PCC. Consultation was carried out and it was agreed to move from current 25 members down to 10 members + PCC with the PCC having equal voting rights. The request to change the combination order is now with the Home Office for approval.</p> <p>He believes the reduced numbers will result in members having more involvement with the FRS so members will become more valuable and knowledgeable about the Service and they will have more accountability.</p> <p>Roger Hirst – acknowledged he has a lot of work to do to win Essex fire and the wider fire sector over to the idea of a PCC running fire. He saw it as a natural progression in the governance arrangements as Essex police and Fire areas are coterminous.</p> <p>He has engaged PA consulting – looking at potential benefits of efficiency and effectiveness looking at up to £30.8m of efficiencies over a 10 year period if he takes over governance of the FRS. Single employer is harder to implement and more expensive so single governance came out as best option. £30.8m is for single employer and £23m for single governance but PA came up with figure of £3m if he just had voting rights on FA, but he did not provide detail of how this would be achieved. He highlighted that there are transformation plans for Police and Fire already in place that run up to 2020, so real benefits will come after that period.</p>	

Essex Fire Authority voted unanimously to go ahead with a consultation which began on 10 Feb 2017 and will run until the 10 May 2017. So far there have only been 770 responses in an area with a population of over 1.5m.

Dependant on the outcome of the consultation there is the potential to submit a business case to Home Secretary in late May 2017 with the aim to form a single governance arrangement in October 2017. If constituent authorities don't agree or there are large scale modifications then it is likely to be 1st April 2018 before the change could occur.

He will be scrutinised by Police Crime and Fire panel – members from elected members from the authorities – 17 members instead of 25 from current Fire Authority.

Implications for Service

Internal audit have recently undertaken an audit of the efficiency of the Fire Authority and members will receive a full brief on this at the next Fire Authority meeting.

TOPIC	Improving Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
Speakers	Organisation
Janet Hills	National Black Police Association
Danny Cotton	Commissioner, London Fire Brigade
Rebecca Bryant	CFO Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service

Janet Hills – provided a perspective on E and D from her experience of 25 years as a frontline police officer.

Met has highest proportion 12.6% from African / Asian background 40% in recent recruitment. Her view was that organisations did not understand what diversity looks like; having a panel with only females and her as the only black member looks like from an outsider view that the conference has ticked 2 boxes on diversity. Her challenge to the conference was why isn't a man championing diversity?

She stated that having the look of diversity is not enough you have to be able to feel it with minorities involved in decision making all the time.

Danny Cotton - stated that Services need to offer bold challenge as she acknowledged London Fire Brigade with 13% BME and 7% women in the workforce was not representing London population.

She felt where FRSs needed to improve was to address the challenges on a watch. Services need to make a bold statement; hers was to recruit 18% female – she acknowledged that would be very challenging in a small service. She says encouraging people is not dumbing down standards because we need to recruit the best people and we are missing them from the female and BME communities

Rebecca Bryant – stated Services need recruitment, retention and progression packages and ask the question why aren't we the employer of choice?

- Is it the perception that you have to be strong?
- Is it we don't promote an inclusive culture?
- Is it the lack of family friendly working shifts?
- Is it the super hero image?

She felt we need a national research study to find out why we are not an employer of choice. But she said we can help ourselves: ie positive action only seems to be done when recruitment in place, it should be all year round and should be in all engagement with staff

Implications for Service

As detailed in a section above the Service's two recent recruitment campaigns have provided us with the opportunity to increase the workforce diversity. The Service through its Workforce Development Strategy will explore how positive action can become more mainstreamed rather than purely a recruitment activity.

TOPIC	Inspection
Speakers	Organisation
Chloe Dunnett	Head, Fire strategy and Reform Unit, Home Office

Chloe Dunnett – she stated the government is committed to first inspection later this year. Hope to announce who will do it shortly. It is proposed to be modelled on the HMI approach.

3 key initial tasks

- Need to recruit staff for inspectorate – fire sector expertise. Encourage talented officers to join inspectorate
- Inspectorate programme
- Inspection framework – what good looks like and what they will be inspected against

Snap inspections are an option but only in special circumstances

It will look at what good is; the inspectorate will work with the standards body. The Inspector inspects against standards; standards body takes account of inspection and sets new standards. Although she did acknowledge formal agreed standards will not be in place for first inspections.

Key points of the inspection:

- Be proportionate and risk based and not burdensome on Services. Exceptional or good will maybe only inspected every 2 years;
- Improvement in performance promoted and best practice shared;
- Inspection reports published in full and open for public;
- Findings should be easily understood;
- Outstanding, good, require improvement, inadequate – likely to be similar.

Peer review could focus on those who received a poor inspection rating

As to who will do the inspection, what exactly will be inspected and when still uncertain but next couple of weeks hopefully more will be known.

Implications for Service

The speaker did not provide any further information to what was already known. The Service is doing work in preparation of the inspectorate based on the information already provided and also information from Durham Constabulary. This work will continually develop as more information becomes available.