



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority

FIRE FUTURES PROJECT

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Agenda Item No:

Date: 17 September 2010

Purpose of Report:

To update Members on the current fire futures project being undertaken by Communities and Local Government (CLG) and the Fire Service Sector.

CONTACT OFFICER

Name : Frank Swann
Chief Fire Officer

Tel : (0115) 967 0880

Email : frank.swann@notts-fire.gov.uk

Media Enquiries Contact : Elisabeth Reeson
(0115) 967 5889 elisabeth.reeson@notts-fire.gov.uk

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In his speech to the Fire Conference in Harrogate on 29 June 2010, Fire Minister Bob Neill MP, set out the Government's vision to reset the relationship between central and local government so that people would feel more connected to and have a real say over what happens within their communities. He also highlighted the need for all public services to do more, for less.
- 1.2 In order to drive forward in consideration of these issues in the context of the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS), he proposed that there should be a strategic review engaging a wide cross-section of partners within the sector.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 Following on from his announcement, CLG hosted a workshop on Wednesday 28 July 2010 which was attended by both the Chair of the Fire Authority and the Chief Fire Officer. Although notice was short (one week) both the Chief and Chair felt it important for the Service to be represented and re-arranged diary commitments.
- 2.2 At the event the minister opened by making some clear statements with regard to the sector and to current governance of the Service. Most notable were the following in relation to the National Framework:
 - 2.2.1 There is no longer an expectation from Government that Regional Management Boards (RMBs) will continue. RMBs would be a voluntary issue that will not be enforced through the Framework;
 - 2.2.2 The department (CLG) would no longer be monitoring performance against equality and diversity targets or recruitment;
 - 2.2.3 CLG would no longer give direction on recruitment and development. This would be the responsibility of the sector and individual FRSs;
 - 2.2.4 Government would continue to support the principles of Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) and it would be for local Fire Authorities to implement effective IRMPs.
- 2.3 In addition to the above, the Minister then kicked off a workshop to determine and build upon the points he originally raised in his speech in Harrogate.
- 2.4 Following on from the workshop, a broad terms of reference was agreed for ministers and was circulated to Chief Fire Officers on 2 August 2010 (Appendix A). In a covering letter the "Fire Futures" project director confirmed CLG's expectations were:

- to give back local power;
- remove barriers and burdens;
- “get off our backs”;
- against a backdrop of tight finances think more cleverly and imaginatively;
- hold a short, sharp view.

2.5 For their part, CLG were to engage by:

- being a facilitator and not a director;
- thinking to be by the Service and not CLG;
- expecting the sector to make a real and tangible contribution;
- support the sector to innovate;
- support the Service to bring about transformational change.

2.6 The workshop was completed and following agreement of the terms of reference by ministers, the outcomes have been distilled into four draft key workstreams. These are:

1. Location and accountability;
2. Role of the Fire and Rescue Service – delivery models;
3. National interests;
4. Efficiency, effectiveness and productivity (Appendix B).

2.7 It is expected that the workstreams will be taken forward by a chair appointed from within the sector, supported by workstream leads and CLG policy officials, with a wider team of sector contributors. Both the Chair and the Chief Fire Officer have put forward their names as part of this process.

2.8 As yet no specific timeframes have been set for the review, although it is clear that there is some urgency being displayed to the project.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

At present there are no direct financial implications for Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, although elements of the review will cover the efficiency of the Service as a whole.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

The Minister’s confirmation of the new Government’s approach, at the meeting of 25 July 2010, towards recruitment and development of staff will have an indirect impact on the Service’s current approach. This is currently done collaboratively through the RMB and a meeting is scheduled to look at this and other issues with RMB colleagues on 16 September 2010.

5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Although there are no specific equality and diversity implications identified within this report, the announcement by the Minister regarding equality and diversity targets will need to be considered by the Fire Authority in the future through the Equalities Steering Group. The fire service still retains its statutory obligations under Equalities Legislation.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The enforcement of the provisions of the National Framework is enshrined within the Fire Services' Act 2004. The Minister's announcement that Government will not be seeking to enforce certain provisions of the Framework does have indirect legal implications for the service.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

At the present time, any specific risks to Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service are hard to determine. Clearly any fundamental review of the service provision at a national level will have an impact on the Service and its current delivery model. This can be mitigated by involvement within the project which both the Chief Fire Officer and Chair have volunteered for.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- 9.1 Members discuss the contents of this report and support the involvement of the Chief Fire Officer and Chair in the project.
- 9.2 As and when available, further information is presented to Policy and Strategy Committee prior to being presented to the Fire Authority, on the progress of the review and its implications for Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

Frank Swann
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

APPENDIX A

FIRE FUTURES - Scope and Terms of Reference agreed by Ministers

Working together with the sector, develop a joint view on the future shape and direction of the FRS and the respective roles of local and central Government in that.

This should involve consideration of the range of new and evolving challenges facing the Service and how these will impact particularly in relation to role, structure, governance and efficiency.

The Strategic Review will develop a range of robust future strategy options for the Fire and Rescue Service and make recommendations to Ministers for how these should be taken forward.

Key issues are likely to include the following, although we will take our lead from the Sector itself in terms of the current and future remit and strategic priorities for the FRS over the short, medium and longer term.

- § The current and future delivery model for the Service, taking account of the work that the sector is already leading on decentralisation, and considering how this can be taken further to drive increased localism.
- § The efficiency of the Service and how this can be further improved to enhance value for money.
- § The respective roles and responsibilities of central Government and local partners including consideration of the future role of a national framework.
- § Implication of all of the above for the FRS workforce and for the future structure and governance of the Service.

The review will be within the context of our clear commitment to achieving value for money whilst prioritising the front line, improving resilience and ending forced regionalisation of the service.

Department for Communities and Local Government
Eland House
Zone 3/E2
Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU

Tel 030 444 3257
Email firefutures@communities.gsi.gov.uk

WORKSTREAMS EMERGING FROM THE MINISTERIAL WORKSHOP

FIRE FUTURES, 11 August 2010

The fire sector faces an emerging set of challenges – economic, social, physical - over the short, medium and long terms. It must proactively change to meet these challenges to maintain its effectiveness in serving communities and to represent value for money to the wider public purse. Along with this is an expectation from government that the service reflect localism, decentralisation, transparency, accountability and the big society in what they do.

ROLE OF FRS (informs) DELIVERY MODELS

Key Workstream Question

Are the current set of roles and functions the right ones going forward? Should the FRS take on additional roles or could delivery of current functions by others better meet these objectives now or in the future and if so what would the delivery model look like?

Areas to consider:

Q: What is the role of the FRS in the new environment – what functions should the FRS deliver?

- What are the drivers for change? And what degree of change might be required to the fire delivery model to meet these challenges?
 - Challenges: finance, demographic, climate change, health and equality etc
 - government expectations: transparency, big society, total place
- What are the core functions a FRA should deliver?
- Has the risk profile changed? Does this effect the role expected of the service?
- Can and should IRMP be developed further to better support localism objectives and the performance of the Service locally/nationally?

Q: How could FRS services join with other emergency/public services to improve delivery and value for money in public spending?

- How could shared emergency services, with police and/or ambulance, contribute to delivering the core national function and what other benefits could it bring?
- What are the barriers to better joint working with other public services and how could they be overcome? (e.g. joint service delivery – separate governance)

Q: What are the implications of any proposed changes to the delivery model for the skills and profile of the workforce and vice versa?

- What are the implications for the workforce of any changes in role which might be considered?
- What would be the implications for Skills/organisation/culture?

Q: Should the FRA take a step back from direct service delivery?

- Should FRAs move to a model where they commission some or all of their services rather than provide them direct?

EFFICIENCY, EFFECTIVENESS AND PRODUCTIVITY

Key Workstream Question

We are in a tight fiscal environment where the service is likely to be expected to do more with less. Are there changes in how fire and rescue services are provided which would enable improvements in cost effectiveness in the provision of Fire and Rescue Services in England while improving or at worst having a neutral impact on effectiveness? And are there opportunities to improve productivity?

Areas to consider:

Q: What alternative options for providing FRS could be considered?

- What would models being used or developed overseas have to offer?
- Is there an optimum size/number of FRAs and if so how could change be incentivised?
- How could shared services offer efficiencies either at the
 - back office level
 - the senior operational level
 - political level

Q: The local government funding system (including that for the FRS) is to be reviewed in 2011 – however are there additional funding mechanisms which could contribute to FRS resourcing?

- Should insurance or charging mechanisms help pay for the service? (levies on policies could pay for the Service i.e. road traffic accidents (RTCs) and house fires or costs for attending RTCs could be re-charged.)
- False alarms? Additional services for businesses...?

Q: Is the balance of where the FRS spends its resources correct?

- Should FRAs focus more on or less on prevention?
- How should better use of the skills of the workforce be made? (e.g. provide first aid training for local people making them more responsible for own safety / health and reducing burden on NHS, or promoting community resilience)
- The role many FRAs are playing in local partnerships tackling a wide range of local priorities “adds value” to the national resource represented by the FRS (a) can this be quantified and (b) should different roles and functions by FRAs be determined nationally or locally?

Q: How could FRAs make better use of their assets?

- Can the FRA estate be better used
 - Between FRAs?
 - With other public sector bodies?
 - With the private sector (e.g. super markets)?
- Are appliances still appropriate? (numbers, type etc)

LOCALISM AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Key Workstream Question

Would alternatives community engagement and governance structures improve localism and performance in the delivery of Fire and Rescue Services now and in the medium/long term?

Areas to consider:

Q: What does localism mean for the Fire and Rescue Service? – ie how does the FRS ensure it is responsible and accountable to local citizens?

- How can engagement with the public on the nature of local services and the way in which they are delivered be improved?
- What are the best public services doing and how can the FRS learn from this?

Q: Is the FRS transparent and accountable to local service users?

- Do the current governance models enable FRAs to be as accountable to local citizens and communities as they could be?
- Are there better models (e.g. police, ambulance)
- Should joint governance with other emergencies services be considered?

Q: How can the FRS promote the Big Society

- Should wider models of volunteering be delivered looking at
 - International models
 - For some aspects of the work (e.g. fire safety)
 - Harnessing volunteer support in dealing with emergencies (e.g. flooding)
- How can the FRS go further on Big Society

Q: How can FRAs provide assurance at the local level?

- How can FRAs assure their service users on the quality and value for money of their services?

NATIONAL INTEREST

Key Workstream Question

Where does the national and government interest lie?

Areas to consider:

What should the respective roles of the FRS and government be on national resilience eg

- National risk assessment
- Major terrorist and other incidents
- Interoperability
- New Dimensions

and other issues such as:

- Research
- Sponsor/voice in Whitehall
- Central Funding

Q: Is having a National Framework consistent with localism? If so, what form should it take?

[Decentralisation project to run alongside Fire Futures]