

## Report of the Chief Fire Officer

### 6. A Service for the Future

#### Purpose of report

1. To introduce the work of the Local Government Association (LGA) in relation to Fire and Rescue Authorities.
  2. A short presentation will be provided at the meeting by guests from the LGA.
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#### Recommendations

*It is recommended that the Authority notes:*

- i) the work of the LGA in relation to Fire and Rescue Authorities; and*
- ii) the recent response to the Government Spending Review from the Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA) and the LGA.*

#### Introduction and Background

3. The LGA works with local authorities to ensure local government has a voice with national government. It aims to influence and set the political agenda on the issues that matter to local authorities and the people they serve.
4. The LGA Fire Commission provides a forum for member authorities to come together to discuss matters of common interest and concern, to exchange good practice and to influence the priorities and activities of the LGA. All Fire Authorities in associate or corporate membership of the LGA are entitled to representation on the Fire Commission and are entitled to vote on the basis of population. This Authority has nominated the Chairman to have a seat on the Fire Commission.
5. The Fire Commission is led by Fire Services Management Committee (FSMC) which reports to the LGA Community Safety Board, as shown in the structure at Appendix 1. Members are appointed by their respective political group to sit on FSMC with representation being based on the nationwide political balance amongst the Fire Authorities that are members of the LGA. The membership of the FSMC is attached at Appendix 2.
6. The role of the 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.

7. Senior Advisor to the LGA, John Wright, the FSMC Chairman Cllr Jeremy Hilton and Helen Murray, LGA Principal Advisor to the West Midlands Region, have been invited to attend the meeting to provide Members with a further overview of the work of the LGA in influencing government and acting on other matters on behalf of fire authorities.

## **Government Spending Review**

8. Since the Government announced its Spending Review in 2010, finance settlements for fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) have resulted in central government funding reductions to directly funded fire authorities from £1057m to £739m, a fall of £318m or 30%.
9. With regards to local taxation, in 2015/16, the average Band D council tax levied by precepting fire authorities is £70.00 per household whilst the average local authority Band D council tax is £1,484. On average the fire and rescue element of the council tax bill is £1.34 per week. Fire and rescue service council tax levels have only increased on average by 6.5% (£4.27) in the last five years with an average increase in 2015/16 of 1.47%.
10. In comparison, in 2015/16 this Authority precepts on average £76.50 per household, which equates to £1.47 per week. We have increased our council tax level by 3.8% since 2010/11 and by 1.92% in 2015/16.
11. Between 2010/11 and 2015/16 the underpinning budgets for precepting fire authorities were reduced by £141.7m in cash terms or 9.2%. It is estimated that in comparison this Authority has had its budget reduced by approximately 14% in cash terms during this period. It is useful to note that in the previous CSR period (2007/08 to 2010/11) the grant to this Authority was increased by 3.0% compared to the national average increase of 6.4%.
12. In the national context, approximately 80% of the fire and rescue service's budget is to pay for frontline staff, which will inevitably be impacted by cost savings. Since 2010, this Authority has seen a reduction of 82 wholetime operational staff, which has reduced the overall wholetime establishment from 314 to 232 as follows:
  - reduction of 1 Assistant Chief Fire Officer;
  - increase of 1 Group Commander;
  - reduction of 11 Station Commanders;
  - reduction of 1 Watch Commander; and
  - reduction of 70 Firefighters.
13. The Authority does not work on an authorised establishment for on call firefighters (Retained Duty System). The on-call headcount (not full time equivalent) has increased by 24 from 356 to 380 since 2010.

14. The Authority has reduced its fire control establishment of from 25 to and there has been a reduction in support staff in the same period from 142 to 100.
15. The fire and rescue service has driven down fires, deaths and injuries by over 50% in the last 10 years. The most recent data quoted by the LGA/CFOA shows that the decreasing trend is continuing:
  - 15.1 The provisional number of reported fire fatalities in England in 2014/15 was 258, down 6% from 274 in 2013/14, which is the lowest annual figure to date. Of these fatalities, 163 were from accidental dwelling fire fatalities, a decrease of 10% compared to 2013/14 and also the lowest to date.
    - This Authority recorded two fire related fatalities in 2014-15: one of those being deliberate. This figure is down from six in 2013-14 although as our number of fire related fatalities is historically low it is unwise to draw any conclusions from statistics from only two years' data.
  - 15.2 In England there were 3,235 non-fatal fire hospital casualties in 2014/15, which is 6% lower than in 2013-14 and 55% lower than in 2004/05
    - HWFRS dealt with 43 such casualties in 2013/2014, which was down to 25 in 2014/2015.
  - 15.3 Fire and rescue services attended a total of 154,700 fires in 2014/15, the second lowest on record.
  - 15.4 Fire and rescue services also attended 125,000 non fire incidents in 2014/15, which was down 5% from 2013/14, due to largely fewer flooding incidents compared to the previous year. The largest categories of non-fire incidents were road traffic collisions (25%) and attending medical incidents (13%)
    - The total number of incidents attended by HWFRS in 2014-15 is the lowest overall total in the nine years that the current data set has been collected. It is also the lowest number of incidents for each of the three main categories of incidents individually (fires, false alarms and special service (other non-fire emergency) incidents).
  - 15.5 The number of false alarm incidents attended was down by 4% in 2014/15 compared to 2013/14.
    - The total number of false alarms we attended has decreased overall by 4.8% in 2014-15.

## **A Service for the Future**

16. CFOA and the LGA have recently published a response to the Spending Review. In the document entitled "A Service for the Future: 670,000 ways to add value", CFOA and the LGA recognise that the financial challenges that face public services, local government and the fire and rescue service will continue

over the current parliamentary term. CFOA and LGA state that there will also be other challenges, such as an ageing society and increasingly complex security threats, which will place new demands on fire and rescue services. All Members have been sent a copy of the document as a background paper.

17. The submission does not primarily focus on budget reductions, it also offers Government the opportunity to exploit the potential of the fire and rescue services to play a vital wider role that will contribute to the ambitions of the spending review. The submission contains a total of 7 recommendations to the Government, which aim to exploit this potential.

### Conclusion/Summary

18. The LGA works with local authorities to ensure local government has a voice with national government and its Fire Services Management Committee ensures that the views and concerns of the fire community are raised. For example, CFOA and the LGA have recently published a response to the Spending Review.
19. Representatives from the LGA will be in attendance at the meeting to provide Members with a further overview of the work of the LGA in influencing government and acting on other matters on behalf of fire authorities.

### Corporate Considerations

<b>Resource Implications</b> (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	N/A
<b>Strategic Policy Links</b> (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	The LGA, Fire Commission and Fire Services Management Committee lobby central government to ensure that the voice of local Fire Authorities are heard.
<b>Risk Management / Health &amp; Safety</b> (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	N/A
<b>Consultation</b> (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	N/A
<b>Equalities</b> (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	N/A. This report does not contain any recommended changes to Authority Policy.

## **Supporting Information**

Appendix 1 – LGA Structure

Appendix 2 – Fire Services Management Committee Membership

Background papers - A Service for the Future: 670,000 ways to add value - CFOA and LGA, 2015

## **Contact Officer**

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