

Report

13-14 March 2018

LGA Fire Conference and Exhibition 2018

The LGA held its Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition in March 2018. This report outlines the key points from the sessions over the two days of the conference.

Keynote session 1. Grenfell: Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Fire Sector

Dany Cotton, Commissioner, London Fire Brigade

Ian Hayton, Chief Fire Officer, Cleveland FRS

Laura Lawrence, Welfare Manager, Tyne and Wear FRS

Steve Malley, GMB Risk and Information, Tyne and Wear FRS

This session explored mental health and wellbeing for the fire service's workforce.

Key points

There are some key challenges facing the fire and rescue workforce in terms of mental health, with FRSs losing 55,000 shifts a year due to mental health issues.

Fire service staff face experiences that can affect mental health. Typically see a range of responses, but one definite trigger is fatalities. Everyone can be effected. It's ok not to be ok.

The mental health impact of Grenfell was much wider than firefighters – call handlers and other staff etc who were also involved in the Grenfell fire both on the night and subsequently. This is borne out in the wider FRS workforce statistics where mental health issues can be seen across wholetime, retained, control room and green book staff.

9 months on from Grenfell and the impact has not diminished. It is not something that will go away or that people can just get over and it will be a lasting legacy for people. That is why it is key to keep the conversation going and be open about the issues.

All those involved had an initial de-brief and access to counselling before they went home. This was followed up through debriefs on stations – at 3 month and 6 month checks. There has been a growing number of people in the counselling support team since the incident.

The public inquiry will increase the pressure and stress, and LFB are trying to prepare people to be mentally resilient.

All speakers agreed on the importance of having buy in and visibility from the top . The Commissioner has been very open about her own experiences and encouraged people to share their experiences. There had been a lot of support for LFB from the rest of the sector – firefighters charity, MIND (blue light programme initiative – feedback from staff really positive)

MIND's Time to Change programme commits LFB to challenge mental health stigma and promote positive wellbeing within the service <https://www.mind.org.uk/news-campaigns/campaigns/bluelight/blue-light-time-to-change-pledge/?ctaId=/news-campaigns/campaigns/bluelight/slices/blue-light-time-to-change-pledge/>. The ideal position would be to have a mental health champion on every fire station so people can go and have a conversation, with no stigma.

For the speakers from Tyne and Wear being a part of the trauma support service was a really rewarding piece of work. They saw the positive impact and felt that it really helped people. The welfare work was part of a wider context and framework for staff wellbeing – e.g. sports and social, health promotion and wellbeing, watch culture, trauma support, welfare, counselling, health surveillance

[Ian Hayton - presentation](#)

[Tyne and Wear – presentation](#)

Keynote session 2. Grenfell: Building Safety

Dame Judith Hackitt, Chair, Independent Review into Building Regulations and Fire Safety

Roy Wilsher, Chair, National Fire Chiefs Council

Chair: Cllr Rebecca Knox, Deputy Chair LGA Fire

Dame Judith set out the background to the independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-building-regulations-and-fire-safety-interim-report>) and explained that she is looking at the framework rather than the detail of what should be in regulations. She expects to report before the end of May. The overwhelming message she has received in response to calls for evidence is that the system needs a radical overhaul not tinkering. Some of the things found in the last 6 months are shocking

Roy Wilshire outlined the work of the fire and rescue service and the NFCC in responding to concerns about building safety in the wake of Grenfell. He thanked the wide range of colleagues who had been involved, in particular the West Midlands for being central hub for communications out to fire services.

Key points

The whole system is not fit for purpose: construction, occupation and management of buildings. Part of the challenge is to understand how much of the change can be done before we regulate and how much we can do with regulation

There was a need for a significant culture change in the process. The system should place clear responsibilities on people. Conversations will need to start with 'demonstrate to me what you have done to make this building safe'.

The compliance, enforcement and regulatory system doesn't work well; sanctions are pretty weak. We will need a new regulatory framework for high rise and complex buildings that is simpler and risk-based, a stronger regulator and stronger penalties

A lot of confusion exists, for example between regulation and guidance, and a lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities - if people don't feel responsibility then they are not thinking about the safety of the building that they're constructing but focussing on compliance with guidance rather than the purpose of the guidance.

Dame Judith outlined that a key issue was that whilst the FRS were statutorily consulted they were not necessarily listened to.

Partially privatising building control service has created confusion. Approved inspectors are not regulators but validators.

Routes for residents to raise concerns is unclear – and where they have tried to raise concerns, they don't get listened to

The way in which products used in complex buildings is unclear. It is quite concerning that you can test a cladding system as many times as you need to get a pass - and you don't have to say how many times you tested it to get a pass.

Need to raise levels of competence across the piece - construction workers, maintenance - and ensure that the work is quality assured. Very lax competencies around who qualifies to be a fire engineer. Registered builders or a ticket to practice right across each stage - architect, fire engineers, LA inspectors etc, is being considered.

Lessons can be learned from other countries' experiences and systems including Scotland. Grenfell sent shockwaves way beyond our shores - Need to pool knowledge and work together - everyone looking at the same time in improving regulatory systems and sharing knowledge as go through. Need people to take ownership to replace cladding quickly and not wait for the review to finish. Owners need to take a decision and replace unfit cladding with a system that is either non-combustible or has passed a test, not a desktop study.

There is a sprinkler group that's been resurrected at the LGA. Dame Judith did not believe government should specify the detail of what should be done or not done – the regulatory system should be there to challenge the sector to build a safe design

If fire and rescue services are going to have to do more work they are going to need more resources

[Dame Judith Hackitt's presentation](#)

[Roy Wilsher's presentation](#)

The Conference then went into a series of 9 workshops for delegates.

Fire Conference workshops

W1. Taking a Portfolio approach to managing fire transformation

Nick Collins, Programme Director, National Operational Guidance Programme

Doc Holliday, Programme Manager, National Operational Guidance Programme

Susan Ellison Bunce, Senior Responsible Owner, National Operational Guidance Programme

Susan Ellison-Bunce set out the work that LFB had undertaken on National Operational Guidance on behalf of the NFCC. The aim was to provide an online catalogue of fire service guidance. This has been done and now 21 guidance documents have replaced 8,000 documents! The 21 are joined by 22 training specifications and 27 scenarios. She stated that this not only has simplified matters but should produce consistency and has dealt with the potential for things to be missed.

All 50 UK FRS have been involved in the programme. Susan called it 'the most effective piece of collaboration' in the history of the fire service. The key factors in this success were a clear scope and effective governance and quality assurance measures.

The NFCC has now established a central programme office (CPO) to apply a similar approach to other operational reforms. The CPO will provide a programme/project management service to facilitate and enable NFCC strategic commitments. The areas the CPO will look at include community risk (including any Hackitt recommendations), workforce (taking forward work Ann Millington is leading) and digital (how to make the most of what we have and future opportunities)

Susan asked how FRAs/FRSs want to be engaged and said that the CPO hoped to utilise their expertise as well as relying on their funding. She said the CPO prioritisation plan will be shared with the Fire Services Management Committee and the LGA and CPO will discuss future engagement.

Presentation

Workshop 2: Creating Innovative solutions via meaningful engagement with partners

Rick Hylton, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Cambridgeshire FRS

Jon Anderson, Area Commander, Cambridgeshire FRS

Cameron Matthews, FBU Representative, Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service

Cambridgeshire FRS and representatives from the local FBU presented on how they had worked together to introduce a new shift system.

Cambridgeshire FRS outlined the challenges that were facing them as a rural area with a large number of on-call staff. They faced a particular issue with daytime crewing especially the availability of appliances during their busiest periods. Their specialised rescue units were also underutilised. They wanted a solution that would improve the services to their local communities and a joint consultation team was formed to arrive a solution to fix these issues.

The first solution of two roaming appliances, one in the north and one in the south of the county, failed as they were unable to agree a duty system. However, the second solution, of over-establishing the wholtime stations and offering 24 hour rotating cover using the 2 roaming appliances was implemented. This allowed for a certain number of firefighters to be on annual leave each day.

The FBU requested separate consultation of managers and staff. 85% voted in favour, equating to 6 out of 7 stations.

The new system was negotiated and agreed within 6 months.

Cameron Matthews a firefighter from Cambridgeshire FRS and FBU representative then outlined his perspective on the work. He detailed the framework for change and commented that good industrial relations should be simple. There were three clear criteria for implementing change effectively:

1. Clear mission focus
2. Recognise the legitimate interests of each party
3. Preparation and resources

Cameron outlined some lessons learned and tips for maintaining good industrial relations during transformational change through innovation:

- Agree how to disagree.
- Remain professional and proceed through stages of consultation and negotiation.
- Use Joint Secretaries.
- Exhaust all avenues to demonstrate professional commitment.
- Pre-determined outcomes can lead to poor industrial relations and unprofessional divergence from nationally agreed process.
- Trial and error within Grey book framework.
- Think win/ win to reach mutually agreeable conclusion.
- Consultation and negotiation is a 2-way street.

Presentation

Workshop 3: ESMCP workshop

Paul Channing, Regional Coordination Manager, NFCC ESMCP

Pete Clarke, Trials and Pilots Lead

Nick Carroll, Transition Support Coordinator, ESMCP, Home Office

Paul Channing outlined the background to the introduction of the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP) and the Emergency Service Network (ESN) and the potential benefits of the new system. It would be delivered by a commercial company on the 4G network and will have the security and capacity to provide a large amount of data. It has the potential to influence the way the service responds to incidents through streaming of videos of incidents being attended.

JESIP had introduced new ways of working and sharing information across the emergency services and ESN would help to facilitate this further to help improve the response to incidents and identifying hazards and risks. It was anticipated that this would lead to deeper collaboration however it was challenging to get the technology right.

The programme was currently undergoing a review, looking at the timescale for implementation as well as how it would be implemented. The programme team will produce a revised transition plan and revised business case in the Summer following the review.

There were some concerns around the impact of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) on the ESMCP and how we can ensure that the right people access the right information in a timely manner. Another issue raised was the potential risk posed to the programme by using a commercial provider rather than an in-house service.

Presentation

Workshop 4 – Blue light services working together: National Leadership through to Local Delivery

Stewart Adamson, Assistant Chief Officer, Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service

Rebecca Gill, Senior Programme Manager, Emergency Services Collaboration Working Group

Stewart Adamson, Assistant Chief Fire Officer at Hampshire opened up the workshop with a discussion on “what is collaboration, what does it look like, how does it feel?”

The key message was that collaboration was wider than just with the other blue light services it also meant working with clinical commissioning groups and health services. The group looked at some of the key reasons for collaboration included the duty to collaborate, preventing duplication, achieving

better outcomes, less silo working, solving problems and sharing learning. Positive outcomes included increased savings, and best value, effectiveness and better use of resources.

The group discussed the importance of a person centred approach to working together better. The group discussed better ways of working together including commitment, honesty, developing good relationships:

- Egos out of the room
- Communication - opportunity to discuss
- Honesty
- Commitment
- Cultural boundaries
- Develop relationships and trust

The discussed then turned to the work of the Emergency Services Collaboration Working Group. It was formed in 2014 to look for innovation, effectiveness and efficiency in the emergency services. The group had developed four key projects:

- 1) Guide on the duty to collaborate
- 2) Community of emergency service professionals
- 3) Evaluation of collaboration
- 4) Sharing new ideas through the [National overview document](#)

A local example of collaboration from Hampshire about their work with Hampshire police. There were about 80 projects across the two services, with 12 that they priorities and included coterminous headquarters, shared estates and services, a blue light executive group, a delivery group and a number of workstreams as well as a number of shared stations. They had learned that building positive working relationships were key as well as a shared understanding of their organisations and capacity. Though it was important that each organisation kept their sovereignty and collaboration took time to embed.

W5. Fire and Rescue Service fleets - the environmental challenge

Sue Budden, Director of Finance and Contractual Services, London Fire Brigade

Samir Maha, Fleet Management Director, Babcock International (fleet management provider to LFB)

Ron Dobson, Babcock International

This workshop looked at how LFB is meeting the challenge posed by the low emissions zone.

Low Emissions Zone, T-charge introduced in 2017, ULEZ starting 2019. These impose charges on vehicles that exceed emissions limits. There are a number of appliances that will be within the low emissions zone, these will be updated by April 2019, all other HGVs were expected to be replaced by Oct 2021, expected to meet ULEZ by 2021.

LFB are at the forefront of the way fleet and equipment is provided. Three strands to this work - in house engineering team, sustainability expertise, fleet management partner. Fire service ought to come together on this.

Current progress - 100% of hybrid fleet cars, charge points at 75% of premises, more planned to give 95% coverage, PAYG technology only, provision of 9 publicly accessible charge points on station forecourts. Grants are available to do this.

Current work: retrofitting vehicles to meet Euro XI regulations, appliance development, developing electric fire engines.

LFB id Babcock's first major deployment of electric vehicles, police will now commit to further 60 vehicles. Not just electric, MPS also experimenting with hydrogen powered vehicles (and are developing a mobile hydrogen refuelling facility), hydrogen powered scooters being trialled, not just about electric, 'mototok' - battery on wheels designed to reduce emissions - BA use it to move planes.

Pros: maintenance has reduced, vehicles have less time out of service, saves fuel. Cons: obsolescence, parts not always easy to find, recovery and towing vehicles is difficult, charging means there is a need to change behaviour of the user.

Challenges: timescale, don't have much time to meet deadlines, finance is a problem, need more funding for purchase, development and infrastructure, need to resource the whole project properly, management from initial concept through to getting infrastructure in place and day to day running. Need strong corporate leadership from the top.

Refuelling technology is changing dramatically as is availability of infrastructure.

Whole-life management - need to ensure all vehicles are safe, reliable and can do their intended functions. Vehicles with alternative fuels will always be a challenge. Babcock had to invest in workshops infrastructure, technician training to keep vehicles on the road. End user behaviour needs developing. Finding out how assets are used is important - telematics data.

Collaboration and innovation schemes and initiatives are taking place around the country. Ongoing conversations about what the right level of collaboration across FRSs would be, and with other emergency services, public and private sectors. Need to establish accurate cost of these projects. Wider interest from FRSs, the larger the market, the easier sourcing funding would be.

Are we being forward thinking enough? What will an appliance look like in 2038? Should we look at a modular fleet? Autonomous vehicles could be sent out to meet firefighters on the scene. Cost is big problem in developing solutions into reliable products. The idea of deploying firefighters separately from equipment has been challenged on every single vehicle procurement carried out. Nature of incidents are so diverse but can't get away from idea of sending first attendants with equipment. Modularisation could be done now but requires scale which brings us back to collaboration point.

Is there enough of an electricity supply? We need to be thinking about storage of energy.

Timeframe - BW - will take a significant number of years to get to point where electrically run pumping appliances could be manufactured.

Fire service should engage with the market a bit more to see what they can develop and design for them. to help with reducing the weight of equipment debate to be had with small suppliers and the fire service in terms of how we can work together

Need more collaborative approach - can mitigate obsolescence by transferring risk back to the manufacturers, it's a high demand environment so they need to get it right.

What is the scale of the project? Individuals do not have enough leverage to effect any change. Even combined, UKFRS is minuscule compared to haulage companies. Heard TESLA already have articulated vehicle with 500 mile range out performing diesel acceleration and power? SM - true, but only one model, not widely available. Met have placed order for number of new vehicles, timing feels right to ride that wave, don't want to come at it late.

NFCC national category lead for fleet is Melanie Walsh – she is looking at this. Have to be ambitious and join in the conversation, not end up being told what we'll get. Modularity approach not just for fire but also for urban delivery. Can't underestimate the impact we can have.

SB - Would like to set up a forum if anyone is interested and make this a national project.

Presentation

Workshop 6: It takes 2 (or 3) to tango – the legal and practical implications of joint working and collaboration.

Allison Cook, Partner, Veale Wasbrough Vizards

Mark Heath, Consultant, Veale Wasbrough Vizards

Allison Cook and Mark Heath from Veale Wasbrough Vizards (VWV) presented on joint working and collaboration, they concentrated on the duty to collaborate, different models, employment, law and unexpected challenges. VWV is a commercial law firm with public sector specialism.

Governance

VWV outlined the background to the introduction of PCCs and their role and the changes brought about by the Policing and Crime Act 2017.

The Policing & Crime Act of 2017 came into force on 31 January 2017 giving PCCs power to take on the responsibility of the FRA (ditto metro-mayor), as well as create a single employer, though operational functions may well be delegated to the CFO. The PCC may also be represented on the FRA with voting rights, if the FRA agrees. The PCC must make a case to the Secretary of State. They outlined that coterminosity may be an issue.

Capital/Assets

There are practical issues and implications after changes of governance. There maybe questions over who owns what? If there is a new build, what rights and responsibilities do each party have? What is the duration of the agreement and what are the funding streams? There maybe a need to consider an application to the public works loan board.

Employment Issues

Employment issues need to be considered early and involve trade union bodies. There are various options that employers could choose to adopt including secondments, TUPE or a host employer. There maybe issues round enhanced disclosure checks in police premises.

Presentation

W7. Wearable Technology for the Blue Light Services

Christopher Davies, Chief Fire Officer, Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service

Neil Pollock, Metropolitan Police

This project falls under the NFCC Operations Committee.

Not all buildings are what they seem, yet once in a building we have no idea where our firefighters are, how much air they have left etc, this puts their lives at risk

We want to know location of firefighters, physiology symptoms, how long heart rate operating at X, do we need to pull them out. Wearable technology including cameras/sensors, offers a solution to providing this information. The aim is to feed everything through one R&D hub.

Operational challenges:

- Information overload – what is the appropriate amount of information for officer in charge of an incident to have in their decision making?
- Need to ensure that watching the information on screens will enable action and decision making. This will need to be a key component of training as this sort of technology becomes more widespread.
- Should there be remote access to that information? Live information in strategic settings - can make it difficult to separate operational and strategic leadership
- Will the sensors sewn into uniforms will work in the temperatures or other incidents that we attend - because of the extremes that it can be put through
- How do you keep up with technology when budgets are squeezed?
- Concerns from the workforce about what the data would be used for.

Introduction of drones:

- The introduction of drones had been positive.
- When a drone operator next door to the incident commander it gave them a more comprehensive view of the incident
- The use of infrared cameras on drones could mean that firefighters were no longer putting people at risk when doing river rescues etc

Workshop 8 – Working together is easy isn't it?

Michelle Gaff, Project Manager, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service

John Spoors, Senior Procurement Officer, Northumbria Police

Tyne and Wear FRS and Northumbria Police talked about a collaborative procurement project that they had undertaken. They outlined why they had undertaken the project. Both organisations had the strategic desire to collaborate. The project would also allow them to share knowledge, provide further opportunities to communicate and develop trust.

The project had a number of impacts. It had led to significant cost savings, upskilled a number of staff, and facilitated sharing knowledge. However the project had also had an increased timeframe than originally envisaged, there was some compromising on requirements as well as some additional costs though overall the project saved money.

There needed to be clear expectations from both sides as well as joint responsibility for the outcomes. It was important to compromise and put aside ego's. Both organisations said that they would undertake the exercise again, it had been particularly attractive for the smaller partner as they had received bids from larger organisations than they would have done if they'd undertaken the procurement on their own.

Presentation

Workshop 9: The fundamental Operating Principles of a Fire and Rescue Service, West Midlands FRS

Phil Loach, Chief Fire Officer, West Midlands Fire Service

Ben Brook, Area Commander, West Midlands Fire Service

Phil Loach and Ben Brook discussed the West Midlands approach towards their service delivery model and how preventative work would be used to create a more effective response model.

The West Midlands outlined their work with health and wider partners and talked about how their prevention and protection work had helped to provide a robust response strategy.

The key principles for the West Midlands were as follows:

- 1) The IRMP starts with an evidence based assessment of risk
- 2) The service is assertive, effective and safe
- 3) Community sustainability and economic prosperity
- 4) Collaborative reduction of vulnerability
- 5) With the widest range of partnerships
- 6) Transformation of delivering services

They said that the West Midlands FRS incorporates activities which target joint outcomes and benefits for both the FRS and also other services through their Prevention and Protection work.

Keynote session 3. Early reflections from pilot inspection authorities

Mark Hardingham, Chief Fire Officer, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service

Cllr Matthew Hicks, Cabinet Member for Environment, Public Protection and Broadband, Suffolk County Council

Zoe Billingham HM Inspector, HMICFRS

Suffolk FRS is the first service to pilot inspection. The inspection was at a very early stage. Cllr Hicks pointed out that as a county council, inspection was not a new experience for Suffolk - Ofsted, CQC etc regularly inspect its services.

An HMICFRS team of 11 came to visit the council the day before they were speaking at the conference. The council felt there had been very positive engagement, were encouraged with HMICFRS's openness and really embraced pilot.

One early lesson was to allow more time for the opening discussion that had lasted two hours rather than one, but this was positive - everyone involved is on a steep learning curve. In a county service the director of the FRS may have a much wider role dealing with and managing other services as well as fire and it is hard to see how governance can be outside the inspection process.

Suffolk had a peer review in November - will be interested to compare the outcomes from the peer review and the inspection and how the two overlap. This will be interesting for the LGA in particular and we will be keen to use those pilot areas to influence and inform the peer challenge process. The inspection had been preceded by data collections - from FRS and CC and collecting some 50-60 documents

The self assessment document involved a 300 word return against each element - and 1000 words at the start - Quite succinct in comparison to peer reviews

Strategic briefing yesterday morning - the start of the inspection process - became very engaging and open discussion

Inspection team in Cambridgeshire today - working with fire control operators

Next week inspection is Monday to Friday - Friday lunchtime initial feedback

Sure there are people who've been through inspection in the past - but its different to CPA and CAA - it does feel like a different process at the moment

Has the pilot inspection been burdensome? We have had to commit resources to inspection in a way that we didn't to support peer review

But FRS quite comfortable with the need to add resources to drive further improvements into the FRS in Suffolk - provided that becomes an outcome of the inspections then quite comfortable with that. The burdensome aspect hasn't been a one sided question - have had discussions with HMICFRS - have been asking us on how burdensome is it? How much time and energy are you putting into developing a timetable etc

How does it feel different to LGA peer review? Does feel very different - A data driven exercise, owned by inspectorate rather than owned by sector and FRS.

[Zoe Billingham's presentation](#)

Baroness Pinnock's speech to the Fire Conference – provided by LGA Liberal Democrat group

I have been a councillor for 30 years; in that time have taken many different roles: finance, health & well being; Leader of Council for 6 years. I was appointed Spokesperson for Communities and Local Government in 2015 and have taken on the role to speak for Fire Services from my colleague Baroness Cathy Bakewell.

So I speak today with considerable humility to an audience with a huge degree of experience as practitioners or in the governance role.

Events last year brought a national and international focus on the London Fire Service. On behalf of the Liberal Democrats I want to record my thanks for the skill, dedication, and heroic efforts that were made by the London Fire Service at the tragedy that is the Grenfell Tower Fire.

Conference heard yesterday from Dame Judith Hackett about her inquiry's initial findings. Whatever the findings and recommendations it is clear to me that in overall terms there was a clear failure of public policy and I have said just that in response to Statements on the Grenfell disaster in the House of Lords. There is sometimes a heavy price to pay for loosening regulation.

I understand that the Inquiry, chaired by Sir Martin Moore-Bick, will report initially on what happened this summer. My understanding is that there will be a second report next year with recommendations in response to the analysis of the failings that resulted in Grenfell. Both Inquiries will, I hope, force significant changes to building regulations and fire safety inspections.

Those of us who live many miles out of London were not aware that the Service had appointed its first woman as Chief Fire Officer. A first that will ripple through fire services in our country and one which I very much welcome.

The Fire service has, like Local Government, faced years of cuts to budgets. The scale of cuts is unprecedented. I was shocked to read that the West Yorkshire service has had to make huge reductions in numbers of fire safety inspectors since 2010. 40% cuts to budgets inevitably result in a reduced service. Of course, as in LG the Fire Service will endeavour to prioritise but in the end the impact of the cuts made will be felt by the public.

I hope that one of the consequences of the Grenfell inquiries will be to highlight the need to increase funding. For example the interim Hackett report refers to "ensuring compliance through inspection and enforcement". That cannot be achieved as financial cuts continue. And Financial pressures has been one of the spurs that has led to proposals for dramatic changes in governance arrangements.

The Government 's consultation on a national framework for Fire and Rescue services has given the sector an opportunity to raise a number of issues. I just want to comment on the governance and accountability elements of the plans.

To be crystal clear: Liberal Democrats want to replace Police and Crime Commissioners with Police Boards made up of elected local councillors. Why? Because we firmly believe that good governance, transparency, accountability, and financial probity are best served by groups of people. Big businesses have a code of corporate governance which insists on the numbers and diversity of people around the table. But somehow for an issue as sensitive as crime and justice this is deemed as not appropriate. One of the consequences of the single person model of Police Commissioners is that the voice of the public has largely been removed from their deliberations and with it the nuances that any public service needs to reflect in the variety of the demographics and geography of the people they serve.

You will gather from that that Lib Dems are opposed to Police Commissioners taking over their local fire service as well, unless as with Essex all the relevant elected bodies agree. Of course there should be collaboration; of course there must be effective Fire Authorities and, where that does not exist, action must be taken. The focus of both services - police and fire - is very different and retaining autonomy enables both to develop particular expertise and specialisms.

We support the LGA view that changes to governance arrangements must involve a variety of voices including operational police and fire expertise, finance, and local government as well as requiring support from all member local authorities.

I and Lib Dem colleagues in Parliament will continue to use every opportunity to lobby Government and I certainly will in the Lords. And on the issue of Fire services being taken over by Police Commissioners this will be alongside Lord Kennedy for Labour and Lord Porter the Conservative Chair of the LGA.

If, Fire and police services are amalgamated under the direction of Police Commissioners then Scrutiny arrangements need to be seriously enhanced by increasing powers for calling the Commissioner to account in public, by enabling decisions to be changed, and investing in the support for scrutiny members. Scrutiny with some bite is what is needed and what should be demanded.

Finally it would be good to see a Government in listening rather than ordering mode especially in regard to funding, governance and industrial relations. Macho approaches never end well.

Thank you for the opportunity today. I know I have much to learn and intend to make the effort to do so. thank you for listening and I look forward to your questions.

Keynote session 5. Recruitment and Inclusion

Micky Nicholas, Secretary of the Black and Ethnic Minority Members' section of the Fire Brigades Union

Samantha Rye, Secretary of the National Women's Committee of the Fire Brigades Union

Lt Colonel Andrew Black REME, Engagement NE, Ministry Of Defence

Chair: Cllr Rebecca Knox, Deputy Chair LGA Fire Services Management Committee and Dorset and Wiltshire FRA

Cllr Knox introduced the session. She stated that at last year's conference we had set some high ambitions for the sector but change had been slow. She encouraged people in the room to consider their role in leading change.

Micky Thomas talked about the challenges facing BME communities. He highlighted the poor record of the FRS in recruiting and building awareness of the firefighter role in BME communities and the necessity of proper commitment and resources to improve diversity.

He outlined a series of percentages for the BME working population in some of our major cities and looked at that in comparison to the fire and rescue service percentages:

FRS Diversity / BME Working Population (BWP) - England & Wales – BWP 25% / FRS 4%

- Bristol (Avon FRS) – BWP 11.5% / FRS 3%
- Bedford – BWP 21% - Luton (Beds and Luton FRS) BWP 43% / FRS 4%
- Derby – BWP (Derbyshire FRS) 18% / FRS 3%
- Basildon - BWP 15%- Chelmsford (Essex FRS) 14% / FRS 2%
- Gloucester (Gloucestershire FRS) – BWP 12% /FRS 7%
- Leicester (Leicestershire FRS) – BWP 45% / FRS 3%
- Liverpool (Merseyside FRS) – BWP 12% / FRS 4%
- Nottingham (Nottinghamshire FRS) – BWP 24% / FRS 4%
- Sheffield (South Yorkshire FRS) – BWP 16% / FRS 3%
- Birmingham – BWP 40% - Walsall 54% - Wolverhampton (West Midlands FRS) 29% / FRS 8%
- Bradford – BWP 38% - Leeds (West Yorkshire FRS) 21% / FRS 4%
- Newcastle (Tyne and Wear FRS) – BWP 15% / FRS 2%
- Slough (Berkshire FRS) – BWP 50% / FRS 4%
- Manchester – BWP 35% - Blackburn (Greater Manchester FRS) 37% / FRS 5%
- London (London Fire Brigade) – BWP 40% / FRS 14%

He outlined a number of recommendations, including mandatory unconscious bias training; diversity and inclusion process, end of year reviews, building awareness in BME communities of the role, even when there are not recruitment campaigns underway. The apprenticeships also provided an opportunity for FRSs to improve diversity.

Samantha Rye looked at women in the fire service. She noted the key role that the Home Office can play in driving diversity forward. Recruitment and retention was poor and more planning was necessary to correct poor performance. It was necessary to continue to raise awareness and embed it in all our communities.

It was noted that cadet schemes often had a more diverse intake, however this wasn't translating across to a more diverse workforce. She made a number of recommendations including positive action, education for the current workforce, positive action days, emergency crèches in fire stations. There was also a need to look at the barriers to retention for women. There were often poor maternity policies and the effects of the menopause needed to be better understood.

Language could be a barrier to inclusion, the recent #firefightingsexism campaign showed the importance of getting language right.

Andy Black talked about the work of the army in improving diversity through youth engagement. They had targets in place to improve the representation of both women and people from BME communities in the workforce. It was important that they were perceived in ways other than “bombs and bullets”. The army recognised the importance of real models as well as role models.

It was clear that the service would be held to account for their performance on diversity.

There was also some discussion of re-engagement of senior staff.

[Lt Col Andy Black's presentation](#)

Keynote session 6. Future of Fire Finance

Charles Kerr, Director of Finance and Corporate Services, Kent and Medway FRS and Chair of the Fire Finance Network

Emma Lawrence, Head of Fire Funding, Home Office

Councillor Nick Chard, Chairman Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority

The three speakers outlined what they saw as the particular challenges facing the fire and rescue sector. The Home Office also outlined the work that they were undertaking around fire finance.

Charles Kerr outlined the key challenges facing the sector. Continuing austerity for the foreseeable future, the fair funding review, 75 per cent business rates retention, the comprehensive spending review, falling demand and the potential burdens of the new HMICFRS inspection regime were all discussed.

These issues were also picked up by the Home Office. The Home Office outlined the work that they were doing to prepare for the comprehensive spending review including work around fire risk and demand that they were keen to engage with all FRSs on. They were keen to understand how fire risk and demand had changed over the years as well as what the requirements for the service would be in the future. This would feed into work on the Comprehensive Spending Review. The Home Office would also be interested in hearing about debt issues.

They outlined their concerns around reserves and the need to be transparent and clear on how reserves will be used. They wanted a publically available list of what reserves will be used for, both earmarked and general reserves and how they will be used to drive efficiencies. There would be a fire funding review from 2021, with a new formula for fire. The Home Office acknowledged the need to agree what cost and risk factors are with the sector. However she said that the sector should expect further efficiencies.

Both speakers encouraging early engagement with the Home Office on the comprehensive spending review work.

Other issues raised included the implications of the Hackitt Review and HMICFRS inspections.

Cllr Nick Chard outlined that though the sector is facing fewer fires, the risk of those fires had not diminished, therefore they still needed the appropriate establishment to deal with those fires when they did come along. The work around broadening the role was continuing through the NJC and there was a commitment to working together on those issues. The issue about reserves was raised, however Cllr Chard made the point that you can't fund ongoing expenditure from reserves. A cost/benefit analysis was being produced to help make the case to government about the importance of broadening the role. The work that the FRS had done in adding value to wider public services was praised.

Questions were asked about debt and national resilience.

[Charles Kerr presentation](#)

[Emma Lawrence Presentation](#)

[Cllr Nick Chard presentation](#)

Karen Lee MP speech to the Fire Conference – speech provided by her office

INTRODUCTION

Conference, thank you for inviting me to speak today. It is a huge honour to come here as the newly appointed Shadow Minister for Fire and Emergencies and to fight for the interests and improvement of the Fire Service.

I have regularly met with my predecessor, Chris Williamson MP, and I want to build on the great work he undertook.

As is with most public services under the Conservative Party, funding, staffing and resources are all decreasing while the service is expected to provide more.

I want to breakdown the challenges and deliver our approach to create a Fire Service for the Many.

GOVERNMENT CUTS

The government's attacks on the Fire service are threatening its sustainable future.

The Tory government have cut central funding year-on-year since 2010. The latest Settlement Funding Assessment has shown that the government will cut fire service funding by 15% by 2020, on top the cuts of around 30% since 2020.

The government's focus on 'efficiencies', rather than cost effectiveness, is very concerning for the future of the service.

We can see the real effects of their agenda in the cut in firefighters and the office staff employed by the service. Since 2010, the service has lost around 11,000 employees, including around 8,500 firefighters.

The government's cuts agenda is based on fire service reserves and a reduction in attendance at fire incidents.

I'd like to expose these myths.

Firstly, I acknowledge that the fire service's attendance at fire related incidents have reduced by 27% since 2010.

However, according to the government's own fire statistics, the fire service's attendance at fire and non-fire incidents have only reduced by 10%. How this justifies a 20% cut in staff, while expecting the same performance standard, is very unclear.

The government misunderstands the changing role of the Fire Service in keeping our communities' safe, not just in fire incidents.

Secondly, while staff are cut, the government point to reserves to show the financial strength of the service. However, of the £615 million in reserve, only £143 million is not earmarked, equating to only three weeks of extra operating costs.

The government is using these myths to dismantle the Fire Service.

And we, the Labour Party are offering an alternative which will build the Fire Service, not undermine it.

POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONERS

The service is changing, over the past two years we have seen the fire service attend more non-fire related incidents, rather than fire related incidents.

However, the Tory Government's fire service reform programme is very concerning and misunderstands the role the fire service delivers in our communities.

We the Labour Party firmly believe that merging the Fire Service with the Police and Crime Commissioner should not happen.

It raises public safety concerns and the operational distinctiveness of the fire service from the police.

The government has avoided in their impact assessment a pilot programme, a transparent policy goal and delivered a sham consultation which failed to ask the important questions. It changes the role.

Police and Crime Commissioners have noted that firefighters may be made to undertake unwarranted police activities. Work such as dealing with vulnerable people, including those with mental health problems, which do take up a lot of police time, should not be transferred to taking the time of firefighters.

The fire service's budget is already under pressure and the merger would enable the PCC to access the fire service's budget to help the equally pressured police service. The expansion of the service should not make the fire service a junior partner.

I understand the rationale and I understand that the fire service are responsible for far more than just fires.

However, your distinctiveness from the police service ensures some vulnerable communities are safe.

You are not the law enforcement branch of the public sector.

This enables you to enter communities and achieve levels of trust which can't be replicated by the police service. Your distinctiveness is crucial to public safety.

There is almost unanimous trust in the Fire Service and we must maintain this.

In changing the role of the Fire Service, we must look at the role you already play in our community.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL RESPONSE

Firefighter's role is very diverse, varying from the adoption of Emergency Medical Response contracts in some places to responding to terrorist incidents in others.

Like the Government, the Labour Party will look to expand the Fire Service's remit.

Rather than the Government's focus on efficiencies, we focus on cost effectiveness, and on the positives of what the Fire Service can contribute to our communities and how that can bring additional funding.

We will assess the outcomes of the National Joint Council's findings of the Fire and Rescue Authorities trials of Emergency Medical Response and look to provide proposals of additional investment into the service where it is necessary.

The benefits of the fire service delivering EMR rapid intervention are clear. Timely responses to cases such as a cardiac arrest, could be the difference between saving lives.

A properly trained and equipped fire service, co-responding with the ambulance service, effectively achieve this.

However, we will only support an expansion of the service if it is accompanied by proper investment and support.

The Labour Party will not contribute to the damage inflicted by the Tory Government.

PAY, PENSION AND CULTURE

Alongside supporting a well-resourced service, the pay cap will be scrapped for public sector workers.

You will see a pay rise under a Labour Government.

Not a smoke and mirrors real-terms pay cut like that under the current government, but a pay rise above inflation.

Firefighters undertake courageous work to keep our communities' safe and they should be rewarded appropriately.

From an economic perspective, the latest PCS's report shows that a properly funding Public Sector will promote growth across all sectors of society through higher spending.

Is a decent wage too much to ask for? I think not ...

And neither is a strong, reliable pension.

With deficits in the Pension scheme every year for the past 8 years, Labour will look to address the current structure and approach.

How is it fair that you work hard for years on end in a very courageous job that you are then not provided a fair wage and a stable pension.

We need proper support for all workers.

Beyond financial commitments, diversity and support is crucial for a well-functioning fire service. From firefighters to office staff, every worker from all backgrounds are crucial to the great work the service provide.

We need to celebrate diversity and promote an inclusive culture where everyone can be successful within the service.

I believe our plan will champion the service.

A proper wage, greater pension security and continuing to foster a great working culture.

GRENFELL – CLADDING, CABLING & SPRINKLERS

We have a duty to ensure there is never a repeat of the awful Grenfell tragedy.

I went to Grenfell not long after the tragedy and laid flowers on behalf of Lincoln. It really knocked me back. Seeing it on TV is horrific, but in person it is something else.

Since I've been on the Silent march and just walking through the posh streets of Kensington to the tower really doesn't sit right with me.

Those families and emergency services involved, need our support.

We know where the direct problems lie, so let's fix it.

We need to address the fire regulatory system now!

We welcome the recommendations in the interim Hackett Report and that the current fire regulatory system for building regulations and fire safety are not fit for purpose.

Cladding, cabling and sprinklers are not meeting the level required to keep the public safe. The current cladding situation is deeply concerning. 9 months to the day after the tragedy, of the 301 high-rise buildings over 18 metres identified by experts as not meeting building regulations guidance, only seven buildings have completed cladding replacement.

I have spoken with the FBU and they have advised me that had this tragedy occurred outside Central London, the tragedy may have been much worse due to a lack of resources.

The government need to stop dragging their heels and offer local authorities and private companies the support they need to keep our communities safe.

Greater accountability is needed on developers of high rise buildings. Residents safety should be put before profits and certainly should not be footing the bill on behalf of private companies.

The Housing Secretary's only inclusion is an empty assertion that building owners should have the "Moral Duty" to replace the cladding.

To be clear, a Labour Government will ensure that the cladding is removed and not at the expense of Lease holders, Local Authorities and private companies would be supported to ensure this happens.

The transferring of EU regulations in to UK law also provides the political opportunity to address the current cable regulations.

Millions of metres of cabling across the UK meet regulations, but experts such as Safer Structures highlight the regulations are not of a sufficient minimum standard to ensure fire safety.

This is a similar story with sprinklers in schools. The governments regulations for building new schools do not require the installation of sprinklers, arguing pupil safety is ensured with fire exits.

Yet this does not go anywhere near addressing the infrastructural cost of the schools burning down.

The Labour Party seek to return both regulation and inspection back to where they belong, to the public sector and to the trained, impartial expertise of the Fire Service.

A new regulatory system, along the lines of the Hackett Review's interim report, is needed to prevent any more fire disasters like that of Grenfell.

CONCLUSION

I am very passionate about the fire brief. I believe you aren't currently getting the deal you deserve.

A reduction in fire incidents since 2010 does not reflect a reduction in your work or importance to society.

It reflects your changing importance in the community and you need the support to adapt to this new demand.

I am still relatively new to the Fire and Emergencies brief and I am looking forward to meeting with many of you in the coming months. I am more than happy to take your questions, however, if I am not sure of an answer please leave your contact details and I will be in touch quickly with a response.

Keynote session 8. Contested PCC Business cases: West Mercia case study

Cllr Eric Carter, Chairman Shropshire fire and rescue authority

Cllr Roger Phillips, Chairman Hereford and Worcester fire and rescue authority

The West Mercia PCC was one of the PCC's wh had put forward a business case to the Home Secretary for determination after local disagreement over the governance arrangements. Cllr Carter and Cllr Phillips from the two FRAs affected outlined their concerns. It was outlined that the Fire Minister had previously stated that governance changes were a matter for local areas.

Their particular concerns were around the mandate of the PCC to take on fire governance, and the lack of public and local authority support. They also had concerns around one organisations making decisions on the PCC's business case, they would have preferred there to be a panel overseeing the process. In particular they had concerns around the breadth of expertise needed to make a full assessment of the business case.

National resilience and rising crime were raised as issues for the PCC in the midst of changes in governance.

Issues were raised about both the resources and powers available to Police and Crime Panels in fulfilling their scrutiny functions in relation to an expanded remit including fire and the potential impact on the workforce.

Working with the ambulance services was raised as a great asset of the fire and rescue service. Particularly in a rural area, the importance of joined up working on health was seen as key. However how this work would continue under the PCC was unclear.

Both speakers were clear that this was not a political issue, but it was about what was right for the fire and rescue service locally. There were particular concerns that the changes in governance could be used to save money for the police service.

[Cllr Carter and Cllr Phillips' presentation](#)



Local Government Association
18 Smith Square
London SW1P 3HZ

Telephone 020 7664 3000
Fax 020 7664 3030
Email info@local.gov.uk
www.local.gov.uk

© Local Government Association

For a copy in Braille, larger print or audio,
please contact us on 020 7664 3000. Page 23 of 23
We consider requests on an individual basis.