
IRSPM Annual Conference 2022
Panel PO7 Emergency Services

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Still waiting for Godot:

The government's proposals
for reform of Fire and Rescue
Services in England

Introduction

- There are 3 key aspects to the policy, delivery and assurance arrangements or Fire and Rescue Services
 - The F&R National Framework which performance management and accountability arrangements
 - The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022 which introduce new duties under the Fire Safety Order for building owners or managers (responsible persons).
 - The arrangements for multi-agencies responses to major Civil Emergencies
- All three are inter-related, affect and should be complementary but this paper primarily relates to issues covered by the National Framework (there are ongoing developments in the other two)

The 2017 Policing and Crime Act 2017 Act

- The overall objective was greater **transparency and accountability via directly elected individuals** (originally PCCs and elected Mayors, but subsequently PFCCs for fire services).
- In addition the 2012 **National Framework** for Fire & Rescue Services was no longer fit for purpose and was replaced in 2018
- This was supplemented by the re-introduced of an **external inspection** and assessment regime.
- Coincidentally a series of major incidents and emergencies (particularly the Grenfell Tower Fire and Manchester Arena Attack) spotlighted the Emergency Services response to major emergencies.
- The spotlight on the performance, organisational and financial resilience of emergency services was **intensified during the COVID pandemic and the continuing austerity policies** affecting all public services since 2010.

Police Fire and Crime Commissioners

- Originally a Labour idea, **Police and Crime Commissioners** were included in 2010 manifesto's of both Conservatives and Liberal Democrats) and established by the ***Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011***
- **Public have been unenthusiastic:**
 - 1st election for PCCs in Nov 2012 had a historically low electoral turnout,
 - 2nd election in May 2016 coincided with local government elections for 40 of 43 territorial police forces (not London or Greater Manchester).
 - 3rd election in 2021 was during the pandemic.
- However the 2015 Conservative Manifesto included a proposal to extend PCCs' control to all fire services (**PFCCs**) and in **2017 Policing and Crime Act** facilitated PCCs taking responsibility for FRS subject to a '**local case**' being made.
- There are **38 PCCs, 4 of which are PFCCs**, all in England (Essex, Staffs, Northants and North Yorkshire) while London and Greater Manchester, have 'mayoral' models.

HMICFRS identified 6 national issues from Inspections

Home Office to determine the role of fire and rescue services, to remove any ambiguity

Sector should remove unjustifiable variation in performance, (including the definition of risk).

The sector should review and reform how effectively pay and conditions are determined.

The Home Office should invest chief fire officers with operational independence.

The Home Office should ensure that the sector has sufficient capacity and capability to bring about change

There should be a code of ethics for the sector

Fire Service Reform Agenda

July 2020,
Announcement of a 2
part review of PCCs/
PFCCs, - intention to
extend and
strengthening the
'commissioner' model

Kerslake, Hackitt,
Redmond.
HMICFRS' State of
Fire and COVID-19
Reports published

Phase 2 and 3
Reports received
Fire Reform White
Paper
consultation May
2022

1st part –
primarily
focussed on the
Police). 2nd part
a White Paper
to be published
in Spring 2021

Announcement in
March 2021 further
reform will focus on
three areas "people;
professionalism; and
governance"
anticipated in autumn
2021

Turbulent times?

**Significant
changes since last
year's conference
- external to the
sector**

- **Deteriorating macro-economic circumstances (Brexit, fuel crises, and the Ukraine conflict)**
- **Political volatility (3x PMs - Johnson/Truss/Sunak
2x Home Secs - Braverman/Patel)**
- **Increasing challenge but faltering response to
climate change COP27**
- **The single person 'brand' of governance besmirched
by the institutionally racist, misogynist and
homophobic Metropolitan Police (Casey) and the
London Fire Brigade (Afzal)**
- **Widespread Public Sector Cost of Living Strikes.**

Turbulent times?

**Significant
changes since last
year's conference
– within the
sector**

- **Independent inquiry reports - Manchester and Grenfell)**
- **legal proceedings/government financial demands on Construction sector.**
- **Fire service strike relatively quickly resolved with a two-year settlement under the current national negotiating machinery.**
- **Ministers for Crime Policing and Fire at Home Office x4 Malthouse/Pursglove/Quin/Philp**
- **A new Chief Inspector at HMICFRS**



Omissions

- **Funding and Resourcing:**
 - Financial Support from HMG in short, medium and long-term
 - Concepts of financial sustainability and resilience
- **Review of organisational landscape responsibilities and inter-relationships.**
 - National
 - Local
- **Improvements to internal and external scrutiny**
 - Improved internal scrutiny requirements
 - Government Intervention

Predictions rather than conclusions IRSPM 2022

Change or issue	yes	partial	no
Role clarifications and operational Independence for CFO.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Joined up working and inter-agency collaboration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Revisiting Building Regulations and Enforcement			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Improved Data, Information, and Standards		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Restructuring of Financial support			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
New local public audit	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Corporate or Governance Inspection added to inspection regime			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
National negotiating machinery reform	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Mandatory PFCCs and Boundary Changes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

Predictions have therefore changed.

Change or issue	yes	partial	no
Role clarifications/operational independence for CFO/clarify strategic and operational boundaries	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Joined up working and inter-agency collaboration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Revisiting Building Regulations, Fire Safety Order and Fire Enforcement		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Improved Data, Information, and Standards		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Restructuring of Financial support			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
New local public audit arrangements	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Corporate or Governance Inspection added to inspection regime			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
National negotiating machinery reform		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Discretionary rather than mandatory PFCCs but an increase in boundary changes (with more Combined Authority Mayors)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		