

FIRE STANDARDS BOARD

Title of Paper	Ministerial Expectations for the Fire Standards Board <i>For information</i>
Date of Meeting	2 April 2019
Paper Number	Paper 2
Presented by	Jonny Bugg

Summary

Taking stock on recent Ministerial meeting with the Board Chair and Vice Chair.

Recommendations

Consider how standards produced are implemented, including lessons learned from other sectors, communications channels and change management capability.

Decisions Required

None.

Background Information

- 1. The FSB Chair and Vice Chair met with Nick Hurd, Minister for Policing and the Fire Service on 19 March 2019 for an introductory meeting to set out early progress and plans for the new body.** The Chairs updated the Minister that the first Board meeting had been held and terms agreed. The standards development setting process and the standards template had also been agreed.
- 2. Prioritisation was a key focus and the need to make demonstrable progress on matters of importance for the sector.** The Minister was briefed that the second Board meeting would focus on prioritisation. There was a desire to produce standards quickly, balancing this with the need to develop standards in the most significant areas, as those could take more time. The Chairs said that first standard may be produced as early as September. The Chairs outlined how the standards produced would be detailed but not prescriptive. Maintenance of standards would be built in to a cyclical process, with review, reassessment and revaluation being as important as initial development.
- 3. The Minister saw the first HMICFRS reports findings (prevention, culture etc) as a key foundation for the Board's work and key to informing its early priorities.** Progress had

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been made with HMICFRS, which will be an important bilateral relationship underpinned by an MOU and quarterly meetings. The Chairs were clear that they were keen to engage with the sector at all levels and are attending conferences and were planning visits to services with different types of governance model. Scottish and Welsh services have offered to compare notes on their individual standards work which was welcome.

4. **The Minister set out his expectations of the Board, which are similar to those he outlined at the HMICFRS event in January: to understand what ‘good’ looks like and address inconsistencies across a fragmented system.** He wants standards to be dynamic with today’s best practice becoming the future baseline. He sees HMICFRS and FSB, with delivery coordination by NFCC, as the main tools to drive a cycle of change but flagged concerns about capacity to do so. He mentioned that Policing has, at times, suffered from a lack of clarity on who sets standards, with HMICFRS filling the void at times, which he wants to avoid in Fire.
5. **The Minister asked how lessons were being learnt from other relevant sectors.** The Chair and Vice Chair noted that they have been working to gather and apply learning from other sectors including Health. At a systems-leadership level, there is a need to ensure a mutually-supportive environment committed to tackling shared issues between Chiefs, Inspectorate and the Standards Body.
6. **Learning from other sectors suggests that meaningful consultative mechanisms and strong communications channels are key.** Jonny Bugg gave a readout from recent conversations with College of Policing leaders on lessons learnt in establishing a standards body. These included staying in touch with the frontline, minimising ‘gold-plating’ and thinking about ways to co-create standards with the sector. An early College error was to get carried away with being a membership service that had to be signed up to – creating barriers to access. A good, proactive communications approach could include being active on social media and being clear on what the Fire Standards Board is here for and to communicate this well.
7. **The Minister flagged that a key challenge for the sector will be how to ensure that the standards produced by the Board are implemented, and a need for strong change management in the Fire sector.** HMICFRS will hold up a mirror and report but their role is not to ensure implementation. The Minister felt that change management capability in the fire sector should be a subject which the Board should consider, and which should also inform spending review planning.