

MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 14th July 2021

Time: 12:30- 15:30 hours

Venue: Virtual Meeting - Microsoft Teams

Attendees:	Suzanne McCarthy (SMcC) – Chair Alison Sansome (AS) – Vice-Chair Cllr. Nick Chard (NC1) – Local Government Association (LGA) Mark Hardingham (MH) – National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Awaiting nomination from Association of Police & Crime Commissioners (APCC)
In Attendance:	Lucy Ellender (LE) – Local Government Association (LGA) Anjili Mapara (AM) – Home Office (Deputised for JB) Tom Pinchbeck (TP) – Home Office Eddie Smithwick (ES)– Association of Police & Crime Commissioners (APCC) (Deputised for APCC representative)
Executive Support Team:	Nick Collins (NC2) - NFCC Central Programme Office (CPO) Natasha Elia (NE) – NFCC Central Programme Office (CPO) Chimmi Ezigboh (CE) - NFCC Central Programme Office (CPO) Joy Flanagan (JF) – NFCC Central Programme Office (CPO)
Guest Attendees:	Donna Bentley (DB) –NFCC Safeguarding Committee Chair Steve Beakhust (SB) – NFCC Data and Digital Programme Manager
Apologies	Jonny Bugg (JB) – Home Office

Introductions, welcome and apologies and conflicts of interest

Chair

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting

AM gave JB's apologies and advised she would act on his behalf.

Due to timing issues, the APCC representative for the Board had not yet been nominated. ES acted on behalf of the APCC for this meeting.

Minutes of meeting and matters arising

Chair

Minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting of the 19th April 2021.

Updates on the outstanding actions were provided from the Actions and Decisions Log.

Item 3 Paper 1 – Fire Standards Delivery Plan Progress Report – for information

CPO

JF provided an overview of the progress table contained at Appendix A attached to the paper.

She explained that the Prevention Fire Standard was expected to be published by 30th July and the Protection Fire Standard to follow in September 2021.

Feedback from the consultation for the Protection Fire Standard had raised queries relating to the responsibilities of some services in regulating petroleum and explosives. An approach to how this could be incorporated into the standard was yet to be determined. Discussions were planned with subject matter experts to determine this.

JF advised the Board that these discussions were due to conclude in July and a final Protection Fire Standard would be presented to the Board in August via email for its agreement to commence quality assurance (QA).

JF explained that the timelines for the delivery of Fire Standards had changed slightly due to several external factors. SMcC said that she had talked through the forward plan with the Minister earlier in the week and he indicated that he was content with the pace of delivery.

Item 4 – Guest Speakers

CPO

Safeguarding Fire Standard

The Board welcomed Donna Bentley (DB), Community Development & Safeguarding Manager for Essex Fire and Rescue Service and Chair of NFCC Safeguarding Committee.

DB provided a summary of the work happening within the NFCC Safeguarding workstream. She explained that Safeguarding aims and objectives within the fire sector were lacking. To resolve this, the NFCC Safeguarding Committee conducted a review of the difficulties faced by services in effectively delivering their safeguarding commitments.

The review found that services faced difficulty in adhering to local authority audit requirements. The Safeguarding Committee had responded by producing a national self-assessment tool to help services satisfy local authority safeguarding audit requirements as well as providing assurance to local authority boards. The tool and its supporting guidance were released across UK services to drive consistency in the delivery of national safeguarding requirements and would be key guidance for the Safeguarding Fire Standard.

DB said that key stakeholders had been invited to comment at peer review on the Safeguarding Fire Standard. These stakeholders included NHS Public Health England, the Department of Health and Social Care, the Chief Social Worker, local authorities and strategic members of police and education boards. Feedback resulted in language revisions to emphasise the links to key legislation.

DB explained that the legislation driving the Safeguarding Fire Standard related to the role of firefighters not appearing on the list of Excepted Professions in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act. In response to this, she had engaged with the Home Office to ascertain how Fire and Rescue Services could be represented on the list and that employees of those services were appropriately DBS checked to carry out their duties in the community. She added that a business case seeking to revise the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act to include Fire and Rescue Services as an Excepted Profession had been submitted. It had since progressed to the Ministry of Justice and where Ministerial support was being sought. The next step was to timetable this for a Parliamentary hearing.

AM requested the name of the contact DB had engaged with in the Home Office to provide support and information on progression. She added that James Webb within the Home Office would be interested in talking to DB regarding the Fire Standard and asked if the safeguarding of employees would be addressed in this standard or would be described elsewhere. DB said the safeguarding of employees would be contained in this standard and revisions would be made to clarify this. She added that the NFCC Safeguarding Committee would work closely with the NFCC Workforce Committee to ensure any HR guidance reflected the need to safeguard both employees and communities.

MH asked if there were other professional Safeguarding Standards. DB responded that she had been invited to review the NHS draft Safeguarding Standard and said there may be other standards to review during this development phase.

AS advised the standard would need to make clear what the Fire and Rescue Service contribution was within the landscape of safeguarding. She suggested the outcome statement should be more impactful. DB agreed and advised that she would review and revise the draft standard to strengthen its outcome.

SMcC questioned how the Safeguarding Fire Standard would be able to demonstrate it added value to the professionalism of the service and the communities it serves. The quantitative value for some benefits could be demonstrated clearly however, others were more aspirational. DB advised that the main benefit of the Safeguarding Fire Standard was that it was an enabler for partnership working, engaging with other safeguarding boards, gathering data and intelligence, and enabling future efficient and effective delivery of Fire Rescue Services. She

added that the language of the benefits listed would be revised to ensure they were quantifiable.

SMcC thanked DB for her contribution. DB left the meeting.

Action FSB-A088: Fire Standards Executive Team to ensure contact details of those in the Home Office engaged on the proposed legislative changes to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act are provided to AM.

Action FSB-A089: Fire Standards Executive Team to engage with James Webb regarding the Safeguarding Fire Standard.

Action FSB-A090: Fire Standards Executive Team to work with DB to research and review other professional Safeguarding Standards.

Data Management Fire Standard

The Board welcomed to the meeting Steve Beakhust (SB), Digital and Data Programme Manager in the NFCC Central Programme Office.

SB provided an overview of the Programme, explaining the two focusses being a strategic alignment to deliver the data and digital requirements emerging from Fit for the Future and the development of a National Data Hub (NDH).

SB explained that several improvement objectives had been defined and work to develop these was underway. SB explained that the NDH was one of these objectives, and the delivery of this would support national capability to provide data analysis, data modelling, and centralised governance of data across services. It would also allow services and the NFCC to respond to business questions and support decision making. The NDH was currently in design phase which was due to complete by the end of August.

SB explained that delivery of the NDH would help to answer the degree of impact of Fire Standards across all services. In conjunction with the Fire Standards team, work to capture data which would help the Board to determine the impact of the Fire Standards was underway and would be input into the NDH when completed. SB stated that the analysis would be continual, working to capture a baseline measurement initially and then measure this impact over time.

SB advised that the development of the Data Fire Standard was in its infancy and the desire was to involve various experts to help inform its content. Early engagement with the Data Standards Authority was positive and they had offered support throughout development.

SB explained the four main areas the draft Data Management Fire Standard would cover would be:

1. Data collection;
2. Data Management;
3. Information Governance; and
4. The UK's Fire Service Core Data Model.

SB confirmed the Programme had funding of £300k for the remainder of the financial year to allocate to specific deliverables. Given the amount of work required, discussions were currently taking place between the Home Office, NFCC, the Programme Board and others to prioritise the Digital and Data Programme deliverables, the Data Management Fire Standard being included within these discussions.

SB clarified that additional data and digital topics had been identified where a Fire Standard might also be helpful. This would be researched further.

AM commented that parties which hold data should be engaged and joined up so as not to duplicate data and efforts. She suggested that the scope of the proposed Data Management Fire Standard was broad and there was a risk it could lead to several standards.

MH suggested standards across the industry should be researched to ensure the product was manageable for services to adopt. He added that the content of the standard should aim to be strategic to allow services to apply flexibility based on their funding limitations and the limitations of national infrastructure.

SMcC thanked SB for his presentation. SB left the meeting

Item 5 Paper 2 – Activity Framework Review - *for information*

CPO

JF provided an overview of the Activity Framework. She summarised that its purpose was to provide a complete roadmap for the Board of the development of the Fire Standards, listing all activities undertaken by services and the standards produced for each of those. For each activity, existing underpinning guidance was identified that was recognised as good practice. This along with the Activity Framework helped to identify and prioritise Fire Standards. JF then presented an impact assessment which provided the Board with the drivers and rationale for the selection of those Fire Standards included in phases one and two.

NC1 found the impact assessment very useful but cautioned that the different aspects did not necessarily carry the same weight. AM said that there was a qualitative versus quantitative

balance that needed to be struck. She added there was much work to be done and continual reviews of the Activity Framework were helpful for the Board.

JF agreed with the points raised and explained that the Activity Framework would be kept under review to ensure changes which may impact the prioritisation or direction of Fire Standards were considered in a timely manner.

Item 6 Paper 3 – Quality Assurance Recommendations Update_- *for decision*

CPO

JF explained that the update summarised feedback and key themes received from the QA exercises that had taken place.

JF highlighted recommendation ID number 3a, noting the recommendation was to produce a Commissioning Brief for each Fire Standard. She explained that having had the experience of delivering several standards, her alternative suggestion would be to revise the development process to include the following steps:

1. The Fire Standards team to clarify the scope of each Fire Standard with subject matter experts at an early stage; and then
2. The Fire Standards team to seek Board agreement on the scope that had been set by the subject matter experts.

SMcC said that the Board would require reassurance that the proposed revision to the process would aid the delivery of the Fire Standards. JF said that the benefit of these steps would help them improve the smooth running of the development process and clarify the process from the outset. She also explained that the steps proposed were currently undertaken informally by the Fire Standards Executive Team, although not formally documented, and therefore would be unlikely to impact the current delivery timescales.

JF asked the Board to consider how it could be assured of the quality of the supporting guidance linked to a Fire Standard. MH responded that although there was a robust QA process in place for the standards, an appropriate and proportionate QA process for products produced by the NFCC should be considered.

Action FSB-A091: Fire Standards Executive Team to present a Fire Standards review process to the Board at the next Board meeting.

Action FSB-A092: MH to put in place NFCC QA processes for guidance. Update to be provided at the next Board meeting.

Decision FSB-D035: The Board approved a revision to the Development Process to include Board sign-off of scope.

Item 7 Paper 4 – Fire Standards Approval - *for decision*

CPO

Prevention Fire Standard – Sign-off to commence QA

JF presented the draft Prevention Fire Standard and the related post-consultation report. She summarised the steps taken in developing the Prevention Fire Standard and explained she was seeking the Board's agreement to commence QA.

JF explained that following a review of consultation feedback, it was felt that some benefits would be impossible to measure, which had led to a revision of that section of the standard. The benefits remaining might still require further thought. She said that more work was planned to develop a methodology for measuring and defining benefits. JF explained that this work might take time and it was felt that this should not prevent the launch of the Prevention Fire Standard. She mentioned that this Fire Standard would not be alone in this as many already published Standards may require revisions to their benefits sections.

AM said that there was internal debate within the Home Office team about whether the benefits should delve deeper into the detail of the standard. In view of this, AM confirmed that the Home Office's sign-off was subject to the outcome of a meeting with James Webb in the Home Office set for 28th July. JF explained that delaying the decision to sign-off the Fire Standard until that date would delay its publication. SMcC clarified that the QA could commence and run in parallel with the resolution of issues.

Decision FSB-D036: The Board agreed to sign off the draft Prevention Fire Standard to commence QA, notwithstanding continued discussion with the Home Office regarding the benefits.

Action FSB-A093: The Fire Standards team to meet with Home Office regarding the benefits of the Prevention Fire Standard.

Safeguarding Fire Standard – sign-off to commence consultation

SMcC raised concerns about the Desired Outcome section and explained that she thought the standard as drafted was too broad. The Board agreed that the Safeguarding Fire Standard required further revision before being signed-off for consultation.

Action FSB-A094: The Safeguarding Fire Standard to be revised based on feedback from this meeting and returned to the Board via email for sign-off to commence consultation.

Well-Led Organisation – for decision

JF explained the steps taken to develop the current draft of the Well-Led Organisation Fire Standard. She said that she felt the standard required further refinement and asked the Board whether it felt that in its current format it would achieve its original intention. AM noted that there was overlap with the National Framework and welcomed further discussions to resolve this.

JF suggested pausing this Fire Standard and proposed that the three Leadership Fire Standards; Developing Leaders, Workforce Management; and the Well-Led Organisation be realigned to develop and deliver them in parallel as a complementary set of standards as was done with the NOG standards.

The proposed approach she said would help to avoid repetition, help to reduce the risk of topics being missed and reduce the burden on services having to be involved in the development and reviewing of multiple standards. JF added that services would find it helpful to review the standards alongside one another. JF recognised that this would create a challenge with timing, but felt it would improve the quality of the end products.

The Board discussed the points raised and supported JF's proposal in principle to realign the timelines of the three Leadership Fire Standards to develop and deliver them as a set. AM explained that before this could be agreed, the Home Office would need to understand the impact on deliverables and how it would align with the grant agreement.

On another matter, NC1 raised that in his view governance and boundaries with governing bodies was not clearly articulated in this standard's How to Achieve the Fire Standard section. JF agreed to work with the LGA and the APCC to draft appropriate wording.

The Board also discussed the title of the Well-Led Organisation Fire Standard and agreed upon a new title: Service Leadership.

Action FSB-A095: The Fire Standards Executive Team to discuss how the delivery of the Leadership Fire Standards in parallel may impact agreed deliverables.

Action FSB-A096: The Fire Standards Executive Team to work with the LGA and the APCC to address the articulation of governance within the How to Achieve section of the Service Leadership Fire Standard (formerly Well-Led Organisation)

Decision – FSB-D037: The Board agreed that the Well-Led Organisation Fire Standard be renamed Service Leadership.

Protection Fire Standard – For information

JF explained the Protection Fire Standard required additional work to resolve how petroleum and explosives would be covered. Once this has been resolved, the Fire Standard was expected to be launched at the Prevention and Protection conference on 3rd September.

MH suggested the wording in the desired outcome section of the Fire Standard should be revised to include the regulatory role of the fire and rescue service. JF agreed to the suggested revision.

Action FSB-A097: Fire Standards Executive Team to revise Protection Fire Standard's outcome section to include the regulatory role of the fire and rescue service

Item 8 Paper 5 – General Progress - *for information*

CPO

JF gave the Board a summary of the General Progress report, highlighting in particular the work on data collection to support conclusions on benefits realised as a result of the introduction of the Fire Standards individually and as a suite

JF asked the Board to give its view on the level at which benefits should be set. She suggested three options:

1. the desired outcome as stated in the Standard being achieved; or
2. services achieving the section on what they need to do to meet the standard; or
3. a blend of options one and two.

Board members agreed with the third option, being a statement of benefits that were more blended and evidence-based, and which would support comprehensive spending review bids.

MH added that having a consistent set of guidance which would support services with the implementation of each Fire Standard, was key to achieving the benefits. Benefits to the public as well as to the organisation and those within it should be taken into consideration. He suggested that it would be a useful exercise to talk regularly with HMICFRS to assess what benefits had been found through inspections to avoid duplication of effort and reduce the burden on services in having to provide the same data to many parties.

AS said the Board should take care not to attach particular benefits to any one standard, especially where several standards may contribute. This could lead to complexity and repetition.

JF thanked the Board for their comments and advised that more work on benefits would be undertaken and reported back in due course. A website refresh was due at the end of the year

and a new benefits section was under consideration. This potentially would highlight the overarching benefits that implementing Fire Standards bring to services.

Decision FSB-D034: The Board agreed that Fire Standards benefits should be comprised of both the desired outcome and the actions services must take being achieved.

Item 9 Paper 6 – Board Effectiveness Review - *for information*

Chair

SMcC introduced the paper and noted that there had been generally a positive response from the Board to the questions asked. She highlighted a number of comments that the Board might wish to discuss.

In light of the responses given SMcC asked the Board to confirm if an in-person meeting to discuss the Board's terms of reference, the White Paper and the Board's role following the production of the White Paper would be useful. The Board agreed this would be beneficial and aim to arrange this for a date after the White Paper had been published.

SMcC went on to seek the Board's opinion on whether there should be more representation from fire and rescue services on the Board. MH responded that Chief Fire Officers had not voiced any concerns about representation on the Board. SMcC thought that a change in the Board's composition might unbalance it. She noted that inviting guest speakers from services to talk about the standard they are working on helped to ensure that services had the ability to engage with the Board. The Board agreed that the composition of the Board was appropriate and should not change.

SMcC referred to comments about the Board papers. JF added that Board papers were produced in line with government protocol, ensuring that Board members were given enough time to review the papers. NC1 said that the papers had improved in quality and he was happy with the quantity and timeliness. AS added that the papers struck a good balance in providing the right amount of information to inform decision making.

Action-FSB-A098: Fire Standards Executive Team to arrange an in-person Fire Standards Board workshop by November 2021 following the publication of the White Paper.

Item 10 – Any Other Business

Chair

No item was raised under Any Other Business.