

MINUTES

Date: Tuesday 19th April 2021
Time: 13:00 –15:30 hours
Venue: Virtual Meeting - Microsoft Teams

Attendees:	Suzanne McCarthy (SMcC) – Chair Alison Sansome (AS) – Vice-Chair Jonny Bugg (JB) – Home Office Cllr Nick Chard (NC1) – Local Government Association (LGA) Mark Hardingham (MH) – National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Julia Mulligan (JM) – Association of Police & Crime Commissioners (APCC)
In attendance:	Rachael Aldridge (RA) - Local Government Association (LGA) Anjili Mapara (MP) – Home Office (<i>deputized for JB during Paper 1</i>) Tom Pinchbeck (TP) – Home Office Eddie Smithwick (ES) – Association of Police & Crime Commissioners (APCC)
Executive Team	Nick Collins (NC2) - NFCC Central Programme Office (CPO) Natasha Elia (NE) – NFCC Central Programme Office (CPO) Joy Flanagan (JF) – NFCC Central Programme Office (CPO)
Guest:	Zoe Billingham (ZB) – Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary for Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)

Introductions, welcome and apologies and conflicts of interest

Chair

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

No conflicts of interest were expressed by Board members.

Minutes of meeting and matters arising

Chair

Minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting of the 16th February 2021. Updates on the outstanding actions were given.

Item 2 – Guest Speaker Zoe Billingham

CPO

The Board welcomed Zoe Billingham, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary for Fire & Rescue Services, to the meeting.

ZB presented an overview of the State of Fire and Rescue Report 2020.

The Board made several observational comments which were discussed. They included a view that the national priorities and their hierarchy could be made clearer in the State of Fire and Rescue Report; the disparity between issues reported in the national report compared to those reported in individual service inspection findings reports which are more likely to drive improvements at a local level. Points were also raised about the proposals for operational independence of chief officers and the challenges for services with primarily an on-call workforce and the implications of recommendations on them as well as the focus for future inspections.

ZB responded stating that the recommendations made should not be viewed in isolation but used to inform setting a vision for the fire and rescue service over the next five to ten years. She added that services would need to be more innovative and the drive should be to ensure communities get the same level of service wherever they are in the country.

She added that the intention for the inspectorate moving forward was not only to be more focussed on addressing culture issues, but, more importantly, to focus on any inappropriate and improper practises within fire and rescue services. ZB added that the inspectorate had not been challenging enough in highlighting efficient ways of working and there was still a lack of efficiency in how services matched their resources to risk. There would be a much more focussed look at those challenging areas moving forward.

JB questioned how the inspectorate would be assessing Fire Standards within services. ZB responded that the inspectorate would incorporate the Fire Standards into their assessment methodology, and, with the support of the Fire Standards Board, would ensure their staff were fully trained to be able to identify the assurance mechanisms put in place by services to help them achieve the Fire Standards.

SMcC thanks ZB for her presentation and invited her to remain for the discussion on Fire Standards benefits measurements.

Item 4 – Paper 2 – Fire Standards Benefits Measurements

CPO

JF introduced the paper and summarised the progress made in how the Board proposed to measure the benefits of the different Fire Standards. She also highlighted the challenge around collecting comparable and quality data from each service.

The paper presented three approaches, and she asked the Board to discuss and agree a way forward with regards to baselining and measuring benefits.

The Board discussed the challenges associated with assessing services at an individual level and gathering the appropriate data to form a baseline of performance. It was agreed that a baseline was needed to enable the Board to see the difference Fire Standards were making once in place and being achieved by services.

It was agreed that the metrics for how the individual benefits included in each Fire Standard would be measured needed to be agreed. Work to refine the approach to benefits management and measurement was being taken forward by the Executive Team on behalf of the Board. It had previously been agreed that the Board would be provided with an annual report which would provide it with an overview of services' performance against the standards and if the intended benefits were being realised.

It was noted that the Board felt that some of the benefits appeared to be very much internally focussed and it was suggested that they should be broadened to consider the wider impact on partners and the community. This would be considered in the further work that was planned

In addition to the approaches outlined in the paper, it was proposed that working with HMICFRS to support the Board in this area would benefit the relationship between the two bodies. To be able to utilise any data the Inspectorate already collected would be beneficial.

ZB confirmed that the Inspectorate was content to work alongside the Board, while recognising the independence of the two organisations. She added that she would like to explore ways to share information with the Board and would value further discussions to clarify and identify data captured by the Inspectorate.

SMcC suggested that it would be helpful if a joint statement made by the Board and HMICFRS was published that would emphasise the importance of good data collection. ZB confirmed her agreement to the drafting and publication of such a statement.

It was also recognised and agreed that services needed time to embed new ways of working and therefore the timing of data collection needed consideration.

NC2 advised that there was a short-term accelerated programme of works within the Data and Digital Programme (DDP) to address the immediate needs of the Board in baselining benefits. There was also a longer-term vision which was seeking to address the data requirement for Fire and Rescue Services and into which the needs of the Board would be fed.

Decision: FSB-D028: The Board confirmed it was content with the combination of approaches to managing Fire Standards benefits as suggested in the paper, subject to the amendments discussed.

Action FSB-A080 – Executive Team to work with key stakeholders as proposed in the paper to clarify the data required to form a current baseline and the metrics needed to measure benefits of Fire Standards in future.

Action FSB-A081– Executive Team to arrange discussion with ZB to clarify datasets available to map to those required to support both establishing a current baseline and metrics for benefits realisation work.

Action FSB-A082 – CPO to draft a joint Board/Inspectorate statement emphasising the importance of data collection.

Item 7 - Paper 4 – Fire Standards Approval

CPO

The Board discussed the implications of election purdah on the publication of the next Fire Standards. Publication dates had therefore been adjusted to allow for purdah as it was recognised that there were limitations on those Board members who held political offices being able to engage in publicising Fire Standards during that period.

Code of Ethics Fire Standard

JF introduced the paper and advised that the Board was requested to sign-off the draft Code of Ethics Fire Standard for Quality Assurance (QA). Subject to QA, the Board would be asked to give its final approval via email in order for the intended publication date to be achieved.

It was noted that the new APCCs would not be in post until the 13th May and therefore it was proposed that the launch be postponed until the 18th May.

The Board discussed the Fire Standard which included points raised about the potential impact of the upcoming Government White Paper and an opportunity to feed in any learning from the review of the Police Code of Ethics in progress through the College of Policing.

NC1 requested that the Code of Ethics Fire Standard be renamed the Core Code of Ethics Fire Standard on the basis that would provide consistency in mirroring the Core Code of Ethics. This point was discussed reflecting on the journey to the current position. The Board was reminded that the initial intention was to establish a national code of ethics to underpin the Fire Standard. There was a documented decision made at the beginning of the process that the Fire Standard would specifically address ethical behaviour and should direct services to a common ethical code. The name was agreed as the Code of Ethics Fire Standard at the start of the development phase.

The naming of the Core Code of Ethics was as a result of feedback from services during peer review and a desire to make clear that services may add to, but not detract from, the Core

Code. The Board accepted the rationale for this. It agreed that the Fire Standard set out a desired outcome of creating positive working environments and required services to commit to the principles within the Core Code. Therefore, the Board agreed the naming convention should remain as it was.

SMcC requested the Board to confirm its agreement to both the name of the standard and for it to be approved subject to QA. This was agreed.

Decision FSB-D029: The Board agreed that the Fire Standard should remain as the Code of Ethics Fire Standard.

Decision FSB-D030: The Board confirmed the Code of Ethics Fire Standard be approved subject to quality assurance.

Community Risk Management Planning Fire Standard

JF summarised the findings of the QA report for the Community Risk Management Planning Fire Standard, the full report having been sent to Board members outside of the Board meeting.

JF added that this Fire Standard was quality assured according to the previous Fire Standards development process. Therefore, as expected, similar themes made in previous recommendations from the last QA report were noted. She reported that some actions to refine the process had already been taken in response, but that a full review of all recommendations would be completed and progress reported to the Board at the next meeting in July. This was agreed.

The Board was asked to confirm, based upon information provided within the QA report, that the Community Risk Management Planning Fire Standard be approved for publication in June 2021.

SMcC requested the Board to confirm that the Community Risk Management Planning Fire Standard should be approved for publication in June 2021. This was agreed.

Action FSB-A083: Executive Team to evaluate and act on the recommendations made within QA reports and provide a progress report at the next Board meeting.

Decision FSB-D031: The Board confirmed that the Community Risk Management Planning Fire Standard should be approved for publication in June 2021.

ZB left the meeting.

Item 3 – Paper 1 – Phase Two Delivery Plan

CPO

JB confirmed that he would leave the meeting during this item. He nominated AM, as a member of his team, to deputise for him for the remainder of the meeting.

JF formally introduced and summarised the Phase Two Delivery Plan paper. She put the recommendations outlined within the paper to the Board for consideration and agreement.

SMcC requested JB raise any queries prior to leaving and invited comments from the Board.

Points raised included requesting an explanation of the areas selected to be part of Phase Two Fire Standards; the rationale for the order in which work had been planned and the impact of those areas that remain outstanding.

JF referred to the information in the paper that provided the rationale for the selection of the proposed Phase Two Fire Standards. She also urged the Board to consider the longer-term intention of developing a suite of Fire Standards over multiple years and therefore pacing development work accordingly based on the Activity Framework. This approach aimed to allow the Board to address priority areas and continue the momentum now gained, whilst avoiding putting undue pressure on services in terms of implementation with multiple standards being published either together or in close succession.

JB then left the meeting and AM replaced JB for the remainder of the meeting.

There was further discussion about some of the standards proposed for Phase Two, the suggestion of an impact assessment on those areas not currently addressed, the order selected for development and considerations about the consultation process being accessible for relevant stakeholders and partner organisations.

AM also noted that the delivery plan's span went into the financial year 2022/2023 while funding was only guaranteed until April 2022. The Home Office would make bids for funding beyond that, but such funding could not be guaranteed.

JF noted the comments made. She reminded the Board that the initial bid for funding anticipated that the work to develop a full suite of Fire Standards would span five years. She added that importantly it was not only development of standards, but the longer-term maintenance of them that would be key to seeing them have the intended impact of driving continuous improvement in fire and rescue services delivery to the public.

She added that there had always been a challenge in balancing the development of those standards seen as high priority against those standards that were equally necessary but may be seen as less important due to external factors that may be influencing views of the Board at the time. This might include the most recent inspection reports or the findings and

recommendations from recent incident inquiries. Another influence on priority order could be impending legislation changes such as those affecting both Safeguarding and Fire Investigation. Work to address those areas now would ensure services were well prepared to comply with the legislation when it was enacted.

It was proposed that a review of the Activity Framework and the areas that had been included in the early development phases be completed and conclusions shared with the Board at the next meeting to provide assurance.

SMcC suggested that the Executive Team be allowed to continue with the work proposed according to the timeline included in the paper to avoid delay. This was agreed.

She also proposed work to complete a further evaluation and impact assessment of the remaining areas for standards be reported to the next meeting. This was also agreed.

Action FSB-A084: Executive Team to carry out an evaluation of the remaining areas for Fire Standards and provide a report for the Board including an impact assessment at the next meeting.

Decision FSB-D032 – The Board agreed the phase two delivery plan

Item 6 – Paper 3 – Phase One Delivery Plan Progress Report

CPO

JF presented the paper and summarised the progress on Phase One Fire Standards development as outlined in the paper's progress table. The Board discussed the progress reported with points raised about the Data Fire Standard, the implications of the White Paper on the Well-Led and Developing Leaders Fire Standards and a request for early engagement with Governing bodies on them.

JF proposed that given the complexities of the proposed Data Fire Standard and differing views about its scope, it may be useful for a member of the NFCC Data and Digital Programme to be invited to the next meeting to discuss the work in progress and impact on this standard. This was agreed.

SMcC asked the Board to confirm the approach suggested for the Data Fire Standard and for a commissioning brief to be produced as a result of further discussions. This was agreed.

She asked the Board to confirm if it was happy to accept the recommendation in the paper to approve the new timeline for the Well-Led Organisation Fire Standard. This was agreed.

Action FSB-A085: CPO to invite a representative from the Data and Digital Programme to attend the next Board meeting to discuss the Fire Standard which would allow a commissioning brief to be drafted.

Decision FSB-D033: Board agreed to the revised timeline for the Well-Led Organisation Fire Standard

Item 8 – Paper 5 – General Progress Report

Chair

SMcC presented the paper and summarised the Chairs' engagements and the impact of Fire Standards Board communications.

She proposed that after being established for two years, it was the appropriate time for an evaluation of the Board's effectiveness. She suggested that members of the Board should complete a survey and for the results of that survey to be discussed at the next Board meeting. It was agreed that JM and Roy Wilsher would be invited to respond given their experience on the Board over the last two years. This was agreed.

Action FSB-A086: Executive Team to issue a Board Effectiveness survey to Board members and for the results to be collated for discussion at the July Board meeting.

Item 9 - Any Other Business

Chair

SMcC stated that the Minister had expressed a desire to meet with the Chairs to discuss the phase two development plan. She asked that AM follow this up with Home Office officials.

NC1 thanked JM for her important contribution to the Board and wished her well for the future. SMcC added that JM's presence on the Board had been highly valuable and that and she would be missed.

JM thanked NC1, SMcC and the rest of the Board for their support throughout and wished the Board all the best with continuing the work of the Fire Standards Board.

Action FSB-A087: AM to arrange meeting between Minister and Chairs.

Next Meeting: 14th July between 13:00-15:30