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Meeting: Fire Standards Board
Date: 5th March 2026
Time: 10:00
Venue: Virtual – MS Teams

Board Members:	Suzanne McCarthy (SMcC) – Chair Alison Sansome (AS) – Vice-Chair Ben Adams (BA) – Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) Amanda Evans (AE) – Local Government Association Phil Garrigan (PG) – National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC)
Observers In Attendance:	Hannah Condon (HC) - Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) on behalf of PL Lucy Ellender (LE) – LGA Abigail Hopewell (AH) – NFCC Marie Langtry (ML) – NFCC Peter Leckie (PL) – NFCC Richard Martin (RM) – APCC
Fire Standards Team (FST):	Nick Brennan (NB) – NFCC Natasha Elia (NE) – NFCC
Apologies:	Peter Lee (PL) – (MHCLG)

Item 1 - Introductions, apologies, and declarations of interest	Chair
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The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting apologies from PL.

There were no declarations of interest.

Item 2 - Minutes of previous meeting held on the 4th of December 2025 and matters arising	Chair
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The minutes were agreed as accurate and the action log was updated.

Actions from the previous meeting:

FSB-A171: FST to share the [handling misconduct] review findings with the Inspectorate, to ensure alignment of views. NB confirmed he had engaged with HMICFRS on the misconduct work undertaken by the FSB. Action closed.

FSB-A189: FST to work with NFCC (AH) to develop an assurance workshop to support fire and rescue services with misconduct: Two assurance pilot workshops are scheduled with Essex FRS and Merseyside FRS in Spring 2026. The team would evaluate the workshops, ensuring they were fit for purpose before a wider roll out to FRS in 2026/27.

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FSB-A191: FST to work with NFCC DDAT team to establish how services were currently being supported with the introduction of AI. Findings to be presented to the Board. See Item 6b. Action closed.

FSB-A194: MHCLG to arrange early engagement with the Chair, Vice-Chair and FSB Team on the planned review of the National Framework: Engagement between MHCLG and FSB on the National Framework have been scheduled. Action closed.

FSB-A194: YB to share FaRDaP data with FSB/NFCC to analyse performance improvements effectively. HC agreed to follow up with the Board on this. Action remains open.

FSB-A195: The Chair to draft a letter outlining proposed engagement processes with representative bodies and for this to be circulated to Board Members for approval before sending. A letter was drafted and shared with representative bodies in January 2026. Action closed.

FSB-A196: FST to update the draft FSB Business Plan considering comments from Board members. This would be brought back for final sign off at the next Board meeting. See item 6b. Action closed.

FSB-A197: FST to revise language within the Leading and Developing People Fire Standard points 17, 23i and 23h to reflect the Board's discussions on independent reporting lines and inclusive support. The standards were revised and subsequently opened for consultation in December 2025. Action closed.

FSB-A198: NB to deliver two pilot handling misconduct workshops before the end of the financial year. The Board agreed to merge this action with action FSB-A189. Action closed.

Item 3 – MHCLG General Update

SD

HC reported that a team member was focusing on the national framework as a priority with sector-wide engagement underway. MHCLG aims to have a revised version by the end of 2026. It was confirmed that discussions with stakeholders and the Board were planned.

PG noted that the 2018 national framework did not reference Fire Standards specifically. He suggested the need to discuss how to describe the standards in the revised National Framework.

HC confirmed that a public consultation on a College of Fire and Rescue was on track to open in May 2026.

NB noted the re-establishment of the Culture and Integrity Task and Finish Group. Board members acknowledged the substantial progress already achieved in this area

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and encouraged the leads of the group to build on existing work rather than duplicate effort. HC agreed to pass this feedback to those leading this group.

ACTION FSB-A199:

FST to continue to consider Fire Standards within the context of the National Fire Framework during 2026/27 business planning.

ACTION FSB-A200:

HC to share feedback from the Board relating to the Culture and Integrity Task and Finish Group.

Item 4 – Evaluation of Fire Standards	ML
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ML explained that the average number of AFIs per service was trending down, with notable reductions in effectiveness, efficiency and people pillars. Analysis of Prevention and Protection related AFIs, showed reductions in their number after the corresponding Fire Standards had been introduced. However, attribution to the standards alone was cautioned.

Discussions took place on the limitations of comparing inspection rounds due to changing focuses and the need for more sophisticated analysis which would include reviewing internal audits to strengthen the evidence base.

A further discussion took place around causation vs correlation, with an emphasis that improvements could be due to multiple factors including inspection activity and that the standards could be one of several drivers. Issues in AFIs reflecting gaps in standards were also raised.

Item 5 – Fire Standards Progress Update and Chairs' report	NB
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A discussion took place regarding the need to better articulate the differences between the Emergency Preparedness and Resilience Fire Standard and the Operational Preparedness Fire Standard, with plans to clarify through communications.

NB was concerned that service visit had become formulaic in engagement. Therefore, the team had decided to step back and review the situation to assess whether these were providing the assurance and information needed and if these could be improved.

The Chair reiterated the importance of these visits and requested that further ones be scheduled throughout 2026 with a particular focus on those with challenging HMICFRS reports so that qualitative and quantitative data could be compared.

ACTION FSB-A201:

FST to arrange further Fire Service visits throughout 2026.

ACTION FSB-A202:

FST to clarify the roles of the Emergency Preparedness and Resilience Fire Standard and Operational Preparedness Fire Standard through communications.

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Item 6a – 2025/26 Business Plan Review Item 6b – 2026/27 Business Plan	NB
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NB summarised the progress on the 2025-26 Business Plan, noting the following:

- publication of eight standards,
- ongoing work on the Organisational Learning Fire Standard
- updates to the Leadership Fire Standards relating to misconduct
- integration of evaluation findings into planning.

The Board discussed the draft Business Plan for 2026-27, which continues with the current objectives. In 2026/27 the team would consider whether AI needs to be included within the existing suite and if there is a need for a Health and Wellbeing Fire Standard.

The Chair requested that the previous year's Delivery Plan be attached as an annex for context and to include timeline deliverables.

The importance of increasing visits to FRSs, particularly those with average performances, was noted as a positive way to encourage engagement with standards and to assist in supporting improvement.

ACTION FSB-A203:

FST to include the 2025-26 Delivery Plan as an annex to the 2026-27 Business Plan and to include timelines against deliverables.

Item 7 – Fire Standards for Approval: Safeguarding and Code of Ethics	NB
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NB reported that the Safeguarding Fire Standard required no further changes following review.

The Board raised concerns about the proposed changes to the Code of Ethics Fire Standard, specifically regarding the language around the role of governing bodies. Minor amendments to the Code of Ethics Fire Standard were requested and that a revised draft standard was to be re-shared with the Board for agreement, in advance of the PCL Committee also agreeing the changes. The Board would provide final approval, prior to publication.

DECISION FSB-D078:

The Board was satisfied with the outcome of the Safeguarding Fire Standard review.

ACTION FSB-A204:

FST to revise the draft Code of Ethics standard to address concerns, and to circulate to the Board for review, before sharing with the NFCC People, Culture and Leadership Hub.

Item 8 – Update on NFCC Competencies	PL
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PL provided an overview of the three main work streams: developing competence frameworks using a sector model; establishing governance and assurance process; and supporting change management and implementation across services.

PL reassured the Board that the competence frameworks were designed to align with Fire Standards to ensure consistency.

Discussion took place on the potential role the FSB could play in the governance and quality assurance of competence frameworks, and it was agreed that this would be considered by the strategic engagement group established by NFCC.

It was confirmed that the Wildfires Competence Framework would be prioritised for publication in May 2026 and would be shared with the Board for review and discussion at the next meeting.

Item 9 – AOB	All
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Members discussed how the Board Chairs and the represented organisations on the Board would respond to the upcoming MCHLG College of Fire and Rescue consultation.

DECISION FSB - D079:

The Board **agreed** that the independent Chairs would be able to submit a response on their behalf while individual organisations represented on the Board would respond separately.

Meeting Closed

Date of Next Meeting: 2 July 2026 (virtual)