

**HIGHLAND AND ISLANDS FIRE BOARD**

**10 SEPTEMBER 2009**

Agenda Item	
Report No	

**SCOTTISH FIRE CONVENERS FORUM**

**Report by the Clerk**

**Summary**

This report briefs Members on key issues discussed at the Scottish Fire Conveners Forum.

**Background**

1. The Scottish Fire Conveners Forum first met in October 2008. The Convener has provided a briefing on Forum discussions at each of the last two Board meetings.

**Briefing**

2. A briefing paper drawn up by the Forum secretariat and covering a number of issues is attached at Appendix 1, on which the Convener will comment.

**Recommendation**

The Board is invited to comment on the issues raised.

Signature

Designation Clerk

Date 1 September 2009

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### **SCOTTISH FIRE CONVENER'S FORUM (SFCF) – KEY ISSUES**

#### **Conveners' meeting with representative bodies**

1. The Forum extended an invitation to all representative bodies to meet with Conveners on 30 July in Dumfries. Conveners felt it was important, in order to inform their discussions, to get a view from the representative bodies on their policy positions and priorities. Association of Principal Fire Officers (APFO) and Retained Firefighters Union (RFU) representatives attended and a useful discussion took place on the challenges of developing effective models of training for the retained.

#### **Flooding Review**

2. The Scottish Government has commissioned a review into Scotland's water rescue capability. The Review is being conducted by Paddy Tomkins, formerly HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary. The Chief Fire Officers Association Scotland (CFOAS) and the Conveners Forum have been consultees in the initial phase. A similar review in England and Wales concluded that there should be a fully funded national capability for flood rescue, with Fire and Rescue Authorities playing a leading role. Conveners and CFOAS supported that position, given the expertise that already exists within the Service. Conveners were clear that this was about more effective co-ordination and not about taking control of other agencies' activities.

#### **Contingency Planning and Resilience**

3. The SFCF met with the Minister for Community Safety on 30 April and two of the key issues raised were around business continuity arrangements, including those for pandemic flu, and a Scotland-wide response to the Government's Resilience Strategy. Officials were asked to take forward work on both these issues. Discussions are ongoing in relation to contingency planning arrangements and a draft delivery plan against the resilience strategy has been submitted, which will also be going to individual Boards for final endorsement. The delivery plan is very much a statement of where we are now and discussions will continue on developing Fire and Rescue Services' contribution to Scottish Resilience.

#### **Capital Grant**

4. Conveners asked officials to consider developing some sound principles regarding the future distribution of capital grant which would demonstrate fairness, equity and transparency. Last year there was a deal of confusion around the grant allocation process and a lack of clarity around the way in which decisions on top-slice were made. CFOAS proposals were presented based on allocation for national

priorities, local priorities that require top-slice, and core funding requirements supported through formula distribution. Conveners particularly welcomed an open and transparent approach to top-slicing. Agreement on distribution needs to be between COSLA and the Scottish Government and so officers will progress discussions with both bodies and report back.

### **Training Investment Strategy**

5. A significant amount of work is being done in this area to translate significant amounts of data from a recently conducted training needs analysis into a cost-effective delivery framework for national, regional and local training. The Forum believes it is important to develop a framework (which for the first time will outline the training that is best delivered at each of these three levels) to inform future decisions on capital grant allocation and to link into the more evidence-based approach to capital grant allocation featured above. Officers are also engaging in discussions with COSLA on improved collaboration between blue light services in relation to training. It is clear that, while innovative solutions will be explored, the bottom line requirement for fire authorities is to ensure the ongoing competence and safety of their staff.

### **Reform agenda**

6. Conveners individually have raised issues during meetings of the Forum on how we collectively react to an extremely tight public spending environment over the next few years; how we collaborate more effectively in areas such as procurement; and, generally, how we consider our approach to shared services. There is much good work going on but Conveners feel it is right to give momentum to this agenda through commissioning officers to scope work out in relation to the establishment of a shared services project (including mapping out existing areas of collaboration). The Independent Review of Policing has also given rise to discussions in COSLA on improving links with constituent councils, elected member development for Joint Boards and the development of national performance arrangements. These are also issues from which Conveners feel the eight Fire authorities can benefit, if work is done on a collective basis.