

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority



MEETING	Fire Authority
DATE OF MEETING	10 June 2020
OFFICER	Graham Britten, Director of Legal and Governance
LEAD MEMBER	Chairman
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Consultation by Minister of State for Building Safety, Fire and Communities
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>The purpose of this report is to apprise the Authority, in its role as the governance body for Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, of recent correspondence received by its Chairman and Chief Fire Officer from Lord Greenhalgh.</p> <p>Lord Greenhalgh was appointed as Minister of State for Building Safety, Fire and Communities jointly at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Home Office on 18 March 2020.</p> <p>His letter dated 14 May 2020 (Annex A) seeks views from the consultees listed in his letter on the recommendations made in the 'State of Fire and Rescue: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2019', the report published on 15 January 2020 by Sir Tom Winsor - Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for (Constabulary and) Fire and Rescue Services.</p> <p>The letter seeks collective contributions from the addressees in the letter and also invites views on Sir Tom Winsor's recommendations from individual fire and rescue services before the end of June 2020.</p> <p>The recommendations within the State of Fire and Rescue Report were as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By June 2020, the Home Office, in consultation with the fire and rescue sector, should review and with precision determine the roles of: (a) fire and rescue services; and (b) those who work in them; 2. By June 2020, the Home Office, the Local Government Association, the National Fire Chiefs Council and trade unions should consider whether the current pay negotiation machinery requires fundamental reform. If so, this should include the need for an independent pay review body and the future of the 'grey book' [i.e. the national collective agreement which is incorporated into the contracts of employment

	<p>of firefighters employed by fire and rescue authorities];</p> <p>3. By September 2020, the Home Office should consider the case for legislating to give chief fire officers operational independence. In the meantime, it should issue clear guidance, possibly through an amendment to the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, on the demarcation between those responsible for governance and operational decision making by the chief fire officer; and</p> <p>4. By December 2020, the National Fire Chiefs Council, with the Local Government Association, should produce a code of ethics for fire and rescue services. The code should be adopted by every service in England and considered as part of each employee's progression and annual performance appraisal.</p>
ACTION	Decision
RECOMMENDATIONS	<p>It is recommended that:</p> <p>1. the content of the letter from Lord Greenhalgh dated 14 May 2020 (Annex A) be noted; and</p> <p>2. the Chief Fire Officer be authorised to submit a response after consultation with the Group Leaders and Vice Chairman.</p>
RISK MANAGEMENT	<p>No risks arise to the delivery of the Authority's functions from the recommendations. The issues arising from Sir Tom Winsor's four recommendations themselves, such as the reform of the current pay negotiation machinery, or changes to the roles of its employees, would have impacts on the Authority depending on if, how, and when, any of them were implemented.</p>
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS	None arising from the recommendations and the proposed course of action.
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	None arising from the recommendations.
CONSISTENCY WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF THE DUTY TO COLLABORATE	<p>The Policing and Crime Act 2017 requires the Authority to keep opportunities for collaboration with the police and ambulance services under review. The consultation is aimed at the fire and rescue sector. Any response finalised could include examples of collaboration and best practice within it, and any feedback and views received from partner services.</p>
HEALTH AND SAFETY	None arising from the recommendations.
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY	No implications arising from the recommendations.

<p>USE OF RESOURCES</p>	<p>While the formulation of any response to the consultation can be accommodated within existing resources, the outcome of any reviews or reforms arising from Sir Tom Winsor’s four recommendations, are not quantifiable at this stage.</p>
<p>PROVENANCE SECTION & BACKGROUND PAPERS</p>	<p>‘State of Fire and Rescue: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2019’</p>
<p>APPENDICES</p>	<p>Annex A: Letter dated 14 May 2020 from Lord Greenhalgh, Minister of State for Building Safety, Fire and Communities at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Home Office.</p>
<p>TIME REQUIRED</p>	<p>15 Minutes</p>
<p>REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT</p>	<p>Graham Britten gbritten@bucksfire.gov.uk 01296 744441</p>



Home Office

Lord Greenhalgh
Minister of State for Building Safety,
Fire and Communities at
Ministry of Housing, Communities &
Local Government and Home Office

2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF
www.gov.uk/home-office

14th May 2020

To:

Roy Wilsher, Chair, National Fire Chiefs Council
Ian Stevens, Chair, Fire Services Management Committee
Susannah Hancock, CEO, Association of Police and Crime Commissioners
Matt Wrack, General Secretary, Fire Brigades Union
Ade Robinson CEO, Fire Officers Association
Tristan Ashby, CEO, Fire and Rescue Service Association
Mick Crennell, Chair, Fire Leaders Association

Copied:

All Chief Fire Officers
All Chairs of Authorities/PFCCs/Mayors

Dear colleagues,

I am writing to you as regarding the recommendations made in Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services' State of Fire and Rescue report. Having completed the first round of service inspections in a decade, the report provides a crucial opportunity for us to take stock on fire reform. As the new Minister responsible for the Fire and Rescue Service, I want to understand the views of the key national bodies on the report's recommendations, as I develop my forward strategy.

There is much to commend in the report. Sir Thomas found that *"Almost universally, the focus of the fire staff we met is on protecting the communities they serve. Their determination and dedication to protect life and property are second to none. Services provide a highly skilled response to a range of emergencies and have designed life-saving initiatives. Firefighting is dangerous, but the sector continues to improve its working practices to make responding to incidents as safe as it can be."* Of this you all deserve to be proud.

However, the report also made for stark reading in other areas, with clear challenges in terms of the balance of services' work, their efficiency and the treatment of their people.

The report also made several recommendations for the a range of bodies including the Government to consider, some of which may require fundamental or legislative change. I know that you will have have been considering these recommendations individually and collectively and I write to you today to seek your views more formally.

Sir Tom recommended that the Home Office, in consultation with others, should review and determine the roles of: (a) fire and rescue services; and (b) those who work in them. This is a key recommendation, which could shape the future direction of fire and rescue services and I would like to hear your views.

The report also recommends that the Home Office, the Local Government Association, the National Fire Chiefs Council and trade unions should consider whether the current pay negotiation machinery requires fundamental reform. Whilst this recommendation is addressed to specific stakeholders, I would also like to understand the full range of views on the key question of whether the current pay negotiation machinery requires fundamental reform.

The report also makes recommendations in relation to the need for clearer operational independence and suggests the development of a code of ethics. Given the importance of professionalism and good governance in fire and rescue, I would also welcome any initial views in these areas.

This is an opportunity for you to contribute to the consideration of the recommendations. As the Minister with responsibility for the fire and rescue service, I want to understand your views as the key national leaders in this area. Although I imagine you will make collective responses on behalf of your constituent bodies, I am also open to any direct response from individual services. I am conscious that Sir Tom's deadlines are currently under review as a result of the pandemic response but I would be grateful for written submissions on these matters by the end of June. Your submissions should be sent to stateoffirerecs@homeoffice.gov.uk.



Lord Greenhalgh
Minister of State for Building Safety, Fire and Communities at
Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government and Home Office