



## Report

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Agenda Item: <b>6</b>	Date of Meeting: <b>25<sup>th</sup> January 2007</b>
This report is: <b>For decision</b>	Meeting Venue: <b>SCC Shirehall, Shrewsbury, Shropshire</b>
Report Status: To report the observations of the WMRMB Member Sounding Board in respect of the LGA prepared draft <i>Ten Year Vision Statement for the Fire and Rescue Service</i>	

Report Title:

### *Draft Ten Year Vision Statement for the Fire and Rescue Service*

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- WMRMB

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Summary:

The Local Government Association's Fire Services' Management Committee have prepared a draft *Ten Year Vision Statement for the Fire and Rescue Service* aimed at assisting Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRA) in managing their workload and long term planning. A formal consultation exercise on the proposed vision has commenced, with the final vision statement to be published in March 2007.

Recommendation(s):

WMRMB are recommended to:

Receive the observations of the Member Sounding Board as the basis of a formal response on behalf of WMRMB to the Local Government Association.

For further information, please contact:

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## 1. Background Details:

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In September 2006 the Local Government Association's (LGA) Fire Services' Management Committee published a draft ten year vision statement for the fire and rescue services of England. The statement, to be jointly agreed by the LGA, Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) and Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), was circulated to WMRMB on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2006 with the recommendation that a 'WMRMB Member Sounding Board' (MSB) be established to consider and formulate a response on behalf of the region.

In early January 2007 the MSB met to consider a more recent consultation document issued by the LGA – **'fire and rescue in 2017: rising to the challenge'** (see Appendix) which presented a revised draft vision statement (p4). The LGA document seeks responses to four consultation questions.

The observations of the MSB, structured around the document's four questions, are set out below.

## Observations of the Member Sounding Board

### Question 1

*Do you agree that a vision statement will be useful in setting the strategic direction for fire and rescue in England? Please comment on any impact you feel an agreed LGA-DCLG-CFOA vision statement would have on the work of your organisation.*

The MSB concluded that:

- An agreed vision statement would be extremely useful, but would only serve to be of real value if it was reflective of all stakeholder aspirations for the fire and rescue service (*it was considered that any such statement would be of little relevance if Government were to introduce future policy that ran contrary to the agreed vision for the service*).
- The vision statement must be more succinct and paint a very clear overarching picture of a future state of the service. The draft vision statement, or moreover list of statements, broadly speaking, could be argued as being equally reflective of the service as it stands today in 2007. It does not illustrate any significant changes or challenges that might be addressed and achieved to deliver a service fit for purpose in 2017.
- Whilst fully recognising that the vision statement should offer a succinct vision of a future state to aspire too, any such statement must be underpinned with some 'SMART' (S – *Specific*, M – *Measurable*, A – *Achievable*, R – *Realistic*, T – *Time bound*) strategic mission statements, goals and objectives. The proposed vision provides no objective declaration that would enable the service, or its stakeholders, to demonstrate measurable movement from the current state (2007) to a future state (2017).
- The statement must be flexible enough to adjust to unforeseen changes in society.

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## Question 2

*Do you agree with the main points of the draft vision statement?*

The MSB concluded that:

- The main points of the vision statement are, by enlarge, being met and delivered already throughout the service. What will be different in 2017?
- The main key points could be assembled into a more succinct high level vision statement, with the remaining text incorporating into some underpinning 'SMART' strategic statements (*mission statements and goals/objectives*).

## Question 3

*Are there any key outcomes that the fire and rescue service should be seeking to achieve in 2017 that have been omitted from the list of statements?*

The MSB concluded that:

- The statements omit any reference to achieving and sustaining 'excellence.'
- The statements do not fully recognise or reflect that joint working with others can only be successful if those involved share the same vision and objectives (*the MSB felt that not all local authorities/agencies are working towards a shared vision, in part, resultant from Government departments issuing disparate and competing aims and objectives*).
- A greater emphasis should be placed on prevention, particularly in respect of the 'built environment' (*where, for example, it would be hoped that at least all new and refurbished schools would be provided with sprinkler protection by 2017*).
- There should be a clear relationship between the vision statement and the Fire and Rescue National Framework. Future Frameworks should be structured to assist in the delivery of the vision statement.
- The service has a statutory role in the enforcement of regulatory fire safety measures. This role is not referenced or reflected within the vision statements.
- There is reference to the protection of the environment, protection afforded by the operational activities of the service (*e.g. mitigating the consequences of fire and other emergencies*) but no mention of any aim to reduce current carbon emission levels etc from day to day activities of the service.
- The events of 9/11 and 7/7, coupled with changes introduced through consequential legislation have placed the service at the forefront of civil protection should an act of terrorism or natural disaster occur. It is felt that this change of role for the service is not fully reflected in the vision statements.
- The ability to effectively achieve and deliver any future vision is, in part, reliant upon excellent and stable industrial relations being in place that promote a culture of trust, dignity and mutual respect. A supporting statement to this effect would, it is considered, be useful.
- The ability to effectively achieve and deliver any future vision is, in part, reliant upon reasonable and adequate sustained funding arrangements being in place. A supporting statement to this effect would, it is considered, be useful.

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#### Question 4

What are the main challenges that will need to be addressed if the vision is to be achieved? Please comment freely on challenges for the LGA and fire authorities, DCLG, CFOA or other delivery partners.

The MSB concluded that:

- The proposed vision statement is probably striving to be ‘*all things to all men*’ and in doing so the MSB recognise that there is a danger of the discussion around the proposed vision statement getting bogged down in a debate over the exact meaning of the terms used. However, by not keeping the vision statement succinct, there is a real risk of generating endless flashy statements that give no real focus or clarity. Fundamentally, the vision statement must have clarity, be challenging, be easily understood and act as a source of motivation and inspiration. But above all else, it should be concise (*at most a single paragraph*). It might be prudent for the LGA to return to the drawing board and ask stakeholders:
  - a, What is the **imagined future** of the fire and rescue service (*as a concise statement*)?
  - b, Given the imagined future and the values inherent in it, what is the **mission** (aimed at achieving the common vision)?
  - c, Given the mission, what **goals** does the service need to achieve that falls within the mission and brings it closer to the vision.
  - d, Given the goals, what **objectives/targets** must the service achieve to bring the goals to fruition?

These latter points are where any future National Frameworks should play a fuller role in supporting any agreed vision statement.

- The MSB also concluded that excellent stable industrial relations and adequate sustained funding arrangements are crucial to the delivery of the vision statement.

#### Next Steps

In order to support the consultation deadlines a draft response of observations prepared by the MSB has been submitted to the LGA. WMRMB are requested to consider, amend as deemed appropriate, and submit a final response to the LGA prior to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2007.

The final version of the vision statement will be launched at the LGA Fire Conference in March 2007.

The conclusions arrived at by the MSB do not preclude individual FRAs and other stakeholder groups (i.e. CFOA) from submitting separate responses.

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#### 2. Legal Implications:

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

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#### 3. Financial Implications:

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

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#### **4. Background Papers:**

- LGA ***'Our Fire and Rescue Service Practitioners' Forum*** document (7<sup>th</sup> September 2006).
- WMRMB 27<sup>th</sup> October 2006, Agenda Item 14 - ***'Ten Year Vision for the Fire and Rescue Service (Draft).'***

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#### **5. Attachments:**

- Appendix – LGA – ***'fire and rescue in 2017: rising to the challenge'*** 2006.
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