

From the Chief Executive
Carolyn Downs

Dan Stephens
Chief Fire Officer
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10 December 2014

Dear Dan

LGA Subscription 2015/16

The coming year will be a challenging one for all of us and we are committed to keeping the cost of LGA membership as low as possible. Last month, LGA Leadership Board agreed to freeze LGA membership subscriptions for a further year.

This means that for 2015/16 your subscription, including all the discounts will be £10,460 (plus VAT).

We are once again offering the 2.5% loyalty discount for all fire and rescue authorities not on notice, alongside the 2.5% prompt payment discount for those authorities which pay in full by 30 June 2015.

In the last year, we have worked closely with fire and rescue authorities on a wide range of issues, and have secured some significant wins. These include:

- delivering a fire pay settlement within the parameters set by stakeholders
- continuing to support all fire authorities with retained duty system staff in managing the resolution of the 12,000 plus Employment Tribunal cases linked to the part-time workers regulations
- securing employer and employee agreement within the NJC for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services to jointly take forward wide-ranging work on the future role of firefighters to support the changing role of the fire service
- submitting evidence to the DCLG Select Committee on the Knight Review and Councillor Hammond gave oral evidence along with a number of Chief Fire Officers
- Championing and winning the argument for a bottom up approach to governance reforms
- contributing to Adrian Thomas's Independent Review of Terms and Conditions and providing a number of opportunities for Members to speak direct to Adrian Thomas
- contributing to the LGA's Independent Finance Commission to ensure fire funding is factored into discussions

- continuing to influence the strategic direction and operation of the Fire Service College through political influence on both the Management Board and Customer Boards
- continuing support for the residual Firecontrol Projects, identifying risk and taking supporting action to ensure all 22 projects are on track
- achieving a manageable timeframe for the implementation of the Primary Authority Scheme
- supporting the first ever Fire Sprinkler Week from 3 to 9 February 2014
- through the LGA/CFOA/LFB National Operational Guidance strategy board, successfully secured a £1 million grant for 2015/16 to match Authorities' contributions for the next phase of the programme
- with CFOA, developing a fire-specific 'First 100 days' document to provide a foundation for influencing a future government
- investing in actuarial and legal advice in response of the retained firefighters' pensions scheme on behalf of the sector
- providing advice and support, and training for Members, on the new Pensions Boards in early 2015
- facilitating an extended discussion with the Fire Minister at the House of Commons to enable Members to hear about Government priorities, and put questions to the Minister
- lobbying to ensure the whole £75 million Transformation Fund was allocated to 37 projects
- supporting 13 fire authorities to resolve local employee relations difficulties through the national dispute resolution processes; and providing training where requested
- Publicly raising concerns of the service eg extensive media coverage in the national press and interviews raising the issue of the dangers of chargers for e-cigarettes
- engaging all fire and rescue authorities in the Operational Assessment and Fire Peer Challenge programme with 42 delivered since 2011 and the remaining 4 confirmed. The programme has been evaluated by Cardiff University and confirmed as a structured and consistent way to drive continuous improvement and an effective way of ensuring the sector as a whole improves
- delivering an effective and popular Fire Leadership Essentials Programme: we have now delivered 3 free fire leadership essentials programmes with attendance from 32 councillors across 22 authorities, with a further programme planned for February 2015
- 48 out of 49 Fire and Rescue Authorities in England and Wales attended the LGA Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition in Cardiff on 11-12 March with a total of 236 delegates.
- publishing *Any Fire*, a report in the re-wiring local government suite that set out the case for reform to the financing of the fire sector
- next year's Conference and Exhibition is being held at the Hilton, Gateshead on 10-11 March, with delegate fees held once again at 2008 prices
- holding a dedicated fire service breakfast session at the LGA Annual Conference
- publishing a quarterly fire bulletin, which has over 1500 subscribers.

In terms of working more broadly with local government, further achievements which will be of interest to you include:

- recovered over 95% of the money councils originally deposited with the failed Icelandic Bank Landsbanki, bringing the total sum retrieved to **over £1 billion**
- established for councils, Public Sector Auditor Appointments Ltd, to continue to deliver **savings in excess of £100 million** over the next 2 years in the fees paid by councils to external auditors
- devolution of **£50 million** of Youth Contact underspend for councils to run local youth employment initiatives

- devolution of **£330 million** of Further Education capital spending to Local Enterprise Partnerships
- a **£168 million** “pothole fund”
- ensuring that the new burdens grant for localised Council Tax Support continued to be paid in 2015/16
- an additional **£270 million** for flood defences over the next 3 years, **£184 million** for road repairs and **£135.25 million** for recovery schemes
- ensuring the Government **withdrew dangerous plans to relax taxi licensing rules** within the Deregulation Bill
- an **amendment to the Serious Organised Crime Bill** to safeguard councils against criminalisation

The new Chair of the Fire Services Management Committee, Councillor Jeremy Hilton, has set out 5 strategic priorities going forward, all of which have been endorsed and agreed by the Committee and the Commission. These include: pressing for a fair finance settlement for FRAs; work to assist resolution in the current industrial action; participation in the Adrian Thomas review; political engagement; and blue light interoperability.

In early 2015, we will also be running a fire-specific perceptions survey which will enable all FRAs to give views on the LGA fire offer. It will aim to quantify members’ understanding of the LGA, and investigate what our member FRAs want from the LGA, and how they want to engage and provide a timely opportunity for us to review our services to ensure they are relevant and in tune with local FRAs.

The current trade dispute between the FBU and the Government is providing an on-going challenge in terms of business continuity and resilience. We have supported fire authorities in managing the industrial relations implications and are continuing to try to resolve fitness issues related to the dispute, representing the clear and shared position of fire authorities in doing so.

Your subscription invoice will be sent out in April. To streamline the process could you ask your office to arrange for a purchase order number to be sent to andrea.gillian@local.gov.uk in my office.

I look forward to continuing to work with you over the coming year.

Yours sincerely



Carolyn Downs
Chief Executive

