Minutes of Business and Community Safety Forum (BCSF) Meeting:

Thursday 2 July 2009

Rooms G/L & G/M Eland House, Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5DU

Present:

Les Byrom (Chair); Ian Evans (CAPT); Graham Ellicott (FIC); Jonathan O'Neill (FPA); Andrew Furness (IOSH); CFO Iain Cox (CFOA); Rhonda Bedford (CFOA); David Beverley (TUC/FBU); Clive Harris (LGA).

CLG: Robert Attrill (FRD); Roger Hargreaves (FRD); John Dackombe (FRD); Gavin Sayer (FRD); Bess Teeger (FRD); Barbara Stewart (FRD); Peter Wise (CFRA).

Apologies: Sir Ken Knight (CFRA); David Sibert (TUC); CFO John Bonney (CFOA); CFO Max Hood (Arson Control Forum); Sarah Davis (CIH); David Geary (Federation of Small Businesses).

1. Introduction

1.1 Les Byrom, the Chair, welcomed attendees.

2. Minutes and matters arising

2.1 The minutes of the BCSF meeting held on 19 February were approved.

2.2 Matters Arising:

A) Les Byrom confirmed that he had been asked to sit on the Operation Guidance Project Board which is due to meet on 5th March and he will feed back to members via e-mail following the meeting.

Les Byrom had attended two meetings of the Operational Guidance Project Board and regarded operational guidance as a major issue for the BCSF, as it would impact on the FRS, business and industry. Areas needing guidance could be flagged up to him, and he would bring them to attention of the Operational Guidance Project Board.

B) It was agreed in conjunction with the Practitioners' Forum that the Terms of Reference of the Research Joint Task & Finish Group are to be updated and the work of the Group is extended for a further 2 years.

This has now been signed off by both Fora. Jonathan O'Neill proposed that the Research Joint Task & Finish Group should report to the BCSF regularly on their work and on the research programme.

C) Timing and method of Public Consultation concerning any changes to Pre-determined Attendances (PDAs) to be looked at by the BCSF at a future

meeting, nearer to the time of their launch, in order to ensure that appropriate consultation happens.

To invite a FiReContol representative (Douglas Weeks) back later to discuss results of the consultation with FRAs, following the updating of relevant Pre-determined Attendances (PDAs) and their effect on IRMP. Any changes to the pre-determined attendance (PDA) times would be discussed at the Practitioners' Forum. The PDA should not exclude traffic gridlock and their effect on IRMPs.

D) To send an electronic copy of the power-point presentation on Sprinkler Consultation to the BCSF membership, particularly those who were unable to attend the meeting.

Issued to members on the 24th March 2009, along with the flyer to attend the planned workshops.

E) Provide Catherine Levin with contact for all BCSF members so CLG/Entec Consulting could approach BCSF members to gain any further contacts.

Provided to Catherine on 23rd February 2009, to note Fire Prevention Policy Branch is now headed by Louise Upton.

F) A link to the consultation on extending FRA trading powers will be sent to members once it starts, to give member organisations an opportunity to respond and members are encouraged to send onto interested parties.

Issued to members on 17th May 2009.

G) Anna Wadsworth is willing to provide an update after the close of the consultation on extending FRA trading powers at a future meeting of the BCSF.

Plans in place to invite her back later in 2009.

3. Ministerial update

3.1 Robert Attrill circulated information on the changes in the CLG Ministerial Team. All Ministers were new to the Department, with the exception of John Healey.

- **Action: Les Byrom would write to Shahid Malik about the work of the BCSF and invite him to come to the joint BCSF/Practitioners' Forum meeting in October, where he could receive feedback from the work of both Groups.**

4. FiReControl

4.1 Roger Hargreaves gave an oral update on FiReControl. He had also given a presentation to the Fire Forum on 26 June. Good progress had been made on a number of fronts – including buildings (with staff now in the nine RCCs); HR terms and conditions (FBU were engaging with this, despite their opposition to FiReControl), and at the FRS level with products in use. There had been positive feedback from the Business Case in early May which made it clear that CLG would bear the setup costs. Mobile Data Terminals (MDT) rollout was planned for the autumn.

4.2 The issues still to be tackled included joining up EADS and Airwave on in-service management, and the timetable/rollout pressures, in which there was national media interest. A Ministerial statement on delays to the timetable would be made before the summer recess, so FRSs could adjust their plans.

4.3 Roger was not able to specify the exact delay to the timetable, and the impact on costs, as information had first to be given to the House. Not every delay was down to the supplier – CLG and FRSs were also involved.

4.4 Summing up, the Chair noted that there was general agreement that Firelink needed to come in, and that linking Firelink and FiReControl before the August 2012 date for the London Olympics was a key issue. Delays gave strength to the critics of FiReControl.

- **Action: The BCSF would be grateful for another report from Roger Hargreaves on FiReControl developments, which they were watching with interest and concern.**

5. Incident Reporting System

5.1 Gavin Sayer gave a presentation on the information included in the Incident Recording System (IRS) which had gone live on 1 April. This will include data on all incidents, including false alarms, patterns of deliberate fires in England and where these occur. The geographic element is popular with the FRS. Warwickshire FRS has reported that the IRS was 20% more efficient than the paper forms on which Fire Statistics UK have been based.

5.2 Iain Cox suggested that a link to the National Land and Property Gazetteer (NLPG) would provide further information e.g. whether the building was of special interest. The Chair summed up by saying that more information on demographics could be helpful, that data on type of building construction was important, and that fire crews acknowledge that the IRS is an excellent step forward.

- **Action: Please send any feedback on the IRS launch to Gavin Sayer by the end of July – gavin.sayer@communities.gsi.gov.uk.** The information collected by the IRS is published on the Department's

website, at:
http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/irsquestionslists

6. Retained Duty System: Developing an employers' toolkit

6.1 John Dackombe reminded the BCSF that a third of the 45,000 operational FRS staff in England are employed on the Retained Duty System (RDS). Of these 97% are in other, paid work with a primary employer. Research in 2005, 2006 and 2007 into recruitment and retention in the RDS, and the primary employment undertaken by RDS staff, had helped to shape the development of the employers' toolkit.

6.2 A joint BCSF / Practitioners Forum meeting last year had endorsed CLG's proposal to produce information materials aimed at the business sector. Since then CLG has been working on development of a toolkit designed to support RDS station managers and Retained Liaison Officers in engaging with local business, raising awareness about the existence of the RDS, and encouraging their support in releasing staff for the RDS. This has involved local employer focus groups, key Service stakeholders and RDS lead officers from across all the UK regions. Very positive feedback has been received.

6.3 Whilst the toolkit will contain generic materials, the aim is to ensure flexibility by encouraging each FRS to use the pack as a template, supplementing it with very specific local information (e.g. number of callouts and their duration). Feedback from local employers indicated that the term "Retained Duty System" carried little meaning to people outside the Fire and Rescue Service and did not really describe how the system worked. The term "On-Call" has therefore been adopted in the toolkit to help facilitate engagement with the business community.

6.4 The BCSF noted that CLG was considering a National Recognition Scheme for businesses who release staff under the RDS, and there was discussion on how the BCSF could contribute to this initiative. Suggestions included a letter from the CFO or the Lord Lieutenant, or a Garden Party invitation. It was agreed that the skills gained in the RDS, including management skills, could transfer into the workplace. Les Byrom saw a role for the BCSF in highlighting the work done by the RDS and in thanking employers.

- **Action: John welcomed views from the BCSF on how it could contribute to the final stage development of the RDS employers' toolkit, and how it might support the launch and roll-out of the toolkit in the Autumn.**

- **Action: Les Byrom to talk to John Bonney, the Practitioners' Forum and the Fire Minister about how to provide FRAs with opportunities to draw in RDS employers, to praise and thank them.**

7. Equality & Diversity Annual Report

7.1 John Dackombe gave an oral update on recent initiatives to promote greater progress on equality and diversity in the FRS. Within the context of criticism by the HoC Select Committee in 2006, and the Firefighter Survey of 2008, CLG and key Service stakeholders had developed the Equality & Diversity Strategy to drive improvement and deliver change over the next ten years.

7.2 As part of its responsibility to support implementation of the Strategy, CLG has committed to reporting annually on national progress and on the performance of each FRA. The first annual report, published in March 2009, established a sound baseline for assessing future performance, providing an overview at national level and for each Authority.

7.3 The report includes recruitment targets for each Authority. The background to the targets was described in an annexed PowerPoint presentation. The vast majority of FRAs in England had put forward proposals to set stretching recruitment targets – a measure of their determination to demonstrate leadership and achieve progress.

7.4 It was also clear, as the response to this year's Equality & Diversity Awards indicates, that FRSs are putting considerable thought and effort into their engagement with vulnerable and hard to reach communities - and getting results.

7.5 A key piece of work for the Equality & Diversity team in the coming months will be the preparation of the second annual Equality & Diversity report, for publication in early 2010. Two other key initiatives for the team are the national 'awareness raising' programme (of firefighting as a career) aimed at women and at ethnic minority groups, and the high potential leadership programme. Both of these are being progressed in partnership with the FRS.

7.6 The Chair felt that the targets outlined in the E & D Strategy are now achievable and progress would be a gradual process.

8. Any Other Business

8.1 The Chair gave an update on issues raised at the Practitioners' Forum, which had agreed to set up a Task & Finish group on co-responding.

8.2 Papers from the Devolved Administrations had been circulated.

8.3 Rob apologised for the late circulation of the BCSF papers.

8.4 The Practitioners' Forum had discussed the Fire Safety Order in May. Iain Cox explained that the reason why the FSO appeared to target shops was that sleeping accommodation attached to shops posed a risk.

8.5 CFO Iain Cox, as representative of the Practitioners' Forum, brought to the attention of the BCSF the "Coroner's Office statement" from the recent judgement following the fire at Penhallow Hotel in Newquay, Cornwall, in August 2007.

- **Action: The Chair said the BCSF had agreed to keep an eye on the working of the FSO and inform the Minister. The BCSF had had an update on the FSO in October but would request another.**
- **Action: Andrew Furness was invited to put in an email to CFO Iain Cox and Les Byrom his concerns about the working of the FSO, and who was competent to undertake a fire risk check.**
- **Action: The Chair would write to the Chair of the Fire Safety Development Group who had expressed a desire to attend the BCSF.**

8.6 It was raised that there had previously been a BCSF workplan concerning forward events, which appear to have ceased.

- **Action: The Chair wished to re-instigate the workplan for future meetings and items for agenda.**

Date of next meeting:

- There would be a joint Practitioners' Forum/BCSF meeting on 13 October at 10am, and a BCSF meeting on 26 November 2009.
- The planned BCSF on the 1 October 2009 was now cancelled, owing to the Joint meeting.