

APPENDIX 2

Protocol on Government intervention action on fire and rescue authorities in England

Response of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (WMFRA) agrees that the draft protocol sets out clearly the respective roles of fire and rescue authorities and Government in the event of an intervention. It is suggested that the protocol would benefit from the greater involvement of the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA) in supporting any intervention powers therefore recognising and reflecting the role of these bodies as sector representatives.

WMFRA supports the LGA position in that a single framework should apply across the whole local government sector and that fire should not be singled out as exceptional. Under this approach the Local Government Accountability System Statement, which already covers fire and rescue authorities, would have sufficed.

Question 1 does the draft protocol clearly set out what is expected of the Government and Fire and Rescue Authorities in their respective roles in the event of intervention by the Secretary of State?

It is the view of WMFRA that the document clearly sets out what is expected although we support the view that the LGA and CFOA have a role and can provide valuable input in supporting any intervention powers that are implemented.

Question 2 is there anything you would change?

There is an opportunity to strengthen the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser (CFRA) role by working with the LGA and CFOA utilising the skills and expertise of existing Members and Strategic Managers with sector knowledge and expertise. This should take into consideration the role of a peer review and utilising the LGA and CFOA in a similar way to the Operational Assessment process.

WMFRA supports the implementation of a single framework that should apply across the whole local government sector and that fire should not be singled out as exceptional.

Earlier this year the LGA negotiated a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with DCLG and a new intervention protocol that applies to local authorities. In addition the DCLG and the LGA have agreed a Local Government Accountability System Statement which has a similar scope to the Intervention protocol discussed here and it is the view of WMFRA that this mechanism should be used as an existing alternative to the proposed intervention action.

Question 3 is there anything not included in the protocol that should be added?

There is no reference to the assurance statements currently being proposed as something that may lead into a statutory intervention. There is an opportunity to make more explicit links and references to the assurance statements and how the information provided could be utilised further.