



**Safest People, Safest Places**

## **Combined Fire Authority**

**25 June 2024**

## **Local Government Association (LGA) Subscription**

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### **Report of the Chief Fire Officer**

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#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide details of the LGA subscription for 2024/25 and to seek a decision about continued membership.

#### **Background**

2. A letter from Sarah Pickup, Acting Chief Executive of the LGA, setting out the role provided by the LGA and associated subscription rate for 2024/25 was received on 13 March 2024. A copy of the letter is attached at Appendix A.

#### **LGA Services Provided**

3. The LGA lobbies on behalf of local authorities on many issues that affect the sector as a whole and works with councils and fire authorities to develop new approaches to improvement and innovation. The attached letter sets out the recent work of the LGA.
4. One of the LGA's key priorities has been maintaining close partnerships with other organisations to drive their work forwards. They have continued to work closely with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), the Home Office, Fire Standards Board, the Fire Protection Board, the Health and Safety Executive, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) and the National Employers. This is extremely helpful in presenting a joined-up and consistent voice for the fire and rescue service to government.

5. A significant amount of work has also been undertaken by the LGA and the NFCC to make a case for sustainable funding for the sector.

### **Subscription Rate**

6. Subscriptions are now made via Direct Debit and the LGA Board have agreed freeze in subscriptions for 2024/25. There is a 2.5% Direct Debit discount and a 2.5% loyalty discount for fire and rescue authorities not on notice to withdraw from LGA Membership.
9. The overall membership fee for 2024/25 is therefore £7,337 (plus VAT).

### **Recommendation**

10. Members are requested to **agree** the LGA subscription for 2024/25.

CFO Steve Helps

Tel: 0191 375 5553



March 2024

Dear Steve

**LGA Subscriptions 2024/25**

Over the past 12 months local public services have once again clearly demonstrated their clarity of purpose and unstoppable determination to lead and serve local residents. The LGA has worked to be the strong national voice to promote, support and improve the wider local government family as you've led your fire and rescue service and community through yet another challenging year.

We were pleased to see the publication of the Government's response to the 'Reforming our Fire and Rescue Service' White Paper in December. Many of the issues which we had lobbied on for our members were reflected within the response, particularly around governance change, where there will not be any mandatory changes of governance. We are now working with the Home Office as they look at implementation, contributing to their work around operational independence and the Fire Framework review.

In our response to the White Paper we were particularly supportive of the proposed College of Fire and Rescue and we are pleased to see the Government's ongoing commitment to the College in their response. We have highlighted the sector's preferences around an independent College of Fire and will continue to represent our member's views. Our workforce team continue to support the National Employers who are in discussions with the Home Office in order to undertake a self-led review of the National Joint Council for local authority fire and rescue services, and we will continue to work with colleagues as this develops.

To support the sector in its governance role we have continued to provide sector support offers through the Fire Leadership Essentials Programme and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Champions Network. We are also keen to understand the needs of the sector in improvement support. This will be an ongoing piece of work.

The Fire Services Management Committee (FSMC) and Fire Commission continue to set our direction and establish our key priorities and work areas for the year. Our priorities for 2024/25 are people and culture, professionalism, governance, climate change and sector-led improvement.

People and culture is a key issue for the whole sector, following the publication of HMICFRS's spotlight report on values and culture as well as the publication of various independent reviews and media stories. The behaviour outlined in these stories has no place in our fire and rescue services and we are working with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and HMICFRS on the recommendations as well as more broadly. We held a conference for councillors in the Summer related to their role in driving improvement around culture and will continue to hold learning sessions through our EDI Champions Network. The NJC have also restarted the Inclusive Fire Service Group which has issued a statement of intent, supported the development of toolkits more widely in the sector, and have reviewed and updated the improvement strategies.

Climate change has been a long-standing issue for the LGA and FSMC and we are exploring ways in which fire services can influence these issues at a local level. Issues from new technology such as lithium-ion batteries have been a particular issue highlighted to us by our members as well. The LGA has been campaigning for a ban on disposable vapes, and in January we were delighted to hear the Government's announcement of a ban on single use vapes following our campaign.

We have continued to work with the NFCC to make the case around funding for the sector and were disappointed that we did not get the council tax flexibility that we had all campaigned for. LGA lobbying around the 2024/25 local government finance settlement secured an increase in the funding guarantee for all local authorities, which has resulted in an additional £15.7 million for stand alone Fire and Rescue Authorities. We also continued to make the case for £5 flexibility in our response to the local government finance settlement.

Building safety has continued to be a key priority for the LGA over the last year. We have continued to work with NFCC, DLUHC and the Home Office to support the remediation of buildings with dangerous cladding, including through our hosting of, and provision of policy support to, the Joint Inspection Team.

We have also worked with NFCC to push the Health and Safety Executive for greater clarity on how the Building Safety Regulator will work with the sector in the first full year of the new building safety regime starting in April, and in particular their approach to issuing building assessment certificates for the approximately 12,000 high-rise residential buildings that need to go through this process over the next five years.

We are in the midst of gearing up to our next Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition, taking place on 12-13 March in Bristol and offer a discount for members of the LGA to attend. We will be joined this year by the Fire Minister, the Rt Hon Chris Philp MP as well as Alex Norris MP and Lord David Goddard of Stockport, the shadow Fire Ministers for Labour and the Liberal Democrats respectively. We will also hear from the NFCC, the Inspectorate, the Home Office, DLUHC, and Mind amongst others.

Our workforce team has continued to support fire and rescue authorities and services, including support to the employers' sides of the three national negotiating bodies covering FRS employees including support staff, firefighters and senior managers. This support has included negotiations on pay, assistance in wider industrial relations matters, advice and interpretation on employment issues, acting on behalf of FRAs in relation to the Sargeant/McCloud and Matthews pension scheme related legal cases, and workforce transformation projects. We have also engaged with the Home Office on the implications of their Minimum Service Level Regulations and will continue to do so as they develop guidance around implementation.

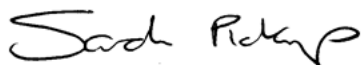
Finally, one of our key priorities has been maintaining our close partnerships with other organisations to drive our work forwards. We have continued to work closely with partners like the NFCC, the Home Office, Fire Standards Board, the Fire Protection Board, the Building Safety Regulator, HMICFRS, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) and National Employers on a range of topics to ensure that the voice of our members continues to be heard.

As part of our commitment to be the best membership body we can be, the LGA Board has agreed to freeze the cost of membership for the coming year.

Your fire authority's subscription for 2024/25 will be **£7,337** (plus VAT), including the 2.5% direct debit and loyalty discounts. As you've joined the Direct Debit scheme there is nothing further to do.

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

With very best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Pickup". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sarah Pickup  
Acting Chief Executive