



## A Two-Week Précis of 2019

Firstly, a bit earlier than last year but probably still a bit late for most, may I wish you and your loved ones a very happy New Year, I hope you have every success in 2019. Toward the end of 2018 I started to consider, as many people do, what the challenges for 2019 might be and what would be my personal objectives linked to those challenges. One thing that shone through those thoughts was that 2019 looks to be yet another year of change, challenge and milestones for the UK Fire and Rescue Service.

I am not sure any of the challenges will come as a surprise to you but as I sat down to write this blog I came to realise that I had been involved in meetings and discussions on every one of the major topics for 2019 already. Grenfell, Hackitt, the Comprehensive Spending Review, Fire Standards Board, the future of the Fire and Rescue Service and continued development of the role of NFCC are at the forefront as this year gets well into its stride and the festive season fades into memory.

The Grenfell Tower Inquiry has finished phase one and although there is a thought that phase two may not start until 2020 we know there are likely to be interim recommendations from the Inquiry and that at least some are likely to be directed at the Fire and Rescue Service. Through National Operational Learning we have tried to keep up-to-date and recently agreed changes to the firefighting and high rise NOG will be distributed soon. The core participants have all been given the opportunity to suggest recommendations and for us these are likely to range across operations, communications, information and risk gathering and associated areas. NFCC has already agreed to use our Central Programme Office (CPO) to collate the recommendations and then use the appropriate committees and other experts to focus the work, doing things once not 50 times. This work is likely, as a minimum to spread across Operations, Protection & Business Safety, Workforce and Prevention committees.

With reference to the NFCC CPO and the work plan related to the NFCC Strategy and our foundation programmes in Community Risk, Workforce and Digital & Data, as well as the maintenance of NOG. The Steering Group is now established as the governance board for signing off the associated work with updates going to NFCC Council. We have also established the Strategic Engagement Forum where all stakeholders can be involved in shaping the programmes and projects for the future. Alongside this we aim to make Council more strategically focussed on the big issues and less transactional. The meetings have been really good up to now, but it is time for that next step for a maturing organisation.

Very much linked to the Grenfell tragedy is the Expert Panel that I am still a member of and still meets every two weeks to consider issues and provide advice. The remediation work on the ACM clad buildings is moving, but not as fast in the private sector as many of us would like. Some of this is the fact that neither the Housing Act or Fire Safety Order were written with this type of problem in mind and the new Joint Inspection Team, with Building Control, NFCC and others is determined to push the progress. The Joint Regulators Group, with NFCC representing Fire and Rescue Services alongside the LGA, Local Authority Building Control, MHCLG and HSE, is now starting to work on how the Hackitt recommendations will be implemented.

Being a learning organisation that supports continuous improvement in Fire and Rescue Services is a key role for the NFCC and as well as learning from Grenfell we are keeping a very close eye on learning from the inspections carried out by HMICFRS. The issue being highlighted are once again being collated by the CPO and fed into the programmes and projects so that we provide the best guidance for Services and Fire Authorities where appropriate, and in this spirit NFCC is working closely with the LGA

on post-inspection peer support to assist where required. I was pleased to provide the NFCC view at the Chairs and Chiefs meeting with HMICFRS held on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> January where I outlined how we would feed the learning into programmes and how we can support both individuals and organisations were required. I was also able to identify areas where we can continue our excellent work with HMICFRS to improve the whole process for everyone involved.

Very closely linked to the inspections and one of the issues the English Fire Minister identified is what 'Good' likes like after 15 years of localism is the English Fire Standards Board (FSB). Supported by the NFCC CPO and aligned with the NFCC programmes, Grenfell and HMICFRS learning we have the independent chair and vice chair appointed LINK and the first meeting of the FSB on 1 February where the inaugural work programme will be discussed. There are already some topics that lend themselves to providing the guidance for standards, one being national operational guidance and the next in line appears to be the new Leadership Framework about to be launched. With the Community Risk Programme and IRMPs, Protection competency framework, apprenticeships and other developing work well placed to be adopted if accepted by the FSB.

The future of the Fire and Rescue Service is aligned to all the points so far but I have also had important discussions, along with others, on the proposed Comprehensive Spending Review. Our challenge is to show the Treasury how Fire adds value and is worth future investment whilst we are struggling with standard data sets and evidence that go beyond professional judgement. What we cannot afford to do is to be seen retracting to what some see as core business and removes innovation. NFCC supports a pay rise for firefighters, but believe this can be achieved by building a sound case, not pulling back and allowing others to fill the space whilst Fire & Rescue becomes less relevant. NFCC is working hard with the LGA and Home Office to develop the case built on excellence in core function, training for that core function but also supporting issues like the NHS Prevention strategy and embracing digital and data innovation to provide a flexible workforce that adjusts to challenging vulnerability and risk. Work that can also inform national pay negotiations.

Another significant factor of change over the coming year is the turnover of Chief Fire Officers with somewhere between 10 and 15% of CFOs changing in 2019. Making sure NFCC continues to build on our first two years is imperative during this change and I wish all past and future colleagues the very best for the future.

Looking back over the first two weeks of the year, it has been a good start, but it will need commitment, discussion and a pragmatic approach to build and maintain momentum to see our Service in its rightful place, adding value to the communities we serve.

**January 2019**