



'A pivotal year'

At the end of 2016 I knew one thing for certain, that was the fact I was in my last few months with Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue Service and 2017 would soon see the National Fire Chiefs Council established.

I don't think anyone could have predicted the events of 2017, of course the threat of terrorism has been with us for decades but we all still looked on with horror at events in Manchester, London and across the world. We also had the worst fire in living memory, the effects of the Grenfell Tower incident will reverberate for years. Our thoughts are with all those affected by these incidents, especially at this time of year when thoughts turn to loved ones with us, and those who have passed.

These events, plus projects like establishing the NFCC, the re-introduction of an Inspectorate for Fire & Rescue, the standards project, business continuity planning, emergency medical response and many others have seen some fantastic work and extraordinary effort by colleagues across Fire & Rescue and in partner organisations.

I thought about name checking some of these outstanding contributions but then decided that not only are there too many people to mention, but there would be a great danger that I would miss some. So can I just offer my sincere thanks to everyone who has worked so hard to make the NFCC the success it is and have attended incidents and worked on projects in order to keep Fire & Rescue at the top of its game. My thanks also to all our partner organisations, we cannot do things alone.

2018 promises to be another busy year, the Grenfell inquiry will push on and generate work, as will Dame Judith Hackitt's review which aims to issue its full report in the spring; I have no doubt this will lead to many workstreams and NFCC will play its part in every one.

The first inspection pilots and full inspections will take place, Standards should move from business case to implementation, the English national framework will be issued, Scotland Fire & Rescue Service will develop its transformation agenda and Fire Authority governance in England will continue to change as more Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners will be created, Mayors will be more prominent and the London Fire Commissioner should become the first corporation sole in Fire Governance. National Operational Guidance will go into steady state, procurement collaboration should generate more savings and the new duty to collaborate will develop.

The local government settlement provided a little good news on precept but not what we were hoping for. I have in the last week had discussions with the Minister and the Home Office Permanent Secretary who have both assured me that the Home Office want to work with NFCC to develop an evidence base for future Fire Authority funding.

The Minister is also very keen to visit Fire & Rescue Services across England to further understand the context and will be with us at Council. The NJC pay discussions need to be finalised and importantly we need to ensure the resource and finance structure for the NFCC is sustainable.

One thing is for certain: 2018, even without any unknowns, will be a busy and pivotal year. But for now I wish you all a very happy Christmas and safe and peaceful New Year. Thank you to everyone working over the festive season and best wishes to your loved ones. See you in 2018.
