



Planning Day Minutes 21 February 2024

FM Global, Leadenhall Building, Leadenhall Street London

Present

Terry McDermott	TMc
Iain Cox	IC
Jon Dyson	JD
Ronnie King	RK
Tom Roche	TR
Alasdair Perry	AP
Toni Maddox	TM
Roger Brason	RB
Joanne Fowler	JF
Nick Coleshill	NC

Apologies

Rob Barber
Richard Clark

Opening and Introductions

The planning day was opened and facilitated by TMc who welcomed the Exec Group and thanked TR and FM Global for providing the meeting venue and refreshments.

The purpose of the day was explained and the Agenda was introduced.

The main purpose of the meeting was to achieve updates on parliamentary issues, review the NFSN finances and to discuss the NFSN strategic aims and develop a programme of work scoping out an improvement plan.

Agenda

1. Parliamentary update.

RK provided the update (hard copy distributed at meeting) and it was agreed that this document would be shared via the wider NFSN.

Actions

RK to provide a list of MPs and Peers connected with the APPG so that this can be distributed to CFOs who may wish to make contact with those Members of Parliament in their area and establish communications in relations to all matters fire related, particularly sprinklers. **RK – supplied to go out week 26/2**

In regard to BB100, it was proposed to draft a question for the LGA Fire Conference that could be asked by an FRA member in regard to the progress on BB100, the apparent failure to follow due process in regard to consultation before issuing or amending guidance. **RK TMc** (it was suggested Cllr Brian Gallagher of Cheshire could be approached to ask the question).

The NFCC Fire Protection lead (CFO Tomlinson) to be informed in advance of the LGA fire conference that the question would be raised. **TMc**

2. Financial Update

TM provided an update on the accounts and estimated that there would be an ongoing deficit of approximately £3000 per annum due to mainly to the reductions in grant funding over recent years. (Spreadsheet distributed at meeting).

Action RK to follow up with Dean Price (RSA) about grant

Action RK to see if IFSA has changed their position on providing grants to Europe

The potential to raise membership fees once we have implemented changes and improved communication

3. Future of the NFSN

TMc opened the discussion reviewing the wider context in which the NFSN is operating using the revised PESTLE analysis as a template.

It was recognised that this year there will be a general election and that this will have implications on the appetite of Government regarding making decisions such as legislative and regulation changes. It is difficult to predict the impact of the forth coming

elections and forecast if such changes will be slowed down or speeded up by the prospect of the general election.

As an example, BB100 has seen a two year gap between the consultation being launched the results not yet reported, as an indication of the current pace.

Similarly, the Grenfell Phase two report is yet to be published and is predicted to be published in June just before the summer recess with an Autumn election to follow. The summer recess may be considered a timely period to publish the report by Government and if so what the subsequent impact of purdah will mean for any actions for Government linked to the report will remain to be seen.

In regard to the economy, it was discussed that public spending is under pressure, there are a number of local authorities that are facing or going through bankruptcy and there are capital costs relating to RAAC concrete in schools that may require significant investment from central Government to address. All areas of public spending are stretched particularly the health sector, no doubt impacting on political appetite for legislative change that will increase building costs. If these costs are devolved downwards to local councils, the appetite for retrofitting sprinklers in premises may be diminished.

Globally the UK is operating in a more challenging and contested environment with conflicts in Ukraine and Palestine, which will potentially have a negative impact on the UK economy and world markets, costs of building materials may increase further as supply chains and shipping lanes are interrupted, impacting on trade.

It was against this backdrop that the purpose and future if the NFSN was discussed regarding our priorities and how we can shape the offer of NFSN membership in the future, to demonstrate more clearly the value that the NFSN provides.

Originally the NFSN was created to provide a voice for the FRS on all matters related to sprinklers and to engage with industry and suppliers to share knowledge and understanding across the whole of the sector.

As the NFSN developed four key work strands were identified:

Influencing the wider use of sprinklers

Evidencing the benefits of sprinklers

Educating Widely

Supporting members

The exec group discussed if these four areas were still relevant in context in which we are operating.

It was determined that the “Influencing” strand needed to be better explained to demonstrate that the NFSN, whilst keen advocates for sprinklers, is focussed on applying a risk-based approach rather than a blanket approach to sprinkler provision.

It was then agreed that once the risk-based case for sprinklers in a building type was determined such as care homes and extra care facilities the “Evidencing” work strand

should be used to support the case with data. It was also pointed out that risk can be discussed in many forms, financial risk, critical infrastructure risk, life and property etc, and that it would be counter intuitive to align risk purely to building types.

In regard to “Education” it was agreed that there are a wide range of materials already available to explain how sprinklers operate and provide myth busting materials, via means such as BAFSA and BSA. By contrast, it was discussed that there is a gap in education material for both Protection staff tasked with engaging architects etc on sprinklers and also importantly for fire crews attending incidents where sprinklers have operated. These two areas are to be pursued by the NFSN.

With regard to “Supporting” it was recognised that the fundamental problem or hurdle for the NFSN is engaging with the right people, particularly across the fire and rescue service as post holders change frequently and the NFSN email contact list is always out of date, with little hope of being able to refresh it and maintain it.

A solution for this was discussed and it was agreed that the best method of contacting all FRS personnel who operate in the Protection field is via the NFCC Workplace communication tool. It was noted that the NFSN do not have access to the tool, but a work around could be put in place to make this happen. It was agreed that JD and JF would be able to upload NFSN material to the Workplace communicator in the first instance, until access issues could be resolved for the NFSN, or if not resolved this would continue to be the method of disseminating material to the FRS section of the NFSN. This would leave a much smaller pool of contacts to maintain for the commercial section of the NFSN who would receive direct email contact as previously.

Materials to be shared would include a quarterly update from RK, and the regular minutes of meetings and any other information of note.

NC asked that future Sprinkler Saves communications to be forwarded to Terry/Toni allowing publications to be.

- i. Uploaded on to the NFSN website
- ii. Communicated via the proposed NFCC forum

With regard to communications and future meetings it was discussed that given the costs of attending the meetings for members, it may be more prudent to run a hybrid meeting with the Exec meeting in person along with any members who wish to do so, and this would be live streamed via MS Teams to establish a much wider audience.

A debate then took place regarding the organisational structure of the NFSN and the roles of the Executive. It was discussed that the secretary role could be split between TMc and TM and this could be transitioned over a three-month period. This would allow TMc to take up a vice chair role to support Rob Barber when he is not available and allow TM to take a more active role in improving communications and the website.

Actions

Set up and use the NFCC Workplace community for distribution of NFSN material and correspondence to the NFSN members.

Set up Hybrid meetings on teams

Link NFSN website to other websites such as BAFSA and BSA

Questionnaire to Fire Services to improve training package for all services

Learned from JD – Robert Inman has tried to contact NFSN through website and link was wrong. Link has been fixed and TMc to respond to Robert

Structure of NFSN – TMc and TM to further discuss the transitioning of the secretary role.

Determine how to compile information from various associations and how to disseminate the information to our members

4. Future meetings

The AGM will be on 30th April 2024

The Exec will take place the evening before

Venue to be determined