BOARD PAPER

Item Number	Item 4 – Paper 2
Title of Paper	Fire Standards Development Process Review
Decision or Information	For discussion and decision
Date of Meeting	9th September 2024
Presented by	Fire Standards Team
Attachments	Appendix A - Fire Standards Development Process Appendix B – Fire Standards Maintenance Review Process

Summary

This paper provides the Board with a review of the process by which Fire Standards are developed and maintained, following recommendations contained in the Internal Governance and Assurance Fire Standard QA Report.

Recommendations

The Board is asked to approve the changes to the Fire Standards Development Process which are highlighted in red in Appendix A (the Fire Standards Development Process) and summarised below:

- An additional stage to be added to the Governance Review cycle (Appendix A, page 8) outlining the process and governance requirements around reviewing and maintaining Fire Standards
- Clarity on the content of the annual report (Appendix A, page 8)

Background

In 2019, the Fire Standards Board (FSB) approved the Fire Standards Development Process. This process has been used to develop each Fire Standard. In December 2021, the Fire Standards Board also approved the Fire Standards Maintenance and Review Process (appendix B) which details the process for undertaking both periodic and exceptional reviews.

At the FSB meeting on 10th June 2024, the Board discussed the recommendations contained in the QA report made in association with the Internal Governance and Assurance Fire Standard. It was noted in that QA report that some aspects of the development of that Standard had deviated from the agreed process. In considering the Reviewer's comments, the Board decided to review the

process by which Fire Standards are developed in support of planned reviews of published Fire Standards (Action FSB–A162)

Recognising that the initial suite of Fire Standards is now complete with 19 Fire Standards now published and that delivery timeframes on the periodic and exceptional reviews have been agreed (see Item 3 Paper 1, Appendix A), the Fire Standards Team (FST) has conducted a review of the process specifically the following:

- The necessity for the involvement of a National Lead from the beginning of the development of a Standard
- Whether early identification of key stakeholders and specialist expertise is always needed
- The need to provide those involved in the development of a Fire Standard with all guidance that is available at the start of the process
- The need for peer review processes to take place prior to public consultation

Each of the above has been mapped to the Lessons Learned Log maintained by the FST as shown below.

Lessons Learned Log

The FST has collated, reviewed and responded to a number of lessons learned throughout the development of the initial suite of Standards.

Lesson	Learning Outcome	Introduced
Commissioning Fire Standards	When commissioning Fire Standards to strategic leads and working groups, the FST needed to develop a briefing document to be shared to provide clarity on the steps and approach to be taken including the roles and responsibilities of those involved.	February 2021
Strategic Leads to be in place prior to development	The FST updated the development process to ensure that identifying and engaging with the national strategic lead for any given Fire Standard is prioritised.	February 2021
Definition of peer review and consultation	A definition of what is meant by peer review and consultation was produced and guidance was also	June 2021

	produced which is shared with working group members[1].	
Stakeholders to be identified and documented at each stage of development	The FST updated the development process to ensure that stakeholders are identified, documented and engaged with for research, peer review and consultation purposes.	June 2021
Communications plans put in place	A communication plan is produced for each Fire Standard, setting out the communication points, messages and the intended audience	January 2022
Post-Implementation Support	The standard consultation questions were updated to ask respondents about what post-consultation support would be beneficial	May 2023

Proposed Revisions

The FST has identified proposed revisions which are highlighted in red in Appendix A and summarised below together with a short explanatory text about why these changes are proposed:

- Clarity on the content of the annual report (Appendix A, page 11)
  The development of the annual report has evolved since its introduction, and it is felt it would be useful to document some of the information that should be included in the report.

- New maintenance stage within the Governance Review cycle (Appendix A, page 11 and 12)
  The development process originally documented what is required to produce a new Fire Standard, with no reference to the next steps once a Fire Standard has been published. The new additional text outlines the process and governance requirements around reviewing and maintaining Fire Standards.

- Statement outlining the Board's right to change the agreed process in exceptional circumstances (Appendix A, page 12)
  QA recommendations have previously noted that on occasion and due to exceptional circumstances the development process has not been followed at least in part. The new statement puts in place an exceptional route whereby the Board can agree deviation from the agreed process.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Board is asked to review the changes to the Development Process and, if content, approve them.

Fire Standards Development Process

Version 3.0
August 2024

Contents

Version Control

Version	Author	Summary
0.1	Joy Flanagan	Initial version
0.2	Marie Langtry	Amends following clarification of development process
0.3	Joy Flanagan	Amends aligning development process and style guide documents
0.4	Marie Langtry	Addition of hyperlinks and swim lane diagram of process
0.5	Joy Flanagan	Amends post Sep Board discussion – additions to stages of Governance
1.0	Joy Flanagan	Amends post first QA process March 2021
2.0	Natasha Elia	Amends post several QA reports
3.0	Natasha Elia	Amends post QA reports and Board request

Purpose and Use

This guide is designed for those working for or as part of the NFCC and involved in or leading the development of Fire Standards.

This guidance contains useful information about the agreed development process and tips to help when drafting Fire Standards following the agreed structure and template. To support this there is a generic Fire Standards delivery plan to help structure work and clarify what is expected to be completed as part of the development process.

Many of these tasks will be aligned to standard project management methodologies and will follow the governance structure outlined in the Fire Standards Development Process.

Fire Standards content should be concise and relevant, and the information presented should be informative, specific and clear. The language used should be easy to understand and aim to be 'jargon-free', although inevitably some words and phrases used by the fire and rescue service cannot be avoided.

Agreed terminology and abbreviations are available in the "Fire Standards Style Guide" which aims to help bring consistency to Fire Standards related content. Final formatting of the Fire Standards will be dictated by the website formatting protocols.

Applying the advice provided in these guidance documents will help ensure that Fire Standards and their supporting documentation be written in a style that make them easily read and understood by everyone. It will also lead to delivery of consistent and professional products.

All Fire Standards and their supporting information will be subject to quality assurance processes which will check the agreed development process has been completed before approval and publication.

Fire Standards Component Parts

There is an agreed template designed to help construct a Fire Standard in a consistent format. It has a number of component parts which have been agreed by the Fire Standards Board. The template contains advisory notes for drafting; below is a summary of what is expected in each section:

Section	What is required
Desired outcome	This outcome is fundamentally the Fire Standard. A clear statement about the outcome intended for the community served or for the employees within a service. This statement should be about what a service does. It is useful to consider starting statements with words like plans, delivers, demonstrates or evidences.

Section	What is required
	An example from an approved Fire Standard is provided below for information: *"A fire and rescue service that is prepared to respond to major incidents and large-scale emergencies or disruptive challenges (emergencies). It carries out effective risk-based preparations and emergency planning to meet its duties under the Civil Contingencies Act and to keep the public safe. It reduces, controls and mitigates the impact of emergencies through effective preparedness, response and recovery.* *A service that can continue to deliver critical services during times of emergencies. It is prepared to respond as a single service; working with other fire and rescue services or as part of a multi-agency response. It contributes effectively to national resilience requirements and has suitable and sufficient access to resources and assets to support response to local, regional and national scale emergencies. It collaborates with its local resilience forum (LRF) partners to achieve the LRF National Resilience Standards and to communicate effectively with the public in preparation for, during and after an emergency, building community resilience.* *It has in place arrangements for the sharing and receiving of information and intelligence with partners, contributing to effective decision making and enabling a coordinated response.* *It is an organisation that works with its relevant partners to continually learn and improve multi-agency response by de-briefing after training, exercises and emergencies, sharing and acting on the lessons identified."*
What is required to meet the Fire Standard	This section needs to state what a service **must**, **should** or **may** do to achieve the desired outcome. See notes below on the use of the words [must, should or may](#).
Legal requirements or mandatory duties	A list of links to any relevant legislation or regulations. It is accepted that there is legislation that will apply to **all** Fire Standards, such as the Fire Services Act. This section looks to identify any specific legislation relevant to this Fire Standard. It is not intended to be a complete glossary of legislation just providing links to the most useful for services to reference if they need. See notes below about the [formatting of links to legislation or regulations](#)
Expected benefits of achieving the Fire Standard	List of the benefits this Fire Standard may result in delivering or contributing to. Consideration must be given to how these benefits will be measured. There are many benefits already documented in existing Fire Standards. Development teams may wish to refer to those benefits initially to avoid wasted effort in designing statements that already exist.
Linked qualifications, accreditations or Fire Standards	List of any relevant organisational accreditations; specific qualifications, accreditations or national occupational standards individuals working in this area need to attain or comply with and any linked Fire Standards. Where there are multiple accreditations or qualifications that could be delivered by numerous corporate providers, it is not the place of the Fire Standards Board to promote one provider over another, therefore best practice is not to include any. You may wish to direct services to research providers themselves.

Section	What is required
	This may also include competency frameworks where they exist.
	This is not intended to be a complete glossary but should provide links to the most useful for services to reference if they need.
Guidance and supporting information	Details and links to supporting guidance, foundation knowledge or information.
	This could include guidance produced through the NFCC, wider sector guidance or guidance external to the sector or a combination.

Must, should or may?

To avoid misunderstanding, when describing the actions that will lead to services achieving the Fire Standards, statements should provide a clear understanding of what services must do, what they should do and what they may do. The definitions for each word as agreed by the Fire Standards Board are detailed below. It is anticipated that the majority of actions will be "must" statements to strengthen the Fire Standards as much as possible:

Must
These are actions that fire and rescue services must do to achieve the Fire Standard, they may include those required by legislation but are not limited to that. Examples include;

A fire and rescue service must:

a) Comply with legislation and guidance that applies to emergency response driving
Or
b) Recruit, train, develop and maintain a competent and professional workforce to enable the service to carry out its role in preparedness, response and recovery to emergencies;

Should
These are actions that fire and rescue services are recommended follow to achieve a Fire Standard. Examples include:

A fire and rescue service should:

a) Establish data sharing arrangements or agreements where beneficial to the community, to the service and others;

May
These are actions that do not fall into either of the categories above but are considered advisable. These are often topics that will support improvements in this area, but may create undue burden on some services, particularly those that are smaller. Examples include:

A fire and rescue service may:

a) explore opportunities to enhance its technical data capability by utilising advanced analytical techniques.

Legislation and regulations

Wherever possible, omit the year of publication for legislation or regulations, to avoid time limiting publications. The hyperlink to the legislation should be "hidden" behind the text and should take the user to the latest version of the legislation or regulations. An example is shown below:

For example:

- Road Safety Act

Not

- Road Safety Act 2006 and then https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/49/contents

Fire Standards Development Process

The Board has an agreed standards development process represented as a cycle shown below. This follows a generic process of developing any national product for the NFCC whether that is guidance, tools or services for the use of fire and rescue services. More detailed information about each stage and a more detailed flow diagram is contained later in this guide:
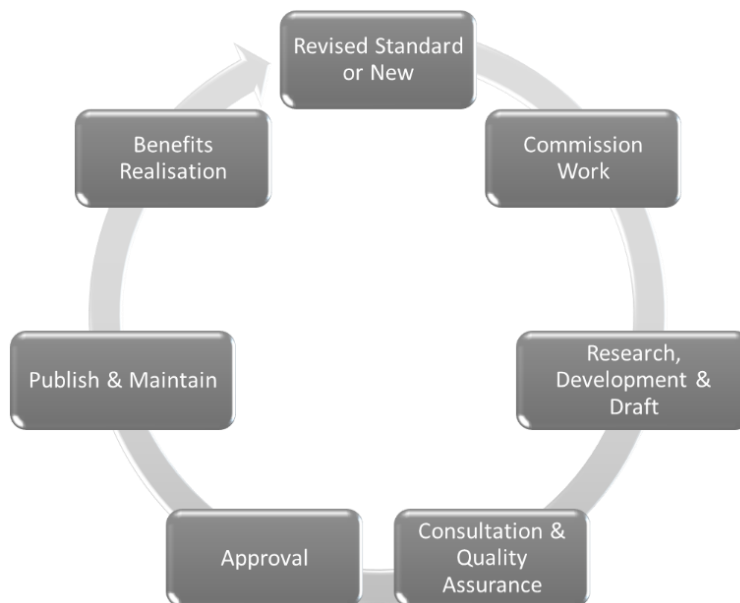
Fire Standards Governance

Underpinning the cycle, are tasks grouped into governance stages described below.

The process of commissioning work has now evolved into the Board approving phases of development that contain multiple Fire Standards being proposed for development.

Stage 1: Scoping, timetable, peer review and initiating consultation

During this phase, the following activities will take place:

- The rationale for Fire Standards development will be shared and confirmed by the Fire Standards Board.
- The Fire Standards Board will approve the overall delivery plan and timetable for development.
- If required, Board expectations will be outlined in a Commissioning Brief for the benefit of those developing the Fire Standard.
- An NFCC Lead officer will be identified and confirmed.
- A working group involved in the delivery of the Fire Standard(s) will be identified and confirmed.
- Development work will be initiated.
- A draft fire standard will be developed using appropriate version control.
- Approximately 5-12 Peer reviewers from within fire and rescue services and externally will be identified and confirmed.
- A peer review will take place with those who have been identified.
- The working group will review feedback from the peer review stage and will make agreed revisions to the draft Fire Standard(s)
- A pre-consultation draft will be produced and shared with the NFCC Lead for agreement before sharing with the Board to gain sign-off to commence consultation.
- The Board reserves the right to further amend a draft Fire Standard post peer review.
- Opening the consultation and informing all identified stakeholders.

Stage 2: Post-consultation draft

During this phase, the following activities will take place:

- the Fire Standard(s) has been fully consulted upon.
- The following and completion of any other identified and relevant governance process, for example gaining agreement within NFCC programme hub/board and with other partner organisations if they have been involved in development work.
- The feedback received at consultation will have been reviewed by the working group. Any revisions which are related to that feedback will have been completed.
- A post-consultation report outlining the feedback received and the post-consultation version of the Fire Standard will have been shared with the Board for consideration.
- The Board will have signed off the post-consultation version of the Fire Standard for quality assurance. The Board reserves the right to further amend a draft Fire Standard post consultation.

Stage 3 – Assurance and Final Approval

During this phase, the following activities will take place:

- Quality assurance (QA) evidence will be collated and a report will be produced which will be shared with the independent QA Assessor.
- A QA exercise has been completed by the independent QA Assessor to verify the correct development process has been followed.
- The Board is provided with a QA report that verifies the quality of the development process along with any learning from its development.
- Subject to QA findings, the Board will approve the Fire Standard for publication.
- During the approval of the Fire Standard(s), a periodic review date will be set. This is usually three years, but potentially could be different if the working group or Board decide otherwise.
- The working group and Fire Standards Team responsible for development will have considered the impact of implementation and developed plans to address any needs identified.

Stage 4 – Impact and Evaluation

During this phase, the following activities will take place:

- The NFCC will provide the Board with an evaluation of the effectiveness of the approved Fire Standards on an annual basis.
- The Board will review the annual report alongside any other relevant information, such as feedback from FRS, changes in legislation etc.
- The Board will confirm the Fire Standards remain fit for purpose and agree a further review date or they may instigate a review of a Fire Standard(s) and commission the NFCC to carry out that review.

The annual report will include information such as:

- the impact the standard has had;
- the degree of adoption; and
- success in delivering the desired outcome.

During this stage, the currency of Fire Standards will be monitored by the Board on an ongoing basis. The Board will consider the annual report, identify any learning which may impact on existing Fire Standards, and if necessary, instigate the review of Fire Standards already approved and published.

Stage 5 – Maintenance and Review

During this phase, the following activities will take place:

- The FST will follow the agreed maintenance of Fire Standards through the periodic and exceptional review process
- The FST will assess the published Fire Standard against a set criterion – this includes accuracy and relevancy of content, identifying any changed legislation or new guidance that may be applicable and what impact any change may have on the services
- The review will also consider the impact of external factors to the maintenance and review process, which may have an impact on timescales such as impending changes to legislation, inquiry outcomes or government / inspectorate activities and priorities
- The assessment will be documented, and a report with recommendations will be produced on whether amendments should be made to the Fire Standard(s)
- The report will be shared with the FS Board for decision
- Should there be any amendments required, the agreed periodic and exceptional review process will be followed

On an ongoing basis, the Board will be responsible for ensuring all Fire Standards remain fit for use and current.

Exceptionally in progressing the delivery of a Fire Standard, the FST will escalate any perceived barriers to the Chairs, who may choose to take such matters to the Board for consideration and decision.

Roles and Responsibilities

Fire Standards are the responsibility of the Fire Standards Board which commissions work to develop Fire Standards through the NFCC.

A comprehensive and auditable development process for Fire Standards has been agreed, and all those involved in development work are asked to follow this process to ensure the end-product meets the required Quality Assurance standards.

The NFCC Fire Standards Team acts as facilitator between the Board and those involved in development and can provide advice and steer in relation to the agreed process.

The tables below are intended to provide clarity and set expectations about the roles and responsibilities of each teams' involvement in the Fire Standard development. It outlines each role at every stage of the process.

Key:

	Role	Definition
A	Accountable	Owner of the Fire Standards, commissions those responsible for the development work and retain overall accountability
R	Responsible	Responsible for coordinating and/or completing actions relating to the Fire Standards development work
C	Consulted	Is consulted as part of the Fire Standard development process and may provide input into it
I	Informed	Is notified/informed about progress with Fire Standards development

Stages of Development Process	Fire Standards Board	Fire Standards Team	Development Team (Working Group)	Implementation Team	Independent QA Assessor	End Users		*Other Stakeholders
						Fire & Rescue Services	*Relevant Practitioner Groups	
Commission Work	A	R	C	I		I	C	
Research, Development & Draft	A	R	R	I		C	C	C
Peer review	I	A	R	I		C	C	C
Peer review sign-off	A	R	C					
Consultation	A	R	C	I		C	C	C
Post-consultation draft sign-off	A	R	C	I				
Quality Assurance	I	A	I	I	R			
Approval (Final)	A / R	I	I	I		I	I	I
Publish and Maintain	A	R	I	I		I	I	I
Implementation Support	I	C	C	A / R		C	C	I
Benefits Monitoring	I	A	C	R		C	C	I
Benefits Realisation	A	R	C	C		C	C	I

*As appropriate

Engagement and consultation

The most important part of the development process is engaging and consulting with the end users and wider stakeholders about the products.

Engagement activity, in whatever format, ensures that all views and feedback from all perspectives are considered as part of development work. It also allows the NFCC to identify any potential risks or barriers to the adoption of national products.

Identification of relevant stakeholders and their early engagement encourages buy-in and support for the work. It also allows the impact of implementation to be considered so that those developing the Fire Standard(s) can make plans to support services with implementation in any way they can.

Failure to adopt nationally produced products means that time and effort has been wasted which does not represent providing value for money for the NFCC's members – the fire and rescue services.

Not all feedback received will lead to changes to the drafted materials, but evidence that stakeholders have been engaged and their feedback considered will be part of the quality assurance measures.

It is proposed that the following steps be followed to ensure appropriate engagement takes place:

- Ensure relevant audiences and stakeholders are identified at the initiation stage of any work
- Clarify what "role" each audience or stakeholder represents, for example:
  - will they be "**sponsors**" of the project – project executives or Board members, those involved in governance of the project or responsible for budget?
  - will they be "**end users**" of the product – fire and rescue services or other organisations?
  - will they be involved in **development and delivery** – working group members, seconded staff or contracted staff
- Clarify how stakeholders will potentially be impacted by the Fire Standard and consider how implementation support could be provided.
- Clarify how and when each stakeholder will be engaged and what should be asked of them. Will they be asked to develop, peer review or consult on the Fire Standard(s).
- Develop and maintain a log of all stakeholders and audiences.
- Keep a log of engagement activity as an audit trail and for the purposes of quality assurance.
- Ensure a wide range of stakeholders, both internally and externally to FRS are included and communicated with at both peer review and consultation stages.
- Aim to achieve a 90% response rate at peer review and consultation stages.

Fire Standards Maintenance and Review Processes

Version 2.0
June 2023

Contents

Version Control

Date	Version	Author	Summary
December 2021	1.0	Joy Flanagan	Initial version – content agreed by Board December 2021.
13/6/2023	1.1	Joy Flanagan	Converted from Board Paper content into stand-alone document June 2023
20/6/2023	1.2	Joy Flanagan	Amendments following sharing with FSB Chairs
23/6/2023	2.0	Joy Flanagan	Final amendments and approval by FSB Chairs

Maintenance and Review of Fire Standards

It is essential that Fire Standards remain current and relevant. Therefore, it is important that they are periodically reviewed and that any changes required can be adequately managed.

As set out in the Development Process, at the point of approval for each Fire Standard a periodic review date is set three years after the publication date. The maintenance schedule held by the Fire Standards Team[2], sets out when future Fire Standard periodic reviews are due.

This document details both the periodic and exceptional review processes.

Periodic Review

The purpose of the periodic review is to assess the continued relevance of the standard's content three years after publication and revise, as necessary. While not exhaustive, the current periodic review process takes into consideration:

- how the standards have been received and acted upon by services, informed by feedback directly via the NFCC Implementation Support Team or other sources;
- external influences on the sector or drivers for change that have or are likely to have an impact on a Fire Standard, such as new or amended legislation;
- external reviews or inquiry outcomes that generate learning and may propose new ways of working for services based on that learning;
- feedback or recommendations made by HMICFRS or based on its inspection findings; and
- feedback from services through the network of Single Points of Contact (SPOCs) in liaison with the NFCC implementation team.

Following review, the nature and level of change required will be assessed by the Fire Standards Team and proposals will be made to the Board for consideration and agreement.

Exceptional Review Process

There may be instances where a Fire Standard will require an earlier review outside of the normal review process. The Exceptional Review process explains how this type of review is managed.

The Exceptional Review Process may be initiated due to a variety of reasons with information or requests for change coming from differing and multiple sources.

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[2] At time of publishing this process, the resources support the FSB are provided by the NFCC.

Upon receiving information or a change request, the Fire Standards Team would:

1. record the request and advise the Chairs (subject to the potential level of change required)

2. assess the extent and urgency of the change requested

3. share the findings from the assessment and any proposals for action with the FSB Chairs for consideration and agreement. (The Board would be informed subject to the level of change identified.)

Should a change be considered necessary, the Exceptional Review process has three possible "change levels:"

- Minor change
- Moderate change
- Major change

The definition of each of these is explained in the table below:

Type of Change	Definition
Minor	A small change to the Fire Standard which **does not** change the fundamental meaning of the standard or how services achieve it. Examples of this include but are not limited to: • typo or missing punctuation • broken web links • the addition of links to any new supporting information or legislation
Moderate	A moderate change to the Fire Standard which **does not** change the fundamental meaning of the standard or how services achieve it. Examples of this include but are not limited to: • a revision to language in the standard providing clarification to readers • conclusions from learning or recommendations from external sources • new guidance or tools made available • significant additions or changes to other components of the standard
Major	A major change to the Fire Standard wording or supporting guidance and information which **does change** the fundamental meaning of the standard or how services achieve it, therefore will require engagement and consultation. Examples of this include: • wording that alters the fundamental meaning of the agreed outcome of the standard, or the activities a service must do to achieve it; • adds any new activities to what a service must do to achieve the standard.

Once a decision about the level of change has been identified, the actions below will be instigated:

Minor Change

1. Any minor change will be considered and approved by the nominated responsible manager for supporting the FSB and fire standards development, review and maintenance (responsible manager).
2. The responsible manager will present the change and rationale for the change to the FSB Chairs (Chairs) for confirmation that it can progress as a minor change.
3. The Board will be informed at the next scheduled meeting of any changes of this nature.
4. Communications to services, the NFCC Implementation Team and other stakeholders about any change made once it has been published (dependant on the extent and impact of the change).

Moderate Change

1. Any moderate change will initially be considered by the responsible manager.
2. The responsible manager will present the change and rationale for the change to the Chairs.
3. The Chairs will review and decide whether to approve the change.
4. Should the Chairs not reach a decision about the change or feel it requires discussion by all Board members, they will put the issue to the Board.
5. If the Chairs have decided on the issue, depending on the extent and urgency of the change, the Board will be informed either at the next scheduled meeting or via email.
6. Communications to services, the NFCC Implementation Team and other stakeholders about any change made once it has been published.

Major Change

1. The requirement for any major change with rationale will be presented to the Board for consideration and decision.
2. Should the Board approve, the Fire Standards Development Process will be instigated, including commissioning, consultation on changes and full Board approval.

Re-Publication

On completion of any change, with approval at the levels described above, the Fire Standards Team will then publish the revised Fire Standard. Depending on the extent and impact of the change, services and other stakeholders will be notified through the usual communication channels.

As part of the review process, the Periodic Review date will be reconsidered and, in agreement with either the FSB Chairs or the Board, may be appropriately extended. This is dependent on the extent of the change being made and where that Fire Standard is within its periodic review cycle.

Change Request Checklist

- Change request recorded on the Change Request Log by the Fire Standards Team.

- FSB Chairs alerted and assessment of level of change conducted.

- Findings of assessment shared and steps to carry out review followed in accordance with the agree level of change needed.

- Publication of revised Fire Standard.

- Appropriate communications and engagement to notify services and stakeholders of the revised Fire Standard.

- Action taken recorded in the Change Request Log by the Fire Standards Team.

Change Request Flow Chart