

TO: Policy and Resources Committee

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CONSULTATION RESPONSE – FIRE AND RESCUE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR ENGLAND

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To bring to the attention of the Policy and Resources Committee the Government consultation on the revised Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 The Policy and Resources Committee is invited to note the contents of the framework and approve the draft consultation response at Appendix 1.

3. Risk Assessment

- 3.1 **Political** -.the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England sets out the Government's expectations for fire and rescue authorities in England. Failure from the Authority to have due regard to this document in setting policy and direction may lead central government to perceive a lack of political leadership and engagement.

4. Background

- 4.1 This revision of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England is being consulted upon by central government. The framework aims to provide an overall strategic direction and support to fire and rescue authorities. The revised document takes account of sector changes such as the introduction of the inspectorate and the creation of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC). In addition the framework also reflects the provisions in the Policing and Crime Act 2017 on emergency services collaboration and changes to fire and rescue governance.
- 4.2 The revised framework consultation closes on 14 February 2018 with the expected publication of outcome(s) by Spring 2018.

5. Draft National Framework

- 5.1 The framework sets out the priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities namely to;
- **identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their areas face,**
 - **make appropriate provision for fire prevention and protection activities and response to fire and rescue related incidents,**
 - **collaborate with emergency services and other local and national partners to increase efficiency and effectiveness of service provision,**
 - **be accountable to communities for the service they provide,**
 - **develop and maintain a workforce that is resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse.**
- 5.2 Within the Workforce Chapter (Chapter 6) the section on ‘re-engagement of senior officers post retirement’ has been added as a result of an earlier, separate consultation. This chapter includes the proposed wording following that consultation and no more changes to that section are planned as a result of this consultation process.
- 5.3 The revision contains at Annex A the revised ‘Protocol on Central Government Intervention Action for Fire and Rescue Authorities’. Section 23 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act (2004) requires that an intervention protocol be prepared and for the Secretary of State to have regard to it in exercising such powers. Government is required to consult upon this protocol and welcomes any comments that the Authority may have.
- 5.4 Further revisions to the framework that may be required as a result of the outputs of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry and the Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety will be considered in due course and subject to a separate consultation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Source Document	Location	Contact Officer
Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (Consultation)	Hinchingbrooke Cottage Brampton Road Huntingdon	ACFO Rick Hylton rick.hylton@cambsfire.gov.uk 01480 444500

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority

Consultation Response

Revised Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

General Comments

The Authority welcomes the clarity and direction setting within the revised framework. It is equally reassuring to note that central government recognise that local solutions for local communities are best determined by those that represent these communities.

The Authority supports the view that central government has a strategic responsibility to ensure national resilience and the Authority acknowledges the key role it plays through the Strategic Resilience Board to ensure that gaps in capability are highlighted at the earliest opportunity to afford central government the opportunity to determine how these gaps are most effectively addressed.

The Authority accepts the responsibility for business continuity since the introduction of the current national framework; the Authority has demonstrated the suitability of these arrangements. The Authority notes that the revised framework places further expectations in relation to national resilience assets. Whilst the Authority understands and supports the need for this, given the complexity and training implications of these assets and with the workforce operating under a right to strike, this expectation may become difficult to locally assure without the support from central government.

The Authority supports the move towards an inspectorate model and the development of professional standard however it is important that any process balances the value that is received with the inevitable additional burden placed upon authorities.

The framework has a specific section on collaboration. The Authority is supportive of the recent Policing and Crime Act 2017 as it will undoubtedly assist to build upon our collaboration at a local level, by ensuring that the other two blue light services have a duty to collaborate with fire. Notwithstanding this, collaboration where it makes sense in the interest of public safety is at the core for fire service business. It is therefore questionable as to why this has a specific section; in turn the Authority would be keen to understand how this duty is being embedded within police and ambulance by central government.

Specific Consultation Responses

Delivery of Core Functions: This section is clear, specific and proportionate. The Authority welcomes the recognition of the role that fire plays in communities aside from the operational response and the specific reference to prevention being better

than cure is an important addition to the framework. The objectives laid out for fire and rescue services are both reasonable and importantly relevant. These align well with our local priorities set out within our Integrated Risk Management Plan.

The framework is clear in the expectation that fire authorities will focus resources in areas where life risk is at the greatest risk. The Authority is in agreement with this in principle however it is also important that fire and rescue services maintain flexibility to place resources against those areas that will provide the greatest value to local communities. It is also important that in terms of better regulation that compliance is a factor in the inspection equation and is reflected within the risk based audit programme.

Inspection, Accountability and Assurance

As previously stated, the Authority welcomes the move back towards an independent inspection process for fire. It is important that the value received from the peer review process is retained, whilst enhancing the independence, assurance and learning that will be received from this new approach. Inevitably this process will come with additional pressures being placed upon local fire and rescue services. At a time when resources and budgets are constrained it will be important that this burden is balanced in terms of government receiving the assurance needed and local fire and rescue services receiving value in terms of improvement.

The areas of accountability and assurance are consistent with current practice and the Authority is supportive of this.

Governance

This section is heavily focussed towards the governance model for an Authority that falls under a Police and Crime Commissioner; largely one would assume because the other models of fire governance are longer standing and more embedded whether this justifies this level of detail in a strategic document for all fire and rescue services operating under varied governance models is open to debate.

The Authority supports the view that the NFCC plays a central role advising and supporting both central government and local fire and rescue services. To date the funding of the NFCC is largely by fire and rescue services, who commit both financial and personal resource to this function. Whilst the Authority supports this approach it should be equally recognised by the Home Office as to the value it receives from such a function.

Value for Money

The Authority is conscious of its responsibility to secure value for money in delivering a highly professional service. It supports the principles set out within the framework and will develop a mechanism for capturing and reporting its proposed efficiencies.

Reserves are an integral part of the Authority's medium term financial plan and will be used extensively over the period to enhance its asset portfolio. The Authority is fully supportive of the proposal to publish their reserve strategy.

Workforce

The recognition within the framework of the challenges fire and rescue services face with regards to workforce reform is welcomed. It is the case that more needs to be done to encourage a workforce that is both representative of communities and one that is equipped with the skills required of a modern fire and rescue service.

Professional standards and nationally developed core progression coupled with positive action and changing perceptions of a career in the fire service are essential pieces of work that will take time. The challenge faced by fire and rescue services is delivering these cultural changes ahead of planned retirements. To this end, fire and rescue services need available to them all options that will enable a progressive transition that does not compromise public safety. The Authority notes the section in the national framework in relation to re engagement of senior officers. It is supportive of this principle but may need to utilise this at lower levels of the Service in the short term to facilitate workforce reform. The Authority notes the expectation of central government in the application of this and will ensure it adheres.

National Resilience

As an area of national security and response it is right that responsibility for this rests with central government. The revised framework sets out clearly the responsibilities for fire and rescue authorities and the coordination required by NFCC to ensure optimal response and coordination arrangements. It is understandable and indeed essential to ensure that these arrangements are supported by effective business continuity arrangements. However it is felt that this is an unreasonable expectation to place upon local fire and rescue services given the contractual context of fire service employees without central government equipping them with the necessary legislative tools required.

Intervention Protocol

The Authority notes this protocol and welcomes the transparency afforded. It is noted that whilst this protocol is required and the Secretary of State reserves the right to intervene, the process of intervention is a last resort and the Authority is supportive of the approach to work with a failing Authority in the first instance.