

Addressed to:

**The Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority
The Chief Executive of the County Council
The Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority
The London Commissioner
The Chief Fire Officer**

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Local Government Resource Review Update

1. Introduction

On 19 December 2011 the Government published its responses to the recent consultations on proposals to introduce a business rates retention system and localise support for council tax. On the same day, the Local Government Finance Bill was introduced to Parliament; this Bill sets out the legislative foundations to implement changes from April 2013.

The Bill takes forward a package of proposals designed to encourage local economic growth, reduce the financial deficit and drive localisation of control over local government finance.

2. Business rates retention System

The Government response to the consultation on business rates retention sets out how the business rate retention scheme will operate to create a direct financial incentive for local authorities - including both single purpose fire and rescue authorities and fire and rescue authorities within county councils - to grow their economies. It also sets out how we will ensure that all authorities have sufficient resources to deliver local services.

The Department for Communities and Local Government is setting up a Local Government Finance Working Group which will act as an advisory body to central government in designing the detail underpinning the scheme. Amongst other bodies, the Local Government Association has been asked to nominate representatives to reflect the broad range of their constituent bodies.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/resourcereviewgovtresponse>

Localising support for council tax

The Government's response to the recent consultation on localising support for council tax sets out the outcome of that consultation, how the Government intends to respond to the issues raised, and its plans for enabling local authorities to introduce localised schemes in England to be in operation from April 2013.

The Department for Communities and Local Government will continue to engage with local authorities including fire and rescue authorities, to support their work in preparing for the introduction of local schemes.

We will continue to work with the fire sector, to understand whether further safeguards are needed to ensure that authorities sharing in risks have sufficient opportunity to shape local schemes.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/localisingtaxresponse>

The Local Government Finance Bill

The Local Government Finance Bill will make it possible for local authorities to retain business rates and establish localised council tax support schemes in England from April 2013.

The detail of the structure of the business rates scheme and the framework for local schemes will be set out in regulations. The second reading of the Bill in the House of Commons was held on 10 January -

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm120110/debtext/120110-0002.htm#1201106000001>

For further information please contact:

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2011-12 Local Risk Assessment Guidance and Local Resilience Assumptions Guidance

1. Background

The Local Risk Assessment Guidance provides a list of the main hazards local resilience forums should consider. It also sets out the methodology local resilience forums should use to assess the impact and likelihood of each risk.

The Local Resilience Planning Assumption Guidance gives guidance to local resilience forums on how to use the national and regional planning figures in the National Resilience Planning Assumptions to calculate local planning figures.

2. Current status

The 2011-12 Local Risk Assessment Guidance and Local Resilience Planning Assumptions Guidance were published recently and are available on the National Resilience Extranet. Fire and rescue authorities without access to the National Resilience Extranet can ask for copies of these documents from the Department for Communities and Local Government Resilience and Emergencies Division or from the Civil Contingencies Secretariat.

Fire and rescue authorities and their local resilience forum partners can use the Local Risk Assessment Guidance to inform their local risk assessments, and the Local Planning Assumptions Guidance to tailor national planning assumptions to their local area.

The most recent National Risk Assessment and National Resilience Planning Assumptions were published towards the end of 2011. These confidential documents have been distributed across Government and to Chief Constables of Police Forces across England and Wales, via the regional Counter Terrorism Intelligence Units. Police Forces are expected to share the documents with Local Resilience Forum members who require sight of them to inform their planning work, including fire and rescue authorities. Alternatively, fire and rescue authorities who require access these documents could contact the Departments Resilience and Emergencies Division.

Fire and rescue authorities can directly access the restricted (less sensitive) version of the National Resilience Planning Assumptions via the National Resilience Extranet (at <https://www.resilience-extranet.gse.gov.uk/AtlasApps/Pages/Collaborate/DocumentStore/DocumentStore.aspx?folderid=49506>) or through their Local Resilience Forums. These documents will help fire and rescue authorities to set their local planning within the broader national context.

For further information please contact:

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Future of Local Audit

1. Background

In August 2010 the Secretary of State for the Department of Communities and Local Government announced plans to abolish the Audit Commission, to be succeeded in due course with a more localised audit regime, which will better support local democratic accountability, and help cut bureaucracy and costs, while ensuring the continuation of robust local public audit.

From March to June 2011, the Government consulted interested parties on its proposals for the new audit framework. These proposals build on the statutory arrangements and professional ethical and technical standards that currently apply in the private sector with adaptations to ensure that the principles of public sector audit are maintained. The consultation closed on 30 June 2011 and the Government's response and Summary of Responses have now been published and can be found via the following links:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/2060619.pdf>

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/2060683.pdf>

2. Next steps

A series of workshops were run in January in partnership with the National Audit Office and the Audit Commission to outline the plans and to give bodies, including fire and rescue authorities, the opportunity to shape the practical details of the proposals.

If you were unable to attend these events and/or require a fire and rescue specific session then further workshops can be offered in February. Please register your interest with contact below by 13 February.

A draft Bill will be published later this year and further updates will follow.

For further information please contact:

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National Operational Guidance

1. Background

The Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser wrote to all Chief Fire Officers on the 5th January 2012 to inform them of the publication by the Department for Communities and Local Government of the Fire and Rescue Service Operational Guidance - Aircraft Incidents

The Operational Guidance is available to be viewed and downloaded in an electronic form.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/aircraftincidents>

Copies of the published document will be sent to fire and rescue authorities from The Stationary Office.

Section 12 of the guidance lists a series of guidance and information, previously issued by Her Majesty's Government that is now deemed to be obsolete or, is superseded by this Operational Guidance document. Electronic versions of these documents are retained within the National Archive.

2. Generic Risk Assessments

Generic Risk Assessments

The following Generic Risk Assessments were recently published to assist fire and rescue authorities in England in drawing up their own assessments to meet the requirements of the Management of Health and Safety at Work regulations.

Generic Risk Assessment 3.3: Fighting fire in domestic chimneys

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/fire/pdf/1953910.pdf>

Generic Risk Assessment 3.7: Fighting fires in refuse

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/fire/pdf/1953920.pdf>

Generic Risk Assessment 2.4: Flooding and water safety

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/fire/pdf/2043194.pdf>

Generic Risk Assessment 2.6: Rescue of trapped persons

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/fire/pdf/2043272.pdf>

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