

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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Fire Service College – Future Options

1. Background

1.1 On 5 September 2011, the Fire Minister announced the Government's intention to explore options for a new ownership, operational and governance model for the Fire Service College by undertaking a short phase of pre-market engagement.

2. Pre-Market Engagement

2.1 The Government is committed to the delivery of a resilient Fire and Rescue Service that protects the public by preventing and responding to emergencies.

2.2 We see strong value in a national college for the Fire and Rescue Service to deliver common, consistent standards of safety critical training and improved inter-operability across the Service in support of resilience and to enable it to meet public expectations. However, the current Fire Service College ownership and business arrangements do not provide the flexibility necessary for the College to operate with sufficient commercial success.

2.3 We wish to explore options for a new ownership, operational and governance model for the Fire Service College which, through greater involvement from other sectors (whether private, public or voluntary), secures its future, supports national resilience and provides best value for the public purse.

2.4 The preferred option for a Fire Service College of the future is a partnership between the public and private sectors with the fire sector playing a key role in that partnership. Whilst a public/private sector partnership is the Government's preferred option, it does not wish to close off other options and would welcome ideas on whether other arrangements may be more suitable.

2.5 To inform its view of market appetite and viable options, the Department for Communities and Local Government is now undertaking a short phase of pre-market engagement. This will allow interested parties to offer clear views on the future of the College, and the Department to assess the reaction of the market to the overarching aim of delivering a new model for the Fire Service College.

2.6 The pre-market engagement document is available at:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/fire/firerescueservice/collegefutureoptions>.

2.7 Please send your views to FSCfutureoptions@communities.gsi.gov.uk by 31 October 2011.

For further information please contact:

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Distribution of Capital Grant Funding Consultation

1. Background

- 1.1 On Monday 12 September 2011 the Government published its consultation on the distribution of Capital Grant Funding and on Friday 16 September 2011, the Government published two supporting documents:
- Sample fire capital grant application form for consultation
 - Sample fire capital grant spreadsheet for consultation.
- 1.2 These provide more information on the bidding and application process referred to in the main consultation document.

2. Consultation

- 2.1 As mentioned in the Fire and Rescue Bulletin 14/2011 (<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/fire/pdf/fsb142011.pdf>), the Capital Grant Funding consultation seeks views on the Government's proposals that future funding is distributed based on a combination of:
- An efficiency fund, administered via a bidding process
 - A pro-rata distribution using the current distribution method.
- 2.2 We strongly encourage you to respond to the Capital Grant consultation and draw your attention to the two new papers a Sample Fire Capital Grant Application Form and a Sample Fire Capital Grant Spreadsheet for consultation.
- 2.3 The consultation and the two supporting documents can be found at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/capitalgrantconsultation>.
- 2.4 The consultation ends on Friday 21 October 2011. Please send responses electronically to: gayle.springett@communities.gsi.gov.uk (with attachments in Microsoft Word). Hard copy responses can be sent to: Gayle Springett, Zone 3/E2, DCLG, Eland House, Bressenden Place, SW1E 5DU.

For further information please contact:

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The Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency

1. Background

1.1 On Thursday 29 September 2011 the Government published the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency, which can be found at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/transparencycode>. This sets out expectations, provides advice on timing, format and licensing for publication of local authority data to help meet their statutory obligations.

1.2 A consultation summary including all the responses has also been published and can be found at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/codepracticeladataresponses>.

2. Data Transparency

2.1 The Transparency Code sets out the key principles for local authorities in creating greater transparency and enhancing accountability through the publication of data. This Code applies to local authorities in England only including all fire and rescue authorities.

2.2 Greater transparency of data is at the heart of enabling the public to hold politicians and public bodies to account. Where public money is involved there is a fundamental public interest in being able to see how it is being spent, to demonstrate how value for money has been achieved or to highlight inefficiency. Publication of data should also be used to open new markets for local business, the voluntary and community sectors and social enterprises to run services or manage public assets.

2.3 Types of data to be published in an accessible format:

- Expenditure over £500
- Senior employee salaries
- Organisational charts of the staff structure including salary bands
- The 'pay multiple' – the ratio between the highest paid salary and the median average salary of the whole of the authority's workforce
- Councilor allowances and expense
- Copies of contracts and tenders to businesses, voluntary community and social enterprise sector
- Grants to the voluntary community and social enterprise
- Policies, performance, external audits and key fiscal/financial indicators
- Location of public land and building assets
- Data of democratic running of the local authority including the consultation, election results, committee minutes and records of decision making process.

2.4 Availability of data should be promoted and publicised so that citizens know how to access it and how it should be used. This will help to embed a culture of openness and data transparency across the public sector.

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The Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency

2.5 The Government has also launched a consultation on Thursday 4 August 2011 which sets out objectives of establishing stronger rights for individuals, businesses and others to obtain, use and re-use data from public service providers. This consultation closes on Wednesday 2 November 2011 and can be found at <https://update.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/open-data-consultation.pdf>.

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For further information please contact:

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Best Value Statutory Guidance

1. Background

- 1.1 On Friday 2 September 2011 the Government published the Best Value Statutory Guidance. This streamlined guidance sets out expectations of the way authorities should work with voluntary and community groups and small businesses when facing difficult funding decisions.
- 1.2 A summary of consultation responses and Government response has also been published.

2. Best Value Statutory Guidance

- 2.1 The Department for Communities and Local Government has withdrawn nearly 56 pages of prescriptive Best Value guidance and replaced it with one page of light touch guidance. That means more freedom for councils, more protection for voluntary groups and more clarity for both.
- 2.2 The new streamlined guidance asks that councils give greater support for voluntary and community groups and small businesses and should seek to avoid passing on disproportionate cuts - by not passing on larger reductions to the voluntary and community sector and small businesses as a whole than they take on themselves.
- 2.3 The guidance also clarifies that there is no requirement for councils to undertake lifestyle of diversity questionnaires of their residents or their suppliers.
- 2.4 Best value authorities including fire and rescue authorities are under a general duty of Best Value to *"make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in a way in which its functions are exercised having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness"*.
- 2.5 This guidance, taken together with measures such as Community Right to Challenge the Localism Bill, aims to promote local authority leadership in providing a level playing field for all including local, voluntary and community organisations.
- 2.6 The guidance can be found at:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/bestvaluestatguidance>.
- 2.7 The summary of the consultation can be found at:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/bestvalueconsultresp>.

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Fire Kills Campaign 2011-12

1. Background

1.1 Fire and Rescue Service Bulletin 10, <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/fsb102011> issued in May 2011, provided information regarding the continuation of the Fire Kills campaign. The national advertising strategy for 2011-12 has now been agreed with the Fire Kills Practitioners' Group and is scheduled to be launched in mid October 2011.

2. National Advertising

- 2.1 As with last year's campaign, radio advertising will be the primary vehicle to drive the campaign's lead messages of smoke alarm maintenance. With the previous 'Don't Drown in Toxic Smoke' theme dependent upon the visual impact, a new advert and strategy has been created that better matches radio delivery.
- 2.2 The new creative will encourage householders to test their smoke alarms regularly, particularly when changing their clocks in both October and March. The radio advert will be supported by press adverts, with a similar message accompanied by an image of a burnt clock.

3. Strategy – Themed Months

- 3.1 A 'themed month' plan has been created to allow better planning of national activity. 'Testing' messages will be promoted in October and March, whereas other key fire safety messages will be pushed in other months:
- October - Smoke Alarm Testing
 - November - Candles
 - December - Christmas
 - January - Electrical
 - February - Cooking
 - March - Smoke Alarm Testing
 - April - Smoking
 - May - Smoke Alarm Acquisition
 - June - Escape Routes
 - July - Outdoor Fire Safety
 - August – Cooking
 - September – Smoke Alarm Acquisition.
- 3.2 This plan provides local fire and rescue services with an early indication of what messages we will be promoting each month. It also provides the opportunity for local fire and rescue services to align local interventions with national activity to ensure a nationally integrated campaign. More information on national activity for each month will be provided in advance to community fire safety and FirePRO colleagues.
- 3.3 The themed month plan is not designed to dictate local activity entirely and should not prevent fire and rescue services from undertaking any local interventions considered appropriate, but gives an indication as to what messages will be focused on nationally.

For further information please contact:

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Fire Kills Campaign Annual Report 2010-11

1. Background

1.1 The Department for Communities and Local Government published the annual report for the Fire Kills campaign 2010-11 online, on 21 September 2011.

2. Annual Report

2.1 The annual report provides detail on the national advertising strategy and outlines the key Public Relations and partnership activity undertaken during the campaign year 2010-11 to target the harder to reach and those potentially more vulnerable to the risks of fire.

2.2 The annual report can be found via this link:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/Firekillsreport201011>.

For further information please contact:

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New Crown Fire notification form

1. Background

1.1 Fire and Rescue Service Bulletin 9/2011 <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/fsb92011> highlighted that Fires of Special Interest notification was no longer required for statistical purposes. Therefore confirming that the requirement on Fire and Rescue Services to submit Fires of Special Interest forms to the Department would end for incidents occurring after 31 March 2011, with the exception of form A6 notification of Fires in Crown Premises.

2. Crown Fire notification form

2.1 Further work has now been completed to develop a new Crown Fire notification process which will superseded the requirement for the Fires of Special Interest form A6.

2.2 The Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, Sir Ken Knight has written to all Chief Fire Officers on Monday 3 October 2011 highlighting the new process.

2.3 The letter also contains some further clarification on the notification process for informing the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser of significant fire and rescue events.

For further information please contact:

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Update on the provision of Support for Fire Service Emergency Cover Toolkit

1. Background

1.1 The Fire, Resilience and Emergencies Directorate have provided a helpdesk service for the Fire Service Emergency Cover Toolkit since 2004 to assist members of Fire and Rescue Services in its use.

2. Provision of support for Fire Service Emergency Cover Toolkit

2.1 Fire and Risk Management Support Services will be responsible for provision of the support service for the Fire Service Emergency Cover Toolkit from 1 September 2011. The contract manager at Fire and Risk Management Support Services is Dave Berry. He can be reached on 01793 820371 or 07701 045781. You can also email him dave.berry@farmss.co.uk.

2.2 The helpdesk service is essentially the same as before. The main member of staff manning the helpdesk will be Jim Smith, and he will be supported at times by George Milburn.

2.3 .You can contact the helpdesk by emailing: FSECSupport@fepd.gov.uk or by telephoning: 07747 693346.

2.4 The helpdesk will be available Monday to Friday between 09:00 and 17:30 except for bank holidays.

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