

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**

Summary of contents in this issue

(the title below is a link to the bulletin page)

Title: Fire Futures

Fire Futures is a strategic review that has the power to inform the shape and direction of the Fire and Rescue Service in England. It is structured with the sector in the lead and Communities and Local Government in support.

Title: Audit Commission Report – Business Continuity in the Fire & Rescue Service

This informs the Fire and Rescue Service that the Audit Commission published their report *Business Continuity in the Fire and Rescue Service* on 15 September 2010.

Title: FiReControl implementation funding

To update Fire and Rescue partners of the distribution of implementation funding for October 2010 and arrangements for the remainder of the 2010/11 financial year.

Title: Update on Operational Guidance

This is to inform that work is ongoing to complete and publish Operational Guidance commissioned by Communities and Local Government.

Title: Fire and Rescue Service Strategy for working with Children and Young People

Update on Working with Children and Young People Strategy.

Title: Clarification on the application of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 to boats

This provides information to clarify the position regarding the application of the Regulatory Reform Fire Safety Order to boats – particularly hired narrow boats, cruisers and other sorts of pleasure craft providing sleeping accommodation.

Fire Futures

1. Background

- 1.1 Fire Futures is a strategic review that has the power to inform the future shape and direction of the Fire and Rescue Service in England. It is structured with the sector in the lead and Communities and Local Government in support.
- 1.2 The review takes place in the context of the fire sector facing an emerging set of challenges – economic, social, physical - over the short, medium and long terms. It is clear that it must proactively continue to change to meet these challenges and maintain its effectiveness in serving communities and to represent value for money to the wider public purse. Along with this is an expectation from government that the service reflect localism, decentralisation, transparency, accountability and the Big Society in what they do. Fire Futures provides an opportunity for the sector to identify future options and to present those to Ministers.
- 1.3 The terms of reference agreed by Ministers (below) set a broad direction of travel for the review and set the expectation for the sector to shape its content. A Ministerial workshop was held in July, where 42 Fire and Rescue Services/Fire & Rescue Authorities were represented. Following this consensus was reached that review would focus on the following four workstreams:
- Roles of the Fire and Rescue Service – Delivery Models
 - Efficiency, Effectiveness and productivity
 - Localism and Accountability
 - National Interest
- 1.4 The Fire Minister, Bob Neill MP, has made clear that Fire Futures would be conducted together with the sector, who have the opportunity to present options directly to Ministers on the future of the service. This has been reflected in the governance structure which draws on over 100 sector volunteers and representative bodies:
- For each workstream there is a sector chair supported by a number of sector subworkstream leads and support from Communities and Local Government policy officials. The chair and leads act as a leadership team and are drawing upon wider active sector contributors
 - A Steering Group dominated by sector representation meets monthly to provide oversight of Fire Futures progress and will be responsible for presenting the final report to the Minister
- 1.5 The review is working to a tight timeframe – as the Minister called for a short sharp review rather than a long introspection with Fire Futures.
- 1.6 If you would like to be kept updated on Fire Futures please register your interest at firefutures@communities.gsi.gov.uk.

2.0 Fire Futures Scope and Terms of Reference agreed by Ministers

- 2.1 Working together with the sector, develop a joint view on the future shape and direction of the Fire and Rescue Service and the respective roles of local and central Government in that. This should involve consideration of the range of new and evolving challenges facing the Service and how these will impact particularly in relation to role, structure, governance and efficiency.

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2.2 The Strategic Review will develop a range of robust future strategy options for the Fire and Rescue Service and make recommendations to Ministers for how these should be taken forward.

2.3 Key issues are likely to include the following, although we will take our lead from the Sector itself in terms of the issues which need to be explored and the options that should be pursued.

- The current and future remit and strategic priorities for the Fire and Rescue Service over the short, medium and longer term
- The current and future delivery model for the Service, taking account of the work that the sector is already leading on decentralisation, and considering how this can be taken further to drive increased localism
- The efficiency of the Service and how this can be further improved to enhance value for money
- The respective roles and responsibilities of central Government and local partners including consideration of the future role of a national framework
- Implication of all of the above for the Fire and Rescue Service workforce and for the future structure and governance of the Service

2.4 The review will be undertaken within the context of the Government's clear commitment to achieving value for money whilst prioritising the front line, improving resilience and ending forced regionalisation of the Service.

END

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Audit Commission Report – Business Continuity in the Fire & Rescue Service

1. Background

1.1 The Audit Commission published their report *Business Continuity in the Fire and Rescue Service* on 15 September 2010.

2. Report Summary

2.1 The Audit Commission have completed the work they commenced in March 2010 to assess business continuity arrangements in Fire and Rescue Authorities. Their report *Business Continuity in the Fire and Rescue Service* was published on 15 September 2010.

2.2 The report concludes that all Fire and Rescue Service's have satisfactory business continuity plans in place and that significant progress is being made in improving national resilience. However it also states that further improvements could be made.

2.3 In particular the report recommends that Fire and Rescue Service's should:

- Involve local people more in deciding what an appropriate level of service means for them
- Be clear about how plans for emergency cover meet those requirements
- Carry out further testing and exercising of plans to assure services that they have enough capacity and skills to provide enough cover
- Collaborate further with partners and other fire and rescue services to build capacity and maximise resilience in a way that shows the best value for money for local people
- Develop tools and self-help guidance within the fire and rescue service to help services be even better prepared and
- Look outside the Service at the plans of others, particularly in the National Health Service and other emergency services, to see if more can be learned

2.4 The report also suggests that elected members could ask their officers:

- Does the Service have a clear, practical plan to deal with a range of possible disruptions?
- Does the plan identify how essential services including mobilising and operational support will be maintained?
- What does the Service learn from testing and exercising its plans, and how is this used to make improvements?
- What has the Service learnt from its partners and other organisations?
- How does the service engage community groups to take more responsibility for their own safety at times when services may be limited?

2.5 The Audit Commission report is available at:

www.audit-commission.gov.uk/nationalstudies/fireandrescue/firebcm/Pages/default.aspx

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FiReControl implementation funding

1. Background

- 1.1 To inform Fire and Rescue Service partners of the distribution of implementation funding for October 2010 and arrangements for the remainder of the 2010/11 financial year.
- 1.2 FiReControl implementation funding payments made in April 2010 provided amounts for local activities on the project through to the end of September 2010.

2. Funding for the remainder of 2010/11

- 2.1 Ministers have recently agreed funding amounts for the remainder of the 2010/11 financial year.
- 2.2 Fixed expenditure has been maintained but other expenditure is subject to a 15 per cent reduction. Regional Project Directors will discuss the implications with the Local Authority Controlled Companies responsible for the control centres and Fire and Rescue Authorities.
- 2.3 Payments for the remainder of the financial year will be made monthly, in advance.
- 2.4 The breakdown of funding allocations by Fire and Rescue Authority has been distributed by email to Regional Control Centre Directors, Regional Project Directors, Regional Project Managers and members of the project's Finance Working Group.

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Update on Operational Guidance

1. Background

1.1 Work is ongoing to complete and publish Operational Guidance commissioned by Communities and Local Government which include:

- Approximately 30 Generic Risk Assessments
- Eight major pieces of guidance that are planned to be published over the forthcoming months
- The commissioning of a further three safety critical pieces of Operational Guidance with the intention to be published during 2011

1.2 More information on Operational Guidance for the Fires and Rescue Service is available at:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/fire/firerescueservice/operationalguidance/>

2. Future Guidance

2.1 The Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor will be engaging with the Fire and Rescue Service over the coming months through the Operational Guidance Programme Board to develop and put into place arrangements to transfer the responsibility for the future provision of sector required operational guidance to the Fire and Rescue Service. This is the line with the Coalition Government agenda on decentralisation and localism, whilst assuring that strategic guidance relating to national resilience and interoperability remains the responsibility of government.

2.2 Further to this all operational guidance published by Communities and Local Government will be reviewed and systematically managed to minimise risk to Communities and Local Government but simultaneously assuring that there is adequate guidance on national resilience and interoperability.

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Fire and Rescue Service Strategy for Working with Children and Young People

1. Background

- 1.1 In 2006, Communities and Local Government issued a *Strategy for Children and Young People: 2006-10* providing advice to the Fire and Rescue Service on what could be done to ensure engagement activity was successful in safeguarding children from the impact of fire and fire crime.
- 1.2 Engagement and interaction with children and young people, in order to drive down both fire deaths and the occurrence of fire-related crime, is now a well established activity undertaken by the Fire and Rescue Service.
- 1.3 In 2009, Communities and Local Government began working in partnership with Chief Fire Officer's Association to refresh this Strategy for 2010 onwards.

2. Way forward

- 2.1 The coalition Government has made clear its commitment to localism and the decentralisation of power and it is overseeing a fundamental shift of power away from Westminster to local authorities, communities and individuals.
- 2.2 As part of this shift, Ministers have confirmed that Communities and Local Government will no longer continue its work to develop a Strategy. In reaching this decision, the Government recognises that the Fire and Rescue Service's work with children and young people is valuable and worthwhile. However, it believes that where there is an identified need for a strategic framework to support local interventions, the sector itself should take on an appropriate leadership role.

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Clarification on the application of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 to boats

1. Background

1.1 This Bulletin article seeks to clarify the position about the application of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order) 2005 to boats – particularly narrow boats and cruisers primarily rented out for holiday or leisure purposes. This clarification is based on Communities and Local Government's understanding and is intended to assist Fire and Rescue Authorities in their enforcement approach. But this clarification should not be taken as legal advice. Only the courts can definitively interpret the law, and if Fire and Rescue Authorities want legal advice they should contact their own legal advisers.

2. Clarification

2.1 Communities and Local Government's view is that the Fire Safety Order generally does not apply to boats hired for the purposes of holiday or leisure activities.

2.2 We consider that the Fire Safety Order applies to: a) permanently moored vessels (i.e. those which cannot travel) which are rented out on inland waterways and b) to boat yards.

2.3 Article 6(1) (c) exempts the application of the Fire Safety Order to a ship in respect of the normal ship-board activities of a ship's crew which are carried out solely by the crew under the direction of the master. Our view is that this exception is likely to include narrow boats, cruisers and other sorts of pleasure craft rented for the purposes of holiday accommodation or other commercial activities. These vessels fall within the scope of the Merchant Shipping (Fire Protection) (Small Ships) Regulations 1998 (whose application is not limited to seagoing vessels) and any queries about the application of these regulations should be directed to the Department for Transport.

2.4 They are also within the scope of the Boat Safety Scheme operated by British Waterways and the Environment Agency. This aims to promote safety on boats on inland waterways and sets fire safety standards which must be met in order to obtain a navigation license.

2.5 The Communities and Local Government Fire Safety Risk Assessment guidance for Sleeping Accommodation currently states that the Fire Safety Order applies to boats. We recognise that this may be open to misinterpretation and plan to clarify this position in any future revision of the guidance.

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