

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: Amendments to the Firefighters' Pension Schemes: Consultation](#)

To bring Fire and Rescue Authorities' attention to a consultation on proposed amendments to the firefighters' pension schemes published on 3 August 2011.

[Title: Local Government Resource Review Consultation](#)

This item highlights the publication of Technical Papers in relation to the Local Government Resource Review Consultation on 19 August 2011.

[Title: Localising support for council tax in England Consultation](#)

This item highlights the publication of the consultation on proposals for the localisation of council tax support in England from 2013-14 on 2 August 2011.

[Title: Distribution of Capital Grant Funding](#)

This item highlights the forthcoming consultation on the distribution of Capital Grant Funding.

[Title: Localism Bill and Pay Accountability - Update](#)

This item highlights that information on the latest draft of the Localism Bill, which includes a requirement for councils and Fire and Rescue Authorities to publish their pay policies statements for low paid staff, as well as senior staff.

[Title: Section 13/16 Mutual Assistance Model Agreement - Correction](#)

To bring Fire and Rescue Authorities' attention to a correction in the Mutual Assistance Model Agreement for Section 13/16 of the Fire and Rescue Service Act 2004, clauses 6 and 9.

Title: Fire and Rescue Service: Operational Statistics England 2010-11

This item signposts the publication of the Fire and Rescue Service Operational Statistics Bulletin for England for 2010-11 on 24 August 2011.

Amendments to the Firefighters' Pension Schemes: Consultation

1. Background

1.1 The Department has been considering amendments to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 1992 and the New Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2006 at the Firefighters' Pension Committee, to bring the schemes up to date with existing Government practice, policy and legislative requirements.

2. Firefighters' Pension Scheme

2.1 On Wednesday 3 August 2011, the Department published a consultation paper setting out a number of proposed amendments to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme and New Firefighters' Pension Scheme. The consultation includes the following proposals.

- The removal of rule A14, compulsory retirement on the grounds of efficiency
- Changes to the indexation of additional pension benefits
- Changes to the maximum commutation payment for those members who have not reached 30 years service, or accrued 30 years
- Proposals to deal with potential age discrimination
- Amendments to the medical and non-medical appeals processes
- Abatement of pensions
- Technical amendments and alignments with tax legislation.

2.2 The closing date for consultation responses is Wednesday 26 October 2011. Further information on the proposals, and how you can respond, can be found at:

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

For further information please contact:

Andrew Cornelius	Telephone	0303 444 2171
Policy lead on Fire Pensions	Email	andrew.cornelius@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Local Government Resource Review Consultation

1. Background

1.1 On Friday 19 August 2011, the Government published eight technical papers which provide more details on the Local Government Resource Review's proposals. This consultation seeks views on the Government's proposals to change the way local government is funded by allowing councils to retain their locally-raised business rates.

2. Consultation

2.1 We encourage you to respond to the Local Government Resource Review consultation (covered in Fire and Rescue Service Bulletin 13/2011

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/fsb132011>) and draw your attention in particular to the following technical papers: number three dealing with non-billing authorities and number one establishing the baseline.

2.2 Currently, all principal authorities, single purpose fire and rescue authorities and police authorities receive formula grant funding. However, only billing authorities physically collect rates. As part of a rates retention scheme, therefore, there will need to be a mechanism for sharing the business rates between billing authorities, other principal authorities, police and single purpose fire authorities.

2.3 These papers consider the mechanisms through which 'non-billing' authorities will be funded within the business rates retention system.

2.4 The web link below has links to all Local Government Resource Review technical papers, together with an overview, and an interactive calculator to help authorities explore the effects of different tariff, top up and levy options:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/localgovernmentfinance/lgresourcereview/>.

- Technical paper 1 - Establishing the baseline
- Technical paper 2 - Measuring business rates
- Technical paper 3 - Non-billing authorities
- Technical paper 4 - Business rates administration
- Technical paper 5 - Tariff, top up and levy options
- Technical paper 6 - Volatility
- Technical paper 7 - Revaluation and transition
- Technical paper 8 - Renewable energy.

2.5 The interactive calculator enables users to explore the principal features of the proposed business rates retention scheme by entering their own inputs and varying components. Guidance on how to use the calculator is available in Technical Paper 5.

2.6 The consultation ends on Monday 24 October 2011. Please send responses electronically to: ResourceReview@communities.gsi.gov.uk (with attachments in Microsoft Word only). Hard copy responses can be sent to: Joel Winston, Zone 5/D1, DCLG, Eland House, Bressenden Place, SW1E 5DU.

For further information please contact:

Helen Moores	Telephone	0303 444 2591
Fire & Rescue Service Finance	Email	helen.moores@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Localising support for council tax in England Consultation

1. Background

- 1.1 On Tuesday 2 August 2011 the Department published the 'Localising support for council tax in England' consultation document which seeks views on proposals for the future of council tax support in England through localised schemes, expected to be implemented from April 2013-14.
- 1.2 Localising support for council tax is part of a wider policy of decentralisation, giving councils increased financial autonomy and a greater stake in the economic future of their local area. This supports the Government's wider agenda to enable stronger, balanced economic growth across the country.
- 1.3 This consultation forms part of the Local Government Resource Review in England, which is looking at several key areas of local government finance, including local retention of business rates. The framework for localised council tax support schemes will be established in a local government finance bill to be introduced in this Parliamentary session, and in regulations.

2. Consultation

- 2.1 The consultation seeks views on all aspects of the proposed approach for the localisation of council tax support from 2013-14, in addition to the specific questions asked in order to enable Government to develop and refine proposals. Fire and Rescue Authorities as major precepting authorities will have a strong interest in their local scheme and what this might mean for them.
- 2.2 It is intended that local authorities will establish their own local schemes by April 2013. We would welcome views on what guidance and other assistance is necessary to support local authorities in setting up local schemes. This consultation document sets out proposals for local mechanisms to help manage financial pressures, in particular to ensure that district councils are not exposed in full to financial risk.
- 2.3 We encourage you to respond and would draw your attention in particular to chapters seven and eight covering such questions as: *How best can Fire and Rescue Authorities be involved in local scheme design? What safeguards are needed to protect the interests of Fire and Rescue Authorities? Should Fire and Rescue Authorities share risk with billing authorities? If so what administrative changes are required and what safeguards would help ensure that risk sharing is appropriate?*
- 2.4 The consultation ends on Friday 14 October 2011 and is published online at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/localisingcounciltaxconsult>. Please send responses electronically to: CTB-Reform@communities.gsi.gov.uk (with attachments in Microsoft Word). Hard copy responses can be sent to: Council Tax Benefit Reform Team, Department for Communities and Local Government, 5/H2 Eland House, Bressenden Place, London, SW1E 5DU.
- 2.5 Enquiries to: Linda Bullivant 0303 444 3524, Elise Laker 0303 444 1331 or Michael Ning 0303 444 2072 CTB-Reform@communities.gsi.gov.uk.

For further information please contact:

Helen Moores	Telephone	0303 444 2591
Fire & Rescue Service Finance	Email	helen.moores@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Distribution of Capital Grant Funding Consultation

1. Background

1.1 The Government will be publishing its consultation on the distribution of Capital Grant Funding on Monday 12 September 2011. This consultation seeks views on the Government's proposals to change the way Capital Grant Funding is distributed to Fire and Rescue Authorities.

2. Capital Grant

2.1 Capital Grant funding is currently distributed by allocation of a fixed sum to every authority with the balance distributed according to population.

2.2 We are seeking views on the proposal that future funding is distributed based on a combination of:

- An efficiency fund, administered via a bidding process, and
- A pro-rata distribution using the current distribution method.

2.3 This would enable funding, currently £70m per year, to be used to target efficiency savings while demonstrating value for money.

2.4 The consultation document will ask for feedback on bid criteria, the proportion of funding available for distribution versus the proportion of funding available to be bid against, the number of bidding rounds and sharing best practice.

For further information please contact:

Gayle Springett	Telephone	0303 444 4129
Fire & Rescue Service Finance	Email	gayle.springett@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Localism Bill and Pay Accountability - Update

1. Background

1.1 The Localism Bill, published on Monday 13 December 2010, included provisions which will require all councils to prepare, approve and publish a Senior Pay Policy Statement which would also apply to all Fire and Rescue Authorities. The Localism Bill has since been amended to broaden the scope of Pay Policy Statements.

2. Localism Bill Accountability Clause Amendments

2.1 The Fire and Rescue Service Bulletin 6/2011 dated 4 January 2011 <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/fsb62011> explained that the Localism Bill will require all councils to publish a senior pay policy statement which would be agreed, annually, by full council. The clauses dealing with pay accountability were subsequently amended on 22 July 2011 during the Lords stage. In addition to the requirements for each council to set out its policies relating to the remuneration of its chief officers, each council will also be required to set out its approach towards the remuneration of its lowest-paid employees, and its policies relating to the relationship between the remuneration its chief officers and the remuneration of those employees who are not chief officers. The arrangements will also apply to all Fire and Rescue Authorities.

2.2 The Bill also refers to guidance which will provide more details about the information required. The Department for Communities and Local Government will undertake a formal consultation on the draft guidance in due course.

2.3 The full detailed clauses in respect of the publication of pay policy statements are available at: <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/localism/documents.html>.

For further information please contact:

Christina Machado	Telephone	0303 444 2937
National Fire Policy Division	Email	christina.machado@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Section 13/16 Mutual Assistance Model Agreement - Correction

1. Background

1.1 Fire Service Circular 29/2006, available at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/fire/pdf/150868.pdf>, provided guidance to Fire and Rescue Authorities on the types of mutual assistance arrangements available under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, including under sections 13 and 16 of the 2004 Act. Annex B to the Circular provided a model Agreement for use by fire and rescue authorities entering into a mutual assistance arrangement.

2. Correction to Clauses 6 & 9

2.1 It has come to light that the model Agreement contains a drafting error. Clauses 6 and 9, covering payment arrangements for the provision of assistance, have been transposed, resulting in the clearly incorrect implication that the fire and rescue authority providing assistance should pay the beneficiary, instead of the beneficiary paying the assisting fire and rescue authority for their services.

2.2 The relevant part of the model Agreement should therefore be amended so that the existing Clause 6 follows Clause 8, and the existing Clause 9 follows Clause 6.

2.3 Fire and Rescue Authorities who have Agreements in place based on the incorrect model should note that Clause 14 of the model agreement makes provision for how the agreement can be varied. Any such variations should be notified to the Secretary of State in accordance with section 13(4) of the 2004 Act.

For further information please contact:

Martin Webb	Telephone	0303 444 2931
Fire and Rescue Service Structures	Email	martin.webb@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Fire and Rescue Service: Operational Statistics Bulletin for England 2010-11

1. Background

- 1.1 This item signposts the publication of the Fire and Rescue Service Operational Statistics Bulletin for England for 2010-11. The bulletin and its accompanying data tables can be downloaded from: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/statistics/frsoperationalstats2010-11>.
- 1.2 The statistics are sourced from the non-financial annual returns from Fire and Rescue Services. These cover the following topics:
- Staff numbers - headcount and strength
 - Staff numbers - headcount by diversity strand
 - Numbers of staff leaving by reason
 - Injuries to firefighters
 - Community fire safety (prevention) activity
 - Fire safety activity (e.g. audits).
- 1.3 The individual data items collected are also published alongside the bulletin on the Department's web site in spreadsheets. Additional appendix tables have been produced to assist retrieval of data for comparison among Fire and Rescue Services and over time.

2. Reduction of Burden

- 2.1 These data returns were reduced to 23 tables for this collection of 2010-11 data. Previously far more detailed data were collected annually which amounted to well over 80 data tables in total.
- 2.2 This reduction followed the consultation which was carried out in winter 2010-11. The summary of responses to the consultation and the Department's response to these was published earlier in the year. As noted in Fire and Rescue Service Bulletin 9/2011 <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/fsb92011>, this can be downloaded from: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/frsandfosisummaryofresponses>.
- 2.3 The Department will continue to seek to work closely with Fire and Rescue Services to ensure that data returns such as these continue to evolve in order both to keep pace with current needs, and to minimise data burdens. Preliminary discussions have already taken place at the new Chief Fire Officers Association Data User Intelligence Group.
- 2.4 Feedback would be most welcome, please contact me on the below details.

For further information please contact:

Daniele Bega	Telephone	0303 444 2824
Fire and Resilience Research and Statistics	Email	daniele.bega@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Department for Communities and Local Government
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU
Telephone: 0303 444 0000
Website: www.communities.gov.uk

© Crown Copyright, 2011

Copyright in the typographical arrangement rests with the Crown.

This publication, excluding logos, may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium for research, private study or for internal circulation within an organisation. This is subject to it being reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the publication specified.

You may re-use this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/> or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or e-mail: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

Email: licensing@opsi.gov.uk

If you require this publication in an alternative format please email:
alternativeformats@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Department for Communities and Local Government Publications
Tel: 0300 123 1124
Fax: 0300 123 1125
Email: product@communities.gsi.gov.uk
Online via the Department's website: www.communities.gov.uk

September 2011

ISBN: 978 1 4098 3124 2