

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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This item highlights the publication of the consultation to allow councils to retain their locally-raised business rates.

[Title: Working with Localities](#)

This item draws attention to the new arrangements that Department for Communities and Local Government and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills have put in place with their work with local areas.

[Title: Firefighters' Pensions Scheme Reform – Next Steps and timing](#)

To bring Fire and Rescue Authorities' attention to Departmental correspondence setting out the next steps and timing for taking forward reform of the firefighters' pension schemes.

[Title: Secretary of State Determination under article 36 of the Fire Safety Order](#)

This item signposts the outcome of a recent determination on the use of self-closing devices on bedroom doors in a care home by the Secretary of State for the Department for Communities and Local Government.

[Title: Fire safety guidance for purpose built flats](#)

To highlight that the Local Government Group have developed and published guidance on fire safety for those with responsibilities in purpose built blocks of flats.

[Title: Generic Risk Assessments](#)

Signposts recent publications and the pending Generic Risk Assessments commissioned by the Department for Communities and Local Government under the Operational Guidance Programme.

Local Government Resource Review Consultation

1. Background

1.1 On Monday 18 July, the Government published its proposals, for consultation, to allow councils to retain their locally-raised business rates. This consultation sets out the Government's proposed core components for a business rates retention system.

2. Consultation

2.1 The consultation seeks views on the Government's proposals to change the way local government is funded by introducing local retention of business rates. These proposals represent a fundamental shift in the way that local authorities are funded, freeing councils from dependence upon central Government grant and giving them a strong financial incentive to drive local economic growth.

2.2 The consultation paper opens the debate on the future funding of local government, including fire authorities. The consultation suggests that single purpose Fire and Rescue Authorities would be protected from possible fluctuations in business rates income in 2013-14 and 2014-15. They would be guaranteed to receive, during those two years, the same level of funding as they otherwise would have received. The consultation paper also proposes that county councils, including those who deliver fire and rescue services, would be part of the business rates retention scheme.

2.3 We are keen to encourage views on the consultation paper, especially given the different governance arrangements amongst fire and rescue authorities. Fire and Rescue Authorities and counties with fire and rescue services may, for example, have views on the potentially different approach suggested for each.

2.4 The consultation paper will be supplemented by a number of detailed technical papers to be published in August. These will be open, discursive papers aimed at providing more detail on some of the issues raised by the consultation document and will include some of particular relevance to fire authorities.

2.5 We encourage you to respond and would draw your attention in particular to the technical papers on "Dealing with non-billing authorities" and "Establishing the baseline". We will make sure we flag these to you when they are published.

2.6 The consultation ends on Monday 24 October 2011 and is published online at:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/localgovernmentfinance/lgresourcereview/>.

2.7 Please send responses electronically to: ResourceReview@communities.gsi.gov.uk (with attachments in Microsoft Word only).

2.8 Hard copy responses can be sent to: Joel Winston, Zone 5/D1, DCLG, Eland House, Bressenden Place, London, SW1E 5DU.

2.9 A plain English guide of the resource review can be found at:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/resourcereviewplainenglish>.

For further information please contact:

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Working with Localities

1. Background

1.1 Sir Bob Kerslake, Permanent Secretary for Department for Communities and Local Government and Martin Donnelly, Permanent Secretary for Department for Business, Innovation and Skills wrote to all Local Authority Chief Executives (copied to all Chief Fire Officers) on Monday 27 June, drawing attention to the new arrangements that both departments have put in place for working with localities.

2. Working with Localities

2.1 This initiative means that both Departments are working closely together across Government to ensure they understand local concerns. They can then use their understanding to shape policy-making and can respond appropriately to issues Local Authorities, public sector bodies, and the Voluntary and Community Sector raise with them.

2.2 Representatives from local authorities and partnerships have told the Department they value:

- Honest and regular dialogue
- Clarity about Government policy
- Signposting/help across Whitehall.

3. Department for Communities and Local Government's new approach to working with localities

3.1 Department for Communities and Local Government will speak to people on the ground to understand the views and experiences of citizens, communities, businesses and local government, and feed that back to improve policy-making and good government.

3.2 This role will also ensure the Department has the local intelligence and engagement to inform policy across Whitehall.

4. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills' new approach to localities

4.1 As part of the new economic development landscape, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has established six small teams based around the country to help drive forward local economic growth and ensure that the local business environment is as good as it can be.

4.2 Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and Department for Communities and Local Government are working closely together to deliver the Government's focus on local economic issues and to tackle specific barriers to growth, regardless of which Government Department owns the policy.

4.3 Over the next few months as these arrangements bed down, we value your feedback on how we are doing, what is going well and what we can improve.

4.4 For further information about Working with Localities please contact Joanna Key, joanna.key@communities.gsi.gov.uk or Ben Rimmington, ben.rimmington@bis.gsi.gov.uk.

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Firefighters' Pension Scheme Reform - Next Steps and timing

1. Background

1.1 On 19 July 2011, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury informed the House of Commons on progress on public service pension reform through a Written Ministerial Statement. The Chief Secretary's Statement set out the basis upon which the Government now intends to proceed to implement policies first announced in the Autumn Spending Review on employee contributions, and on taking forward initial scheme level discussions on long-term pension reform, announced in the Budget. The Chief Secretary's Statement can be found at: www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/press_83_11.htm.

2. Firefighters' Pensions Scheme

2.1 Terry Crossley the Deputy Director for Workforce Pay and Pensions, Department for Communities and Local Government, wrote to Chief Fire Officers, Fire and Rescue Authority Chairs, employee and employer representatives and other interested parties on Thursday 28 July setting out the Department's approach to reforming the Firefighters' Pension Scheme and the New Firefighters' Pension Scheme in England.

2.2 In that letter, Terry Crossley set out that formal consultation on proposals to meet the 2012-13 savings target from increased employee contributions in the Firefighters' Pension Schemes will commence in mid-August on proposed increases with effect from April 2012. How to achieve the savings in 2013-14 and 2014-15 will take place in scheme specific discussions.

2.3 Schemes are also being invited to provide initial reform proposals in headline terms by the end of October to allow full implementation for April 2015. Terry Crossley's letter set out the Department's approach to progressing these discussions.

2.4 Terry Crossley's letter can be found at:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/consultfirefighterspension>.

2.5 For further information please contact Andrew Cornelius or Vickie Edwards on
andrew.cornelius@communities.gsi.gov.uk or victoria.edwards@communities.gsi.gov.uk.

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Secretary of State determination under article 36 of the Fire Safety Order

1. Background

- 1.1 This sets out the outcome of a determination request that the Secretary of State for the Department for Communities and Local Government has received concerning the use of self-closing devices on bedroom doors in a care home.
- 1.2 Where the 'responsible person' and the enforcing authority agree that there has been a failure to comply with one or more provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in a premises, but do not agree on the technical solution to remedy that failure, they may agree, if appropriate, to refer the issue to the Secretary of State for determination under article 36 of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

2. Determination outcome

- 2.1 The enforcing authority and the responsible person have been notified of the Secretary of State decision.
- 2.2 The Secretary of State has considered the facts of this request and determined that, in this case, the installation of self-closing doors on the bedroom doors provides a suitable technical solution to demonstrate compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. This decision is based entirely on the specific circumstances of the care home and has been reached on the basis that the rooms will continue to be used as bedrooms.
- 2.3 The decision was published on the Departmental website on Tuesday 19 July and can found via this link: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/selfclosingdevices>.

For further information please contact:

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Fire safety guidance for purpose built flats

1. Background

1.1 Local Government Improvement and Development has worked with the housing and fire sectors to develop sector-owned fire safety guidance for those with responsibilities in purpose built blocks of flats.

2. Fire safety guidance for purpose built flats

2.1 Local Government Improvement and Development has worked with the housing and fire sectors to develop sector-owned fire safety guidance for those with responsibilities in purpose built blocks of flats.

2.2 The guidance offers information on the legislation and practical advice on how the fire safety issues inherent in these buildings can be addressed effectively in a consistent and proportionate way, ensuring residents get appropriate advice, including on what to do in the event of a fire.

2.3 The guidance is available as a free download from the Local Government Group website:
www.local.gov.uk/fire-safety-guidance.

For further information please contact:

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Generic Risk Assessment

1. Background

- 1.1 The Department for Communities and Local Government through the Operational Guidance Programme commissioned a series of Generic Risk Assessments.
- 1.2 The ongoing series assists Fire and Rescue Authorities in England in developing their own risk assessments for their fire and rescue service operational activity.

2. Generic Risk Assessment

- 2.1 The Department for Communities and Local Government has recently published further Operational Guidance for the Fire and Rescue Service. The four guidance documents are part of the series of Generic Risk Assessments and are published to assist the Fire and Rescue Service produce their own risk assessments and support interoperability of fire and rescue services across England.
- 2.2 Generic Risk Assessments published in January 2011 were:
- 4.2: Incidents involving transport systems – Rail
 - 5.5: Incidents involving radiation.
- 2.3 Generic Risk Assessments published in March 2011 were:
- 3.1: Fighting fires in buildings
 - 5.3: Incidents involving chemicals.
- 2.4 Generic Risk Assessments published in June 2011 were
- 3.4: Fighting fires in open rural areas
 - 3.5: Fighting fires in farms
- 2.5 Hard copies of these documents have been sent to the Chief Fire Officer in each Fire and Rescue Service. They can be found via the following link below:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/fire/firerescueservice/operationalguidance/>
- 2.6 The publication of the following Generic Risk Assessments is programmed over coming months:
- Fighting fires in domestic chimneys
 - Fighting fires in refuse
 - Rescues from collapsed structures
 - Rescues involving flooding
 - Rescues from tunnels
 - Rescues of trapped persons
 - Fighting fires in high rise buildings
- 2.7 More information on Operational Guidance for the Fire and Rescue Service is available at:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/fire/firerescueservice/operationalguidance/>.

For further information please contact:

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