

5. Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

Purpose of report

1. To provide a briefing on the new Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, published on 11 July 2012.
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Recommendation

The Chief Fire Officer recommends that the Policy and Resources Committee notes the content of this report.

Introduction and Background

2. Following a 14 week consultation period earlier this year, the new Fire and Rescue National Framework for England was published on 11 July 2012. The Framework sets out the Government's high-level expectations for Fire and Rescue Authorities. It is largely unchanged following the consultation, though there are a number of clarifications and some tempering of the wording of certain requirements. The Framework was accompanied by a 'Summary of Responses' document, which sets out the Government's comments on the 93 responses to the consultation. The Authority's response is summarised in Appendix 1.
3. The National Framework 2008-11 covered a broad range of activities and responsibilities for Fire and Rescue Authorities including resilience and prevention, protection and response. The revised Framework places an emphasis on local accountability and continues to provide an overall strategic direction for Fire and Rescue Authorities. It has an open-ended duration aimed at giving Fire and Rescue Authorities more certainty for the medium to long term. A summary is attached at Appendix 2.

Requirements for Fire and Rescue Authorities

4. The layout of the Framework is the same as in the consultation draft. Following an introduction, which sets out three key priorities for Fire and Rescue Authorities, there are three chapters covering safer communities, accountability to communities and assurance followed by a chapter covering the legislative context, and finally an annex listing the complete IRMP requirements.
5. The three priorities set the ground for the Government's expectations of Fire and Rescue Authorities. In full, the priorities are for Fire and Rescue Authorities to:

- **identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their areas face, make provision for prevention and protection activities and respond to incidents appropriately;**
 - **work in partnership with their communities and a wide range of partners locally and nationally to deliver their service; and**
 - **be accountable to communities for the service they provide.**
6. The main provisions in the Framework are summarised below in relation to four key areas: the IRMP, Assurance, National Resilience and Accountability.

IRMP – risk assessment, prevent, protect and response measures

7. Fire and Rescue Authorities are expected to deliver the three priorities primarily through their Integrated Risk Management Plans, which the Framework states *“provides an opportunity to demonstrate how it will discharge its responsibilities in a way that is open and transparent to its community and others with an interest.”*
8. The IRMP plays a key role in identifying, assessing and mitigating fire and rescue related risks. The requirements will be incorporated into the Service’s IRMP planning process for 2013-14, and can be summarised as set out in the following table attached at Appendix 3.
9. In terms of ensuring an effective response to incidents, the Framework also requires Fire and Rescue Authorities to have effective Business Continuity Plans in place and they must collaborate with other Fire and Rescue Authorities to deliver intraoperability, and interoperability with other Fire and Rescue Authorities, other emergency services, Category 1 and 2 responders and Local Resilience Forums.
10. Through its measures to identify and assess risk and its prevent, protect and response arrangements, individually or in collaboration with others, the Fire and Rescue Authority will need to have the necessary capability in place to manage the majority of risks in its area.

Annual Statement of Assurance

11. Alongside the IRMP, the Fire and Rescue Authority must publish an annual statement of assurance on financial, governance and operational matters, showing how they have had due regard to their IRMP expectations and the requirements of the Framework. Fire and Rescue Authorities will be expected to sign off the statements and ensure that they are subject to the authority’s scrutiny arrangements. Further *light touch guidance* on what the statement should cover is being considered by Government, but already the Chairman of the LGA’s Fire Services Management Committee has labelled this as an *“extra burden...without any perceivable benefit.”*

12. The Government has suggested that the contents of the statement will already exist within other information published by Fire and Rescue Authorities, and that the assurance statement will bring the information together into a single user-friendly document. The statement will be in addition to accountability, scrutiny and transparency requirements, which also require performance data to be made easily available.
13. The preparation of the statement will be coordinated by the Service's Corporate Services department.

National Resilience

14. The Framework defines national resilience as *"the capacity and capability of Fire and Rescue Authorities to work together and with other Category 1 and 2 responders to deliver a sustained, effective response to major incidents, emergencies and disruptive challenges, such as (but not limited to) those identified in the National Risk Assessment. It refers to risks that need to be planned for on a strategic, national basis because their impacts and consequences would be of such scale and/or complexity that local resources would be insufficient, even when taking into account mutual aid arrangements, pooling and reconfiguration of resources and collective action."*
15. Alongside the Government's provision of specialist capability through the national resilience programme, the Framework expects Fire and Rescue Authorities to work in partnership to agree whether and/or how potential gaps in capability may be met.
16. To this end, the Government has established the Fire and Rescue Strategic Resilience Board as a forum for Fire and Rescue Authorities to collectively engage with Government on national resilience issues. Where there are gaps in capability, they will need to be reported to Government or the Strategic Resilience Board, and Fire and Rescue Authorities will need to work collectively to agree with Government whether and/or how to address the gaps. Where the Board agrees that a gap needs to be filled, and following ministerial approval, new national resilience capabilities will be funded by Government. If the Government commissions Fire and Rescue Authorities to deliver a new capability, it will expect them to work together collectively to procure, maintain and manage the new capability.
17. Fire and Rescue Authorities will be required to work collectively and with the Strategic Resilience Board, to provide national resilience assurance to Government that risks are assessed, plans are in place and any gaps are identified, that specialist national resilience capabilities are fit-for-purpose and resilient, and that any new capabilities commissioned are managed in the most cost-effective manner that delivers value for money.
18. Fire and Rescue Authorities are represented on the Strategic Resilience Board through the Local Government Association's Fire Services Management Committee, while Fire and Rescue Services are represented through the Chief Fire Officers' Association.

Accountability to Communities

19. The Framework makes it clear that Fire and Rescue Authorities are accountable to their communities. Fire and Rescue Authorities need to have *“transparent processes in place to deliver this and engage with their communities to provide them with the opportunity to influence their local service.”* The preparation of the IRMP is highlighted as a key opportunity for community engagement.
20. The Framework adds that Fire and Rescue Authorities must hold the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive to account for the delivery of the Fire and Rescue Service, and that they must also have arrangements in place to ensure that their own decisions are open to scrutiny.
21. To enable communities to hold Fire and Rescue Authorities to account, the Framework requires that Fire and Rescue Authorities make communities aware of how they can access data and information on their performance. In this way, communities can compare the performance of the Fire and Rescue Authority with others. A number of ways of meeting this requirement are highlighted and include meeting the code of conduct of recommended practice for local authorities on data transparency, publishing pay policy statements, raising awareness of sources of comparable data and how to access these, linking to tools and best practice guidance and publishing action plans arising from peer reviews and self-assessments. The Government will also make data available within the bounds of data protection and security.

Conclusion/Summary

22. While acknowledging the consultation responses and concerns, the Framework is largely unchanged, though the Government has provided additional clarification in a number of areas, and made some textual changes where considered appropriate.
23. The Framework has been broadly, though cautiously, welcomed. It is much shorter than the previous document, cutting out layers of national guidance in favour of local determination by Fire and Rescue Authorities. It is also much clearer about the strategic relationship between the Government and Fire and Rescue Authorities, and confirms accountability to local communities not central government.
24. It is clear that the expectations set out in the Framework must be delivered. These are presented as requirements that Fire and Rescue Authorities must undertake – they do not appear to be optional or negotiable. At the same time, it should be noted that the Framework does not cover all the duties and functions that need to be delivered by Fire and Rescue Authorities, both as a public service provider and as an employer.
25. There is still some concern and uncertainty about the extent of information required to ensure transparency to communities and Government as required through annual Assurance Statements and access to performance data and information, though further guidance is promised in due course.

26. The expectations and provisions set out in the Framework have an impact on all Directorates of the Fire and Rescue Service. The Senior Management Board will work collectively to ensure that all requirements are met.

Financial Considerations

Consideration	Yes/No	Reference in Report i.e. paragraph no.
There are financial issues that require consideration	Yes	Whole document, in particular Appendix 1 Para 2, Appendix 2 paras 4, 11 and 21.

Legal Considerations

Consideration	Yes/No	Reference in Report i.e. paragraph no.
There are legal issues e.g. contractual and procurement, reputational issues that require consideration	Yes	Whole document, in particular Para 4 Appendix 2, and paras 6, 11 – 12, 17 and 19 – 21.

Additional Considerations

27. The table below sets out any additional issues arising from the proposals contained in this report and identifies the relevant paragraphs in the report where such issues are addressed.

Consideration	Yes/No	Reference in Report i.e. paragraph no.
Resources (e.g. Assets, ICT, Human Resources, Training & Development, Sustainability).	No	
Strategic Policy Links (e.g. IRMP, Authority Plan, Equality & Diversity, Partnerships, Environmental Impact).	Yes	Whole document, in particular paras. 7 - 10
Risk Management / Health & Safety (e.g. risk management and control measures, risk register score).	No	
Consultation with Representative Bodies	No	

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – Consultation Response
Appendix 2 – The Revised Framework - Summary
Appendix 3 – Summary of Requirements

Background papers (hyperlinks)

[Fire and rescue national framework for England, DCLG, July 2012](#)

[Fire and rescue national framework for England – Summary of responses, DCLG, July 2012](#)

[Response to Consultation on the Draft National Framework for England – agenda item 6, Policy and Resources Committee, 7 March 2012](#)

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