



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority
Policy & Strategy Committee

CONSULTATION ON 2008-2011 FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Agenda Item No:

Date: 1 February 2008

Purpose of Report:

To present to Policy and Strategy Committee the proposed response from Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service to the National Framework consultation.

CONTACT OFFICER

Name : Frank Swann
Chief Fire Officer
Tel : 0115 967 0880
Email : frank.swann@notts-fire.gov.uk

Media Enquiries Contact : Elisabeth Reeson
(0115) 967 5889 elisabeth.reeson@notts-fire.gov.uk

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Government is responsible for setting clear priorities for the Fire and Rescue Service within the National Framework. Members will recall that previous Frameworks, published for one and two years respectively, arose out of reform to fire service legislation and the production of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.
- 1.2 Community and Local Government (CLG) invited response to the current consultation document on 14 November 2007, following the issue of Fire and Rescue Service Circular 52/2007. Response is due by 06 February 2008.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework sets out the Government's priorities and objectives for the Fire and Rescue Service. It does this by making clear:
 - The Government's expectations for the Fire and Rescue Service;
 - What Fire and Rescue Authorities are expected to do; and
 - The support the Government will provide in helping them to meet these objectives.
- 2.2 The Framework is a strategic plan which outlines the outcomes the Government expects to see delivered by Fire and Rescue Authorities across their range of functions. It builds on previous Frameworks (2005/6, 2006/8) but has some key changes, which include:
 - Scaling down the narratives to key "must/should" messages, so the CLG priorities are transparent;
 - Moving to a three year lifespan, so expectations highlighted within the Framework run alongside Fire and Rescue Services' financial commitments;
 - Moves away from a previous nine chapter to four new chapter headings, focussing on revised key strategic priorities.
- 2.3 The new Framework structure identified the following as the key priority areas:
 - **Prevention, Protection and Response** – covers the core business of Fire and Rescue Authorities in analysing risks and taking action to mitigate those risks;

- **Resilience** – concerns the delivery of key resilience programmes and the actions Authorities need to take to ensure they are fully equipped to meet the demands of the resilience agenda;
- **Diversity and Workforce** – covers the importance of mainstreaming diversity in all levels of the Fire and Rescue Service and workforce development, training and pay and conditions;
- **Governance and Improvement** – covers constitutions in place to support the delivery of Fire and Rescue Authority business, the new Local Government White Paper including Local Area Agreements, performance assessment and finance

2.4 To assist in developing a response, CLG have posed four key questions. These are:

- What are your views on the new structure of the Framework? ;
- Is the National Framework clear about the Government's objectives and priorities, what Fire and Rescue Services are expected to deliver, and the support that Government will provide? If not, how could it be improved? ;
- Do you agree with the policies set out in each chapter? If not, why not, and what alternative policy would you wish to see instead? ;
- Do you have any comments on the implementation of the policies set out that are of relevance to the National Framework?

2.5 The Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service response (Appendix A) seeks to address all of the issues contained within the Framework and respond to the questions raised by CLG.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications within this report. However, there are some financial considerations that will arise from it. For example, the Framework addresses directly pay and Council Tax expectations, as well as the requirement to continue to report efficiency targets.

4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

Specific personnel implications will arise from the implementation of elements of the Framework. Equality and diversity targets, workforce development, recruitment and industrial relations are all included within the consultation.

5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The initial equality impact assessment is attached to this report at Appendix B. Additionally, the Framework itself will have been subject to a full equality impact assessment by CLG.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The Framework consultation lays out CLG's expectations of the Fire and Rescue Service for the next three years. Failure to respond will mean Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service miss the opportunity to influence the future direction the Service is taking nationally.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Policy and Strategy Committee agree the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service response to the Framework consultation (Appendix A).

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

- Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2005/06;
- Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2006/08;
- Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008-11 (consultation);
- Fire and Rescue Service Circular 52/2007.

Frank Swann
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
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Response to the Consultation on the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008-2011

CONTACT OFFICER

Name : Frank Swann
Chief Fire Officer
Tel : 0115 967 0880
Email : frank.swann@notts-fire.gov.uk

January 2008

RESPONSE TO NATIONAL FRAMEWORK 2008-2011

Question 1

What are your views on the new structure of the National Framework?

- 1.1 Firstly, Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) would express its support for the movement to a three year document. This ensures that the expectations placed within the National Framework run alongside the Comprehensive Spending Review period and allow for prudent objective setting and financial planning. NFRS has already moved to producing longer term IRMPs and by taking this approach with the Framework, we believe there will be greater synergy between national expectations and local delivery. The business and planning benefits that arise from co-ordinated fiscal planning, both within Services and between Services and the Treasury are obvious.
- 1.2 Additionally, the movement to a three year cycle will indicate to individual Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) that longer term planning is required. This will considerably reduce the burden and workload of the production of annual IRMPs, but will ensure that the Government's expectations should be within both the organisation's financial and community strategy. Flexibility will still remain for annual updates and local priorities, should these arise.
- 1.3 NFRS welcomes the Framework's attempt to reference other key documents without duplicating their expectations and requirements. We believe this helps provide clarity as to how these fit together and better explain the overall picture of the Government's expectations. To enhance this, we would like to see within the Framework the introduction of a tabular summary, highlighting priorities, assigning responsibility, referencing other publications, and confirming "shoulds" and "musts" along with timescales.
- 1.4 Scaling down the narrative to key "must/should" messages so that priorities are made transparent is a positive move. It is appreciated that achieving an acceptable balance between advice and prescription is both difficult and sensitive. However, reducing the opportunity for confusion or misinterpretation to arise, by clearer indications of intent and direction, is welcome.
- 1.5 We are concerned however, that although the document is a three year proposal, it does appear one of a short-term nature and does not appreciate the Service's wider involvement in the community. Since 2003, Fire and Rescue Services have been actively engaged within the wider public sector safety agenda. This has been done very much on a local basis by individual Fire and Rescue Services. This Framework presents a real opportunity for

CLG to promote the Service's involvement in the wider agenda and clearly articulate the contribution that the Fire and Rescue Service can bring.

- 1.6 Nowhere in the document does the Framework refer to the full impact of LAAs, the assessment framework of CAAs, and how this may interact with the current and proposed Performance Framework from the Audit Commission. This gives the impression that the Fire and Rescue Service's part in such agreements will be small as an ancillary player, and as a consequence may lose out.
- 1.7 Although NFRS acknowledge that the Pitt enquiry and the CFRAU are involved in the current flooding reviews, we believe that CLG has missed an opportunity to provide clarity on this issue. There is a clear opportunity to state the intention with regard to flooding, and how the Service's statutory duty will reflect this. The current general duty arrangements are insufficient and CLG needs to build on the commitment and service given by the sector during the previous summer.
- 1.8 The Framework identifies a joint vision for the Service by LGA, CFOA and CLG. It should and could given more clarity on how these stakeholders fit together, along with how the CFRAU and other bodies will engage in future.

Question 2

Is the Framework clear about the Government's objectives and priorities, what Fire and Rescue Services are expected to deliver, and the support Government will provide? If not, how could it be improved?

- 2.1 NFRS has identified some of its concerns in relation to this question in the previous response. However, it is important to clarify some other key elements where it is felt confusion exists and progress may be hampered.
- 2.2 CLG, through previous National Frameworks, has been clear about the implementation of initiatives such as co-responding. NFRS has always been supportive of this approach and has adopted a clear policy of implementation. It is disappointing therefore to read the current iteration and its reference to this life saving initiative. The current wording serves only to present the opinion that CLG's position on this has softened and by leaving it to individual Authorities, betrays a clear lack of thinking. This could be bolder and set a clear expectation. The risk here is that this is no longer a priority and it will consequently diminish in respect of Authority priorities.
- 2.3 Likewise, references to Regional Management Boards appear confusing. Whilst clarity is given with regard to the original six functions (ie:"Regional Management Boards must"), added dimensions such as regional efficiencies, value for money and regional reviews appear to be extending the role. CLG need to be clear if the RMBs are expected to deliver in new areas of function. The role of RMBs post-RCC implementation will also need greater clarity.

- 2.4 NFRS would also like to register its concerns over the lack of clarity regarding New Dimension asset transfer and the implications for mainstreaming the current grant arrangements. We understand that the funding for New Dimension grants will move in stages from grants under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 to the RSG. Can CLG provide more detail on how this will be reflected in the RSG.
- 2.5 NFRS also understands from the proposed Framework that the maintenance contract for the New Dimension resources will be a contract established by CLG, funded initially through the New Burdens principle and then through the RSG. Can CLG provide more details within the Framework on how the funding arrangements for the maintenance contract will be reflected in the RSG.
- 2.6 It is clear that one of the key elements of the Framework is a way to set and monitor equalities targets. NFRS agrees that it is imperative that Services engage fully with the communities they serve and will submit a detailed response separately from this submission.
- 2.7 Additionally, NFRS will also be submitting a detailed response to the Centre of Excellence Consultation.

Question 3

Do you agree with the policies set out in each chapter? If not, why not and what alternative policy would you wish to see instead?

- 3.1 NFRS will detail its response in respect of each chapter and the key aspects highlighted in bold by CLG within the Framework.

Prevention, Protection, Response

- 3.2 As previously stated, NFRS welcomes the proposal to move to a three year IRMP, and the proposals identified in Paragraph 1.6. It is important if the Fire and Rescue Service is to become a key player in Local Area Agreements and other Local Strategic Partnerships, that the Framework will need to be more explicit. Working with partners can be interpreted differently and may leave the Service without influence.
- 3.3 If CLG are seeking greater collaborative working as a priority (1.6), then NFRS believes a review of the Section 13/16 arrangements are essential. The current legislation allows for charging for cross-border working. This results in levies for charges rendered, which is both time consuming and does not present value for money.
- 3.4 The proposal for each Fire and Rescue Service to have a risk inspection programme for Fire Safety is welcomed. NFRS also believes that this should explicitly state the elements where such a process should engage with all key stakeholders. The risk programme should also identify how risk, high impact

businesses where any resultant fines will have a detrimental effect on the community (1.10).

- 3.5 NFRS questions how Fire and Rescue Authorities must ensure the dissemination of risk information to operational crews when this is a matter for the Firelink project. Existing arrangements will be superseded by a centrally provided provision. NFRS would maintain that CLG should ensure the Firelink project delivers this capability (1.15).
- 3.6 The statutory duty for ensuring Emergency Cover rests with the Fire and Rescue Authority and NFRS accepts the proposal within 1.18.
- 3.7 The impact of Fire Control and Firelink is substantial and will affect Fire and Rescue Service resources in respect of many proposals. The implementation of the IRS by 31.03.09 (1.12) will be challenging against this backdrop.

Resilience

- 3.8 Local Resilience Forums – the linkages into the Local and Regional Resilience Forums are well founded in Nottinghamshire. We fully support and endorse Fire and Rescue Service activities in these areas. A fully integrated approach, in the guise of Regional Resilience Forums, is essential – the sharing of best practice should be highlighted and the relationships with the Government Offices made clear (2.3). NFRS also believes that a matrix of interdependency would be helpful within the Framework.
- 3.9 As previously stated, there is a lack of clarity about charging arrangements between Fire and Rescue Services, particularly in the context of major incidents. The review of the National Aid Agreement (2.9) to consider arrangements post-implementation of Fire Control should consider all charging arrangements and the review of the Bellwin Scheme.
- 3.10 Whilst NFRS supports the points made regarding the Firelink roll out (2.11), there are serious concerns regarding the project management of Firelink and the arrangements with individual Fire and Rescue Services. Slippage over contracts needs to be clarified at the earliest opportunity.
- 3.11 As identified under our response to Question 2, NFRS has clear concerns regarding the New Dimension contract (2.15). Before this contract is agreed, NFRS would seek clarity on the transitional funding arrangements.

Diversity and Workforce

- 3.12 In respect of the key elements of diversity, NFRS will be submitting a full and detailed response to this separate consultation process.
- 3.13 NFRS already applies the principles of IPDS (3.20, 3.21) to its workforce. To ensure this remains relevant, we believe there is now time for a review of its impact and recommendations for taking it forward are required. The Service will be submitting a detailed response to the Centre of Excellence to ensure that these issues are clarified.

- 3.14 The Framework proposes that Fire and Rescue Authorities must ensure that they have in place arrangements for the recruitment and development of staff. This contradicts the elements relating to Regional management Boards where it is explicit that the RMB must develop these methods regionally (3.26).

Governance and Improvement

- 3.15 NFRS would seek further clarity on the role of the RMB and in particular how its functions are to be extended. The previous six criteria are maintained, but all now are identified as “must”. Additionally, it now appears that RMBs will be responsible for delivering efficiency savings. Where will the responsibility for reporting these efficiencies lie and will they be counted as part of individual Fire and Rescue Service efficiencies within annual statements (4.4).
- 3.16 A toolkit to assist in the development of targets in the context of Local Area Agreements is needed. The imminent removal of the BVPIs requires prompt guidance to be issued from CLG to Services and partners. It is clear that without some form of consistency across the country, comparative analysis will be very difficult. A timetable within which Fire and Rescue Services can expect guidance would be welcomed (4.10).
- 3.17 NFRS would also like to see greater detail in the relationship between the RMBs and Regional Improvement and Efficiency Strategy.
- 3.18 CLG should provide clarity on how individual Fire and Rescue Services can pay regard to the Government’s public sector pay policy (4.3.8) when both uniform and non-uniform pay is negotiated on a national basis.
- 3.19 NFRS would seek assurances that the CLG approvals process for extending contracts outside of the National Framework agreements of the National Procurement Strategy, are undertaken objectively (4.42).

Question 4

Do you have any comments on the implementation of the policies set out that are of relevance to the National Framework?

- 4.1 The National Framework contains a number of key policy decisions, some identified in a general sense, others specific by date. Given that the timeframe of the Framework is three years, it would be useful if as an appendix, the Framework could identify key dates. This would ensure individual Fire and Rescue Services and CLG would have a key matrix with regard to the implementation of CLG and Government’s expectations.

INITIAL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

<i>Section</i>	<i>Manager</i>	<i>Date of Assessment</i>	<i>New or Existing</i>
SMT	CFO SWANN	14 January 2008	New
Name of Report to be assessed		CONSULTATION RESPONSE – FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK 2008-11	
1. Briefly describe the aims, objectives and purpose of the report.		The purpose of this report is to present to the Fire and Rescue Authority the proposed response to the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework consultation.	
2. Who is intended to benefit from this report and what are the outcomes?		The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework sets the vision for the Fire and Rescue Service nationally. The outcome will be an agreed Framework for the Service for 2008-2011.	
3. Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the report?		Fire and Rescue Authority, Managers, Trade Unions, Stakeholders, Employees.	
4. Who implements and who is responsible for the report?		CLG will release the Framework following consultation, individual Fire and Rescue Services will be responsible for implementing its proposals.	

5. Please identify the differential impact in the terms of the six strands below. Please tick yes if you have identified any differential impacts. Please state evidence of negative or positive impacts below.

<i>STRAND</i>	Y	N	<i>NEGATIVE IMPACT</i>	<i>POSITIVE IMPACT</i>
Race		X		
Gender		X		
Disability		X		
Religion or Belief		X		
Sexuality		X		
Age		X		

6. Can this adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group?	Y	N	7. Should the policy/service proceed to a full impact assessment?	Y	N
					X

I am satisfied that this policy has been successfully impact assessed. I understand the impact assessment of this policy is a statutory obligation and that, as owners of this policy, we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this process.

Signed (completing person) CFO Frank Swann

Date 14 January 2008