

JOINT DCLG/CFOA DISCUSSION PAPER

**Strategic Governance Arrangements for  
Fire and Rescue National Resilience**

**A discussion paper prepared by the Department for Communities and Local  
Government and the Chief Fire Officers' Association**

**Introduction**

1. The draft Fire and Rescue National Framework sets out the roles of fire and rescue authorities and the Government to deliver national resilience. Fire and rescue authorities need to assess all reasonable fire and rescue related risks that could affect their communities (from local fires to terrorist attacks), and have the necessary arrangements in place to manage the majority of these risks, either through adjusting existing provision, more effective collaboration and partnership working, or building new capability.
2. The draft Framework also states that, occasionally, fire and rescue authorities will be required to respond to incidents of such scale and/or complexity that local resources may be overwhelmed even when taking into account mutual aid agreements, pooling and reconfiguration of resources and collective action. These risks need to be planned for on a strategic, national basis. For the purposes of this paper, these risks will be referred to as national resilience risks.
3. The Government retains over-arching responsibility for ensuring we are resilient as a nation to national resilience risks, and the draft National Framework continues to recognise that national resilience is best planned for on the basis of local professional expertise and understanding of risk, supported by strong partnership arrangements.
4. In order to ensure continued resilience, fire and rescue authorities and the Government need to work in partnership to agree whether and/or how these national resilience risks should be addressed. The draft Framework states that **the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) will ensure that appropriate, agreed strategic governance arrangements are in place to enable fire and rescue authorities to collectively engage with Government on national resilience issues.**
5. This paper sets out proposals on these strategic governance arrangements, and invites comments and views from partners on the following questions:

*Q1: Do you agree with the purpose of the strategic governance arrangements?*

*Q2: Does the creation of a new Strategic Resilience Board seem sensible?*

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Q3: *Are you happy with the proposed chair, secretariat arrangements and membership for the Strategic Resilience Board?*

Q4: *Do the delivery arrangements for the Strategic Resilience Board seem sensible?*

Q5: *Do you have any other comments on the strategic governance arrangements?*

**Purpose of the strategic governance arrangements**

6. The draft Framework sets out that the purpose of the strategic governance arrangements is to support discussions and decision making in relation to national resilience, in the context of fire and rescue authorities.
  
7. The strategic governance arrangements will provide a forum for fire and rescue authorities and fire professionals to engage with central Government to:
  - reach a **joint understanding** of national resilience risks and priorities, and current fire and rescue capability in relation to those risks, based on fire and rescue authorities' risk assessments, gap analyses and other relevant processes;
  - identify any existing **capability gaps** and/or any redundant capability;
  - determine **whether and/or how to fill** any existing capability gaps;
  - agree whether any new and/or emerging national resilience risks identified by central Government have a fire and rescue role and, if so, determine whether there are any capability gaps and, if necessary, how these should be filled;
  - agree whether any capability gaps identified by fire and rescue authorities can be filled through reconfiguration of existing capability or innovative solutions. If not, determine whether and/or how to fill these capability gaps;
  - provide **advice to Ministers** on fire and rescue national resilience capability and, where necessary, produce **costed options** for how new capability can be built, taking into consideration the likelihood/impact of the risk and funding pressures;
  - provide a **route for Government to commission** and fund new capability from fire and rescue authorities, if required and where agreed by Ministers;
  - provide a mechanism through which **fire and rescue authorities provide assurance** to Government that agreed capabilities are in place and fit-for-purpose; and
  - consider strategic **intraoperability** and **interoperability** issues, including issues identified through cross-Government work.

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8. Final decisions on whether new capability is required will be for Ministers to take, informed by recommendations from the strategic governance arrangements.
9. **Diagram A** on page 5 illustrates the roles and responsibilities of the strategic governance arrangements, with central Government represented in blue on the left and fire and rescue authorities represented in red on the right. The strategic governance arrangements are represented by the circle in the centre; listed within the circle are the key roles of the arrangements. Some roles will be delivered jointly (e.g. determining whether and/or how to fill any capability gaps), others will be Government-led (e.g. commissioning new capability from fire and rescue authorities) or fire and rescue authority-led (e.g. delivering the new capability).
10. National resilience risks will be identified through a number of routes:
  - a) By central Government, through the National Risk Assessment process;
  - b) By fire and rescue authorities, through local risk assessment and gap analysis processes which have regard to the Community Risk Registers produced by Local Resilience Forums;
  - c) By CFOA operational response and capability leads; and/or
  - d) Through lessons learnt from incidents, exercises and training.
11. The strategic governance arrangements might discuss, for example: the fire and rescue role in international humanitarian assistance, new risks and emerging threats, and response to national flooding, nuclear and radiation incidents; etc.

**Structure**

12. There is currently no existing governance arrangement or board that can deliver the purpose set out above. The existing Fire and Rescue National Resilience Board seldom considers strategic national resilience issues. Its focus is on ensuring existing national resilience capability (new dimension equipment and crews) is maintained and that assurance on this is provided back to Government.

*A new Fire and Rescue Strategic Resilience Board*

13. One way in which the governance arrangements could be structured is to establish a new strategic board to form a focal point for discussion between Government, fire professionals and fire and rescue authorities, and to deliver the purpose set out in paragraph 7. The board would be the key route through which central Government discusses national resilience with fire and rescue authorities. The board could be known as the Fire and Rescue Strategic Resilience Board.

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14. It is proposed that the Board be chaired by the Director of Fire, Resilience and Emergencies in DCLG and for the secretariat to be provided by DCLG.
15. Other members of the Board could include:
  - CFOA, to represent the professional leadership of the FRS
  - LGA, to represent employers/authorities
  - Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, to provide advice and expertise
  - Chair of the National Resilience Board, to provide the link to the delivery arm of the Strategic Resilience Board
  - Cabinet Office, to provide advice on wider resilience policy
  - The Devolved Administrations
  - Other Government Departments, on invitation, as necessary
  - Other chairs of relevant groups/boards, on invitation, as necessary

*Delivery arrangements*

16. The existing National Resilience Board would become the delivery arm of the Strategic Resilience Board. The Government, through the Strategic Resilience Board, would commission the National Resilience Board to deliver any new capabilities and to provide overall assurance on national resilience capability. The National Resilience Board would be supported by various technical and specialist groups, as per current arrangements. The National Resilience Board would report to the Strategic Resilience Board.
17. It is envisaged that the National Resilience Board and its supporting sub groups would be managed as per current arrangements.
18. Through the National Resilience Board and its supporting groups, fire and rescue authorities would develop a collective position on national resilience issues. This collective position and associated recommendations would then be brought to the Strategic Resilience Board by the Chair of the National Resilience Board.
19. In determining those national resilience issues that need to be considered by the Strategic Resilience Board, the National Resilience Board will draw on:
  - the National Risk Assessment and National Resilience Planning Assumptions;
  - local Integrated Risk Management Plans;
  - the Community Risk Registers produced by Local Resilience Forums;
  - sector resilience plans for Critical National Infrastructure;
  - the expertise of CFOA operational response and capability leads; and
  - learning from national and international incidents, exercises and training.

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20. If needed, fire and rescue authorities could establish other sub groups to manage contracts and to provide the assurance required by the Strategic Resilience Board.

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