

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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Update on today's Spending Review announcement and the implications for the Fire and Rescue Service.

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Spending Review – Fire and Rescue Service

1. Background

1.1 The Government has announced today, as part of its Spending Review, that over the four year period, the reduction to formula grant, which makes up roughly 50 per cent of the overall spend for Fire and Rescue Authorities, will be 25 per cent. Reductions for Fire and Rescue Authorities are weighted to the second half of the spending review period, so that Fire and Rescue Authorities have time to prepare.

2.0 Spending Review

2.1 Government is aware of the particular importance of fire and rescue services to their local communities. The reduction in formula grant funding for Fire and Rescue Authorities will be 25 per cent over the Spending Review period. To give Fire and Rescue Authorities time to make the necessary changes without affecting the quality and breadth of services to communities, the reduction is back loaded to 2013–14 and 2014–15.

2.2 In the first year the formula grant reduction that will face Fire and Rescue Authorities collectively will be in single figures (in percentage terms), with the larger proportion of the cuts falling to years three and four. December's Local Government Settlement consultation will detail provisional figures for individual Fire and Rescue Authorities.

2.3 As much as possible we have targeted reductions on central government fire funding (reducing inspection, targets and central direction). We have done this so the Fire and Rescue Service can prioritise maintaining the quality and breadth of frontline services.

2.4 It is for individual Fire and Rescue Authorities – not central government – to make local decisions on how to make these reductions. However, we have identified seven areas where we consider potential savings could be achieved:

- Flexible staffing arrangements
- Improved sickness management
- Pay restraint and recruitment freezes
- Shared services/back office functions
- Improved procurement
- Sharing Chief Officers and other senior staff
- Voluntary amalgamations between Fire and Rescue Authorities.

2.5 Going forward, we are also asking the fire and rescue sector, through the Fire Futures review, to take the lead in shaping the future strategic direction of the Service to meet the challenges ahead, including those which emerge from the Spending Review. Whilst the Spending Review settlement is difficult for all, the Fire Minister has given a commitment that he will continue to work with Fire and Rescue Authorities to remove barriers and to increase the flexibility and freedom they have to do the job for which they are accountable to your local communities.

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