

Police and Fire Sector update

Sector and economic news

Contents at glance

Regulation news

Accounting, auditing
and governance

Find out more

Police

Policing in austerity: rising to the challenge

HMIC have released the findings from their latest 'Valuing the Police' Inspections. The 'Valuing the Police Inspections' are currently in their third year and have focused specifically on how Police Forces have responded to the 20 percent reduction in real terms funding as a result of the October 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review. The latest report focuses specifically on the third year of the spending review period.

The inspection has focused on three key questions:

- ▶ What is the financial challenge, and how are forces responding to it?
- ▶ What is the impact of the changes that forces are making, both on the workforce, and the service they provide to the public?
- ▶ How are forces managing current and future risks?

The National Report drew the following general conclusions:

- ▶ Police Forces in England and Wales are rising to the financial challenge of the spending review
- ▶ Crime is down
- ▶ Victim Satisfaction is up
- ▶ Police Forces are protecting their front lines as much as possible

HMIC however noted that it has concerns about the ability of five forces to respond to future cuts.



Building a better
working world



ACPO response to Crime Statistics for England and Wales, year ending March 2013

The Association of Chief Police Officers has responded to the release of the latest Crime Statistics for England and Wales. Key points include:

- ▶ A recognition that the likelihood of someone becoming a victim of crime is at its lowest level for over 30 years.
- ▶ Although overall crime levels are down by seven percent there are some emerging trends. Data shows that fraud is up by 27 percent. Theft against the person is up by nine percent.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmhaff/487/487.pdf>

Police and Crime Commissioners: Power to Remove Chief Constables

The Home Affairs Committee published its Report on Police and Crime Commissioners - Power to Remove Chief Constables on Saturday 20 July 2013.

The Report recommends that local Police and Crime Panels should fully exercise their powers of scrutiny in cases where the commissioner proposes to remove a chief constable.

The key message was that Operational Independence was essential to the British Policing Model. ACPO agreed with HMIC that for the constitutional relationship between the Chief Constable and the Police and Crime Commissioner to be misunderstood was unsatisfactory.

Evidence to date suggested that most relationships between the Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners were constructive and professional.

Fire

The local government finance settlement for 2013-14 and 2014-15

On 4 February 2013, the Secretary of State published the final local government settlement for 2013-14. The decrease in spending power for fire authorities is significant reflecting the back loading of spending reductions in the spending review period. Metropolitan fire authorities have had a spending power reduction of 4.9 percent, whilst combined fire authorities have seen their spending power reduce by 4.1 percent on average for 2013-14.

The provisional settlement for 2014-15 shows a further 3.8 percent spending power reduction for metropolitan fire authorities and 2.7 percent for combined fire authorities.



LGA responds to Sir Ken Knight's Fire Service Efficiency Review

On 17 May 2013, the LGA published its response to Sir Ken Knight's Fire Service Efficiency Review. Analysis published in March 2013 by the LGA, which represents the 46 Fire Authorities in England, predicted Government funding for the fire and rescue service will fall by £300mn from £1bn in 2011-12 to £700mn in 2017-18. At the same time expenditure is expected to rise from £2.1bn in 2011-12 to £2.4bn in 2017-18.

As fire authorities continue to meet the demands of balancing their budgets they will have to spend on average 30 percent less annually by 2017-18 than they were spending in 2011-12.

The report also noted that the cuts are starting to bite with Fire Authorities reporting a drop of 7 percent in the number of home fire safety checks carried out in 2011-12 than in the previous year.

Public Affairs Committee review of local fire control project

The Public Affairs Committee has said that the government's scheme to improve fire service control centres in England is running late and could prove poor value money.

Margaret Hodge, PAC Chairman, noted that the original Fire Control project had wasted £482mn of taxpayer's money. The project was cancelled in December 2010, six years after its launch, after a series of delays. The government subsequently awarded £82mn to 22 fire authorities for local projects, The PAC stated that the government still had a duty to ensure national resilience.

DCLG has said the project is now on schedule and on budget and will produce £126mn savings for taxpayers by 2021-22.



Regulation news

Local audit and accountability bill

The Local Audit and Accountability Bill will put in place a new local audit and accountability framework for local public bodies in England. The Audit Commission currently appoints auditors to a range of local public bodies in England and sets out expected standards for auditors [via the Code of Audit Practice] and oversees their work. It also compares data across the public sector to identify where services could be open to abuse and help organisations fight fraud. Under the bill, the scope of the audit will remain very similar to the current audit, and auditors will continue to be required to comply with a code of practice and have regard to guidance. In the new framework, these will be developed by the Comptroller and Auditor General of the National Audit Office.

The Bill continues with the auditor's role in bringing any appropriate concerns to the attention of the public through public interest reports which the body will be required to publish, along with their response. The Bill protects the rights of taxpayers to inspect the accounts of local bodies and raise any questions and objections with the independent auditor.

The Bill sets out a new framework which requires local bodies to appoint their own auditors. Local public bodies will have to appoint their own auditor at least once every five years. They will need to consult and take into account the advice of an independent auditor panel. They will be required to publish information about the appointment of an auditor within 28 days of making the appointment.

Final amendments were made to the Bill during the third reading on 24 July. The Bill now goes to the Commons for its consideration.



Accounting, auditing and governance

Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

This framework was published in July 2012 and replaces the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008-11. It provides an overall strategic direction but does not prescribe operational matters. Fire and Rescue Authorities must have regard to the framework in carrying out their duties.

Key priorities in the new framework include:

- ▶ Identifying and assessing the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their area faces
- ▶ Making provision for prevention and protection activities and responding to incidents appropriately
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- ▶ Being accountable to communities for the services they provide

The framework includes requirements to:

- ▶ Produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan [IRMP]
- ▶ Work in partnership
- ▶ Make communities aware of how they can access data and information on performance
- ▶ Have arrangements to ensure that decisions are open to scrutiny
- ▶ Publish an annual statement of assurance

National Fraud Initiative has future moving to Cabinet Office

The National Fraud Initiative (NFI) will be retained and transferred to the Cabinet Office when the Audit Commission closes in 2015. The National Fraud Initiative matches data from 1,300 public sector and 77 private sector organisations, including audit bodies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, government departments and other agencies. It flags up inconsistencies in the information that indicate that a fraud, an error or an overpayment may have taken place; signaling the need for review and potential investigation. The Audit Commission has reported that the outcomes from the most recent exercise in England include:

- ▶ The prevention and detection of £103mn pension overpayments
- ▶ £79mn council tax single person discounts incorrectly awarded
- ▶ £42mn housing benefit overpayments
- ▶ 164 employees identified as having no right to work in the UK
- ▶ 321 false applications removed from housing waiting lists
- ▶ 1,031 prosecutions, 921 of them for housing benefit fraud
- ▶ 32,633 blue badges and 52,635 concessionary travel passes cancelled



Find out more

To find out more on the articles above, please follow the links below:

Policing in austerity: rising to the challenge

For the national report and each of the 43 individual Police Force reports, go to:

<http://www.hmic.gov.uk/programmes/value-for-money/policing-in-austerity-rising-to-the-challenge/>

ACPO response to Crime Statistics for England and Wales, year ending March 2013

To see comments on the Crime Statistics for England and Wales, by the national policing lead for crime and statistics, Deputy Chief Constable Jeff Farrar, go to:

<http://www.acpo.presscentre.com/Press-Releases/ACPO-response-to-Crime-Statistics-for-England-Wales-year-ending-March-2013-24d.aspx>

The Crime Statistics for England and Wales can be accessed via the following link:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/taxonomy/index.html?nscl=Crime+in+England+and+Wales>

Police and Crime Commissioners: Power to Remove Chief Constables

To see more, go to:

<http://www.acpo.presscentre.com/Press-Releases/ACPO-President-Sir-Hugh-Orde-responds-to-Home-Affairs-Select-Committee-report-Police-and-Crime-Com-24f.aspx>

The local government finance settlement for 2013-14 and 2014-15

The written statement to Parliament can be seen at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/local-government-settlement-2013-to-2014>

LGA responds to Sir Ken Knight's Fire Service Efficiency Review

For the full response, go to:

http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/media-releases/-/journal_content/56/10171/3998255/NEWS-TEMPLATE



Local audit and accountability bill

Further information can be found in the DCLG publication 'Audit and Accountability Bill A Plain English Guide':
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/198057/Local_Audit_and_Accountability_Bill_-_plain_English_guide.pdf

Progress of the bill can be tracked at:
<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2013-14/localauditandaccountability.html>

Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

To access the framework, go to:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-and-rescue-national-framework-for-england>

National Fraud Initiative has future moving to Cabinet Office

To find out more, go to:
<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/2013/07/audit-commissions-national-fraud-initiative-has-future-fighting-fraud-under-cabinet-office/>

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