



# The Scottish Fire Service of The Future



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Making it work together

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## MINISTERIAL FOREWORD

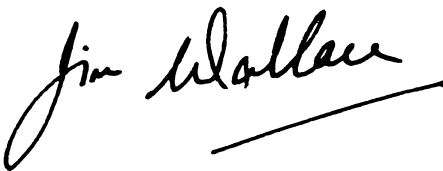


It is many years since there has been a comprehensive development of policy for the fire service in Scotland. The service is one which has an enviable reputation for delivery. At the beginning of the 21st century this is an ideal time to reposition the fire service to meet the changes and challenges of the future which we all face.

In 1998 a review was undertaken of both the police and fire services in Scotland to determine whether their structures remained the best way to deliver their services to the community. In responding to the recommendations of the Structure Review Steering Group, I shared the view that the number of Brigades should remain the same but that the emphasis now should be on the development of collaboration between brigades with a view to improving service efficiency. This moved the agenda firmly toward evolving improvements through stronger collaboration. This policy paper builds on the work of the Structure Review but also addresses a range of other relevant issues for the fire service in Scotland.

It is not my intention that this policy paper will sit on a shelf once publication has taken place and not be acted upon. At the end of the process our intention would be to consult the key stakeholders through the avenues which already exist, particularly the Scottish Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council (SCFBAC), on the actions which will follow.

Your frank and open comments on the many recommendations contained in this paper will be welcomed.



Jim Wallace MSP  
Deputy First Minister

# INTRODUCTION

1. The Scottish Executive is committed to building a "Safer Scotland". Fire and its consequences are a threat to that safety. Fire in the home is a devastating occurrence although, thankfully, one experienced by very few people. The possible consequences, however, are huge, destroying life and often causing terrible damage. Yet as we enter the 21st century there is a danger that simply continuing our present approach will do little to further reduce the risk posed by fire.
2. The levels of fire deaths and incidents have varied little with only modest reductions in each, over the last 20 years. It is a matter of concern that developments in fire-fighting technology, improved training and continued research into fire hazards have not achieved the significant reductions in deaths resulting from fire or the immense damage caused, which we might reasonably have expected.
3. This is not a reflection on the fire service whose exceptional qualities and values are recognised and need to be maintained. We want to build on the past but do not intend to let the past direct the future as we seek to improve the service and make best use of resources.
4. Sections 2-6 of this Consultation Paper explore the issues in depth and suggest solutions. We need to hear your views on our proposals. The closing date and contact for comments is: **30 July 2002**.

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## SECTION 1 – THE DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

### Background

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5. The need for a fire-fighting service has existed since early history but it was only through the Fire Brigades Act of 1938 that a centrally co-ordinated service was put in place in Great Britain. That Act made it mandatory for local authorities to make arrangements for an effective fire service and at that time there were 185 fire brigades in Scotland. In 1941, as a consequence of the war, a National Fire Service was created that remained in place until the introduction of the Fire Services Act in 1947, which returned the service to the control of local authorities. The number of brigades has since been more or less modified in line with successive local government reorganisations. However, following the introduction of single tier local authorities in 1996, the then existing structure of brigades was retained by creating additional joint boards. Currently, Scotland has eight brigades only two of which remain under unitary control, the other six coming under joint boards of between three to 12 constituent councils depending on the size of the area concerned.

### Development

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6. However, as it enters the 21st century, the fire service is subject to a number of key drivers for change. These six key drivers for change are detailed below.

7. First, is the emergence of **Community Fire Safety** as a main focus<sup>1</sup> and a strong fire prevention ethos. This is complemented by an ongoing review of fire cover. In the wider context, there is an increasing awareness of the changing environment in terms of social, economic and climatic developments. The fire service, as an emergency service, is continually adapting its role and responsibility to deal with, for example, road accidents, severe weather and flooding. All of this is underpinned by the need to organise and develop the fire service and its people to best deliver a modern, effective and professional service.

8. Secondly, the **legislative basis** for the fire service needs review. As it stands today, the Fire Services Act 1947 sets out the duties of local authorities in terms of the service they should provide and couches these in terms of “efficient arrangements”. Central government has therefore taken a role in the development of national standards.

<sup>1</sup> *In the Line of Fire* – Audit Commission (1995)



9. A second Fire Services Act in 1959 made some further changes and it was at this time that fire service conditions of service became matters for individual fire authorities and subsequently the National Joint Council for Local Authorities Fire Brigades, rather than Ministers. The Executive recognises that as a third driver the key to strong quality local services remains a **shared sense of direction amongst those who work within the fire service and those who are responsible for it and a commitment to equal opportunities.**

10. The fourth driver is **partnership**. The performance of brigades is monitored by HM Chief Inspector of Fire Services, appointed by Scottish Ministers. Policy is kept under review through national consultative arrangements, involving a range of interests including the Scottish Executive and local authorities and also professional and staff associations. This approach cements a relationship between central and local government and staff, which remains at the heart of current thinking. The Scottish Executive wishes to enhance the role of the authorities and strengthen community safety planning.

11. The fifth driver is the Executive's commitment to a **modernising agenda and the requirement to deliver a value-for-money service**. In terms of *Best Value* this means that the service needs to be committed to the key principles of accountability, transparency, continuous improvement and ownership. It must ensure that all activities are subject to the "4Cs" (challenge, compare, consult and compete) and focused on a public performance reporting framework within which targets can be set and the delivery of performance measured.

12. In addition to the requirement under the Fire Services Act 1947 to provide fire safety advice when requested, there are other legislative responsibilities vested in fire authorities. In the main these also relate to fire safety through their responsibility to enforce the Fire Precautions Act 1971 and more recently the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997. It is generally accepted that fire safety legislation can in the main be categorised as "stable door" legislation, with much of it emanating from a particular incident.

13. Although it is accepted that this legislation has stood the test of time fairly well, it is also acknowledged that it requires overhaul to better reflect the changing role of the modern day fire service. Examples of the changes envisaged occur throughout this Policy Paper but the list is not exhaustive and the Executive is open to suggestions on further changes required to the legislation. The issue is not one, however, simply of legislation. Developments in building technologies will increasingly shape the safety of our future society. **Changes in the built and natural environment** are a powerful sixth driver in the future strategy.

## Public Service Framework

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14. It is the stated aim of the Scottish Executive through its *Modernising Government Agenda* to provide public services, which are responsive to peoples' needs, are efficient and of high quality and make full use of modern technology.
15. The Executive also recognises that there is significant scope for more public/private sector partnerships. Constraints exist within both the private and public sectors around these arrangements. Taking forward this sort of partnership in Scotland involves ensuring that there are safeguards for the public and staff interests and overall transparency in the process.
16. Partnership is at the heart of the Scottish Executive's approach to modernising public services. The Scottish fire service enjoys a positive public image and is regarded as a consistently good performer.<sup>2</sup> The Emergency Services in general have a long track record of co-operation at an operational level in responding to incidents. The task now is to replicate this success at a strategic level. This calls for a full and informed examination of how such co-operation and collaboration can improve delivery embracing contingency planning, use of information technology, procurement, vehicle maintenance, communications and control, and training.
17. The fire service equally has an important part to play in the development of local partnerships to address some of the most significant issues facing society such as community safety, health, housing and the environment.
18. *Best Value* is a key Executive policy aimed at driving up standards in public service delivery. The fire service has been working to deliver a public service which is open, accountable and meets the needs of the local communities in which it operates. The proposed Local Government Bill for Scotland will, for the first time, introduce a statutory duty in respect of *Best Value* for local authorities including Fire Authorities. Although, the Scottish fire brigades took fully on board the *Best Value* approach in April 1999, this legislative change should serve to give stronger impetus to the work. Such changes in the Statutory Duties of Fire Authorities will inevitably require a legislative change to the duties of Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate in Scotland.
19. It is recognised that change in the environment such as global warming, are in turn leading to different demands on the fire service. In particular climatic changes, which have resulted in severe storms and widespread flooding across the UK, have had a significant impact on the demands on the fire service.

<sup>2</sup> Scottish Executive Police and Fire Service Structure Review Steering Group – findings from public surveys (2000)

## SECTION 1 – THE DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

20. All of this sets out the clear need to challenge the culture and role of the fire service as it stands. More than ever we need to ensure that we achieve the correct balance between the successes of the past and the demands of the future. We need to ask whether or not in its present state the fire service is ready to successfully respond to this challenging agenda?

## SECTION 2 – THE VISION

21. The biggest change for the fire service in Scotland in recent years has been devolution. Under The Scotland Act 1998, the Scottish Parliament has legislative competence for all fire service matters in which central government has a locus. Although the Scottish Fire Service has a different funding mechanism from England and Wales; a separate Inspectorate; and a separate albeit linked Advisory Council: service delivery and common working practices remain alike shaped as they are through EU- and UK-wide legislation and a National Joint Council (NJC) which deals with conditions of service. For that reason there will continue to be a close relationship on fire matters north and south of the border. However, the Scottish Executive has identified a number of key issues for the development of a distinctive Scottish Fire Service and these are set out in the sections which follow.

22. In its programme for Government, entitled *Working together for Scotland*, the Scottish Executive set out the clear objective of a Scotland where people are safer and feel safer. Its aims are:

- *to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Fire Service and to help make communities safer from fire; and*
- *to promote quality of service and value for money and improve fire safety awareness.*

23. The long-established and accepted aim of the fire service was "To save lives and property from fire and render humanitarian services." The term "humanitarian" covered the common public perception of rescuing pets and animals through to the rescue of persons trapped in vehicles following road traffic accidents. But to reflect the significantly changing operating context it is suggested that the modern-day fire service now needs a new aim. It is suggested that this could be as follows.

*"A Scottish Fire Service which makes its full contribution to building a safer society by working with others to reduce death and injury, damage to property and the environment, from fire and other emergencies."*

We believe that this will be achieved by adopting the following objectives of an organisation, which:

- *Works with local communities to reduce risks to life, property and the environment from fire and other emergencies.*
- *Assists promptly and effectively when fire and other emergencies occur.*
- *Has a well-equipped, skilful and highly-motivated workforce, able to work safely and whose composition reflects the diverse communities it serves.*
- *Continuously improves its performance in order to deliver Best Value.*

24. The fire service aim and objectives sit alongside the Modernising Agenda bringing together central and local government in integrated action across the public sector in Scotland. The Executive recognises that to achieve this vision we will require comprehensive new legislation which would encompass the role of the fire service as outlined in this paper and including Fire Safety.



## SECTION 3 – DELIVERING THE VISION – PREVENTION

*“Works with local communities to reduce risk to life, property and the environment, from fire and other emergencies.”*

### The Policy

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25. The fire service recognises that prevention is the key to reducing the tragedies and hardships caused by fire. Stopping fires from starting requires the community and the fire service to work together to deliver safer communities. In this regard, the importance of the prevention work of the fire service has been fully recognised. Within Scotland a new group – the Scottish Community Fire Safety Strategy Group (SCFSSG) – has been formed with the aim of co-ordinating and maximising the Community Fire Safety (CFS) activities of both the Scottish Executive and the individual fire brigades. The HMCI for Scotland noted that this strategy:

*“... recognises the long-term nature of community safety work and envisages a five-year rolling programme starting in April 2000 with constant evaluation. Through the adoption of this programme the incentive and opportunity is now there to fully integrate education and advice activity, legislative and technical fire safety roles and also the operational response by brigades to maximise the effectiveness of their service delivery”.<sup>3</sup>*

At the same time we know that two high-risk groups within the community – the elderly and those living alone – are set to increase in size. There is therefore a need to deliver CFS not only in schools but to target all vulnerable groups including the over 65s and single householders. In addition, there is also the need to find better ways of getting fire safety messages across to those areas of society for whom existing strategies and publicity – such as smoke alarm installation and maintenance – have had no impact. The aim is to continually build on this education platform in an incremental way to achieve a safer society, so that targeting specific groups becomes a thing of the past and the fire safety message is fully integrated within communities.

26. Community Fire Safety work is not currently subject to a statutory duty in the same way that other elements of the service's work are recognised as obligations.

The Executive recommends that Community Fire Safety work be placed on an equal footing with existing statutory duties for brigades and authorities.

<sup>3</sup> Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire Services in Scotland – 1998-99 Annual Report



## Community Safety Partnerships

27. A central plank on which to build safer communities are community safety partnerships. With the support of the Scottish Executive, these are now well established throughout Scotland. In 1998 a joint Scottish Executive/CoSLA/ACPOS strategy was launched under the “Safer Communities Through Partnerships” banner. All Scottish local authorities and police forces currently participate in multi-agency activity designed to improve safety within their communities. While these partnerships were initially directed towards crime prevention, they are now viewed very much as part of the broader “community safety” agenda encompassing fire safety, health promotion, road safety, etc.

28. There are already a number of excellent examples of Scottish brigades working within their communities with other organisations particularly on matters of fire safety. For example, the Safe Highlander Project, which is a multi-agency approach which has demonstrated a more effective use of resources and a more effective delivery to the community. The fire service has a vital and important role to play in the community. Specifically by working in partnership with other public sector organisations in the areas of crime, health, education and housing, it can provide both consultative and joined-up service delivery.

29. Audit Scotland published a value for money study into community safety in May 2000.<sup>4</sup> A number of fire brigades across Scotland have become involved with community safety partnerships in their particular areas. At a national level the Executive has announced the setting up of a Scottish Forum on Community Safety to co-ordinate and provide national direction on a range of public safety issues such as crime prevention, drug prevention, road and fire safety and other public safety-related matters. Fire service interests are currently represented on the Forum by CACFOA and the Executive is keen to promote wider fire service involvement in Community Safety Partnerships.

The Executive recommends that all fire brigades participate in their local Community Safety Partnerships to advance the multi-agency approach to community safety. The involvement of CACFOA on the national forum will also give the fire service a voice in influencing the agenda.

<sup>4</sup> *Safe and Sound* – Audit Scotland Publication (2000)

## Working with Young People

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30. Youth represents all our futures. Brigades work hard, often alongside other agencies or with local support and business sponsorship, to assist young people to grow into responsible and active members of society. The fire service ethos of team working in a high-risk environment makes it well placed to help young people – especially those who believe they have been left out by society – gain self-respect and capitalise on their own abilities. Work of this kind makes a long-term contribution to every community. The Fire Cadet Scheme recently introduced by a number of brigades and support for Prince's Trust Volunteers, are to be welcomed as are the countless contributions made by brigades and their staff to established youth organisations or local youth groups. The fire service is well placed to support this work.

The Executive recommends that the fire service should have closer involvement with young people, to enable them to realise their potential, with the aim of promoting responsible citizenship. The Executive will examine the possibility of channelling funds through the Community Fire Safety arena to brigades for worthwhile schemes.

## Working with the Private Sector

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31. Paragraph 15 pointed out that distinctions between services delivered by the public and private sectors are being eradicated and that opportunities for partnership working are being created.

32. Good examples of collaborative working with the private sector include involvement in the Lead Authority Partnership Scheme (LAPS). Under this partnership the Fire Authority acts as a focal point for liaison on fire safety issues between a company with outlets in a number of local authority areas. Such an approach has benefits for both partners.

The Executive recommends the development of partnership schemes with the private sector and recommends that brigades work to identify partnership opportunities.

## SECTION 3 – DELIVERING THE VISION – PREVENTION

### Enforcing Fire Safety

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33. Implementation of the EU framework Directive has signalled a change in responsibilities for inspections and the adoption of a more definitive enforcement role for the fire service. The main responsibility for ensuring that workplace risks are minimised falls now to the employer/owner. The fire service function as a wider enforcer of safety standards – working in the community safety area – will therefore change.

Maintaining statutory powers to control unacceptable risks will continue but new approaches also need to be developed. A lighter touch and reduction in hierarchy need not, and must not, become a pre-cursor to lower safety standards. This approach has organisational implications and a number of legislative changes

are required to place this work on a statutory footing. The Executive will promote these changes. In addition, the Executive has welcomed the responses to its consultation paper *Improving Building Standards*<sup>5</sup> and hopes to bring forward improvements in due course.

The Executive recommends that the enforcement role of the fire service be placed on an equal footing with existing statutory responsibilities for firefighting, by ensuring that the required statutory provisions are introduced through legislative change.

### Fire Investigation

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34. Effective work on fire protection requires a strengthening of the powers of the fire service in the areas of fire investigation and seizure of goods.

HM Chief Inspector of Fire Services in Scotland is tackling the issue of arson through a joint thematic on Wilful Fire-Raising in partnership with HM Inspectorate of Constabulary. The result of this study will be available in the summer and will help inform how both the police and fire service might best tackle this crime.

The emerging recommendations of the Wilful Fire-Raising thematic inspection should be considered by the Executive, particularly in relation to any legislative changes identified.

<sup>5</sup> *Review of the Building Control System – Improving Building Standards* – Scottish Executive (2001)

## Domestic Sprinklers

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35. Experience in other countries suggests that residential sprinklers can make our homes much safer, and indeed, they are already fitted in numerous commercial buildings in this country. There may also be areas where a preventative approach through the fitting of sprinklers may be more effective than the traditional interventionist approach. The Executive considers that it is not a simple task to translate experience from other countries with different built environments to this one and recognises we lack an objective assessment of the effectiveness of sprinklers in domestic properties in this country. The current research by DTLR and the Executive is ongoing and will extend at least over the next two years. This research covers:

- *Sprinklers for life safety.*
- *Design for fire safety systems utilising fast or standard response sprinkler heads.*
- *Effectiveness of sprinklers in residential premises.*
- *Sprinklers in new-build residential premises – regulatory impact assessment.*

There is already some good partnership approaches involving fire brigades, local authorities and the fire product industry working together to evaluate the role of sprinklers in the home. However, a recent consultation exercise by the Building Standards Advisory Committee revealed limited support for the introduction of residential sprinklers. A UK validated standard for domestic sprinkler systems will be required before they can be fully considered for inclusion in Technical Standards for new buildings.

The Executive recommends that the merits of domestic sprinklers should be kept under consideration in the light of current research.

## SECTION 3 – DELIVERING THE VISION – PREVENTION

### Opening up the fire service

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36. Fire stations are often located at the heart of the community. This physical presence is not always utilised to the benefit of the community surrounding the fire station, whether that is in a remote agricultural setting or within the hustle and bustle of an urban district in a busy city. In some locations, especially outside towns and cities, the fire station is the only public building within a community.

37. Some brigades have begun to use the opportunity presented by this central (whether rural or urban) location with developments like a “one stop shop” accessing all fire services and providing the services of a “community fire station” engaged in the wider range of community activities. The fire service is a community-focused service and should continue to foster and encourage activities and ideas of this kind. Making premises available, with due regard to operational and safety requirements, is one way in which participation and involvement can help communities to develop. It also helps improve the fire service’s own ability to listen and respond to local needs, removing the mysteries of what happens behind the big “red doors”.

The Executive recommends that Fire Authorities open up fire service facilities for wider use by the community.

## SECTION 4 – DELIVERING THE VISION – INTERVENTION

*“Assists promptly and effectively when fire and other emergencies occur.”*

### Current Arrangements

38. Across Scotland the fire service is shaped by national standards for attendance at fire incidents. The standards specify the number of pumping appliances that should arrive at the locus within prescribed time limits. These current standards are given below.

Risk Category	Number of Pumps for First Attendance	Time Limits for Attendance (in minutes)		
		1st	2nd	3rd
A	3	5	5	8
B	2	5	8	–
C	1	8-10	–	–
D	1	20	–	–

Table 1: Standards of Fire Cover Attendance Times

39. The risk category is assessed by the brigade and allocated to a given geographical area within the Fire Authority. For example, Risk Category A applies to central areas of large cities, Risk Category B to central areas of towns, Risk Category C applies to urban residential areas and Risk Category D to rural areas. In addition, areas can be categorised as Remote Rural – isolated from centres of population with few buildings.

40. The existing approach is property-based and its main weakness is that it does not take into account the presence of people and/or their activities. Research undertaken in 1998<sup>6</sup> suggested that fire cover should be provided according to the risk of fire and that the nature of the response provided should be reviewed. Further related research was undertaken in a small number of brigades and it was concluded that risk-based fire cover incorporating a flexible response was a viable alternative.

### Managing the Risk

41. The public expects the fire service to respond quickly and make their lives safer. To do this the fire service will have to become risk managers. The common thread to delivering a balanced prevention and intervention service is an integrated risk management approach. The future role of the fire service will

<sup>6</sup> *Out of the Line of Fire – Modernising the Standards of Fire Cover* – Report of the Joint Committee on the Audit Commission Report to the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Councils (1998)



be to manage the fire risk in the community it serves, on behalf of that community. Information, which is accurate and up to date, is a critical requirement of sound risk assessment. This information needs to be gathered, analysed, and presented in such a way as to positively impact upon the entire operational approach. Under the auspices of the CFBAC and SCFBAC a new joint Risk Management Working Group has been established to co-ordinate the development of processes, language, data and recording systems necessary to ensure an integrated approach to risk assessment and risk management in the fire service.

42. Through this approach it should be possible for the fire service to assess the risk in communities and drive it down through community fire safety initiatives and the enforcement of modern fire safety legislation. Each facet of the principles of fire prevention, fire protection and fire cover/firefighting would be entirely complementary as connections were made between the level of existing risk, what could be done to reduce that risk and the level of fire cover provided.

43. It will be important that the risk management system adopted has the strength to ensure minimum standards and the flexibility to reflect local issues. In addition, it needs to reflect the important social and heritage issues within Scotland. For example, there is a need for awareness about industrial property, the predominance of tenement properties within Scottish towns and cities, and our unique heritage sites. Important decisions will have to be made about the balancing of costs against successful delivery. Determining, measuring and managing fire risk will be an integral function of the Scottish Fire Service in contributing to a safer Scotland. The Executive would want to be assured that any changes support the new aim of the Scottish Fire Service detailed in paragraph 23 above.

### Future Intervention Arrangements

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44. The emphasis of the fire service has been on the primary aim of successful rescue. A change in the basis for determining fire cover from standards of response time and appliance availability to risk management would bring with it a need to provide public reassurance. As discussed in the paragraphs above, the current arrangements in respect of the standards of fire cover are not as effective as we would like. The current approach is seen as property-based and the main weakness is that it does not take account of the presence of people and/or their activities. A risk assessment approach, as described in paragraphs 41 to 43, explicitly addresses the risk to life but may in turn require resources to be allocated differently.

45. Two Scottish brigades – Strathclyde and Lothian and Borders – are involved in ongoing Pathfinder trials in moving away from the national standards of fire cover towards a risk management approach. This flexible risk-based approach to fire is applied in stages. Stage 1 uses a range of toolkits to assess the actual risk, Stage 2 deals with the response to the risk. This is a two-fold approach with, firstly, the application of appropriate safety measures to drive down that risk and then agreement on what the operational response will be. The final stage involves a review of the process to ensure that standards are maintained and risks continue to be driven down.

46. The outcome of these trials will be reported in the near future although implementation across brigades may take longer. Planning to allow these changes to go ahead will continue during 2002. However, it is worth recording that any change will represent a significant shift from the existing methodology. Given the nature of the possible changes and the need to maintain public confidence in the service's capability to respond to emergencies, it has always been the intention to increase public awareness to ensure acceptance of any new approach. Only once the details have been agreed can the awareness campaign begin.

The Executive recommends a public awareness campaign on the risk management approach to intervention once the Pathfinder trials have concluded.

47. Current local decisions on resource allocation reflect a fire service based, resourced and organised around the current standards of fire cover. Any move to a risk management approach, based on tested and evaluated pilots, would therefore necessitate the creation of a more accountable and flexible framework for fire brigades and fire authorities. The Fire Authority itself would remain accountable to its local community for those decisions but this would require changes to the Fire Service Act 1947.

The Executive recommends that the Fire Services Act 1947 be amended to reflect changes arising from the risk management approach.

48. Earlier reports<sup>7</sup> recognised that the issue of fire cover in sparsely populated areas was not fully addressed. In Scotland, the Executive recognises the value and importance of the contribution of retained and volunteers and acknowledges that they have a unique position and insight to their community through their other work or interests. Currently, HM Inspectorate of fire services is undertaking a thematic inspection in relation to rural and retained firefighters.

The emerging recommendations of the thematic inspection on rural and retained firefighters should be considered by the Executive, particularly in relation to the need to introduce any legislative changes.

## SECTION 4 – DELIVERING THE VISION – INTERVENTION

### Other Services

49. The fire service in Scotland is highly regarded by the public. It is, however, a developing service which must take into account environmental and other changes. The fire service already undertakes rescues from floods, buildings, high structures, collapsed trenches, chemical spillages, etc. The fire service response to road accidents is recognised and long established. The impact of environmental and other changes have resulted in a higher degree of involvement by individual fire brigades in these non-fire incidents. Special services were provided by the fire service in Scotland on 10,794 occasions during 2000-2001.

50. There is no statutory requirement for fire brigades to provide “special services” such as attending non-fire-related incidents, but individual fire authorities can and do exercise discretion in this area. The recent Structure Review<sup>8</sup> of the Scottish Fire Service identified that:

*“All brigades respond to road traffic accidents, lift rescues from silos and sewers and provide attendance to animals in distress. Similarly they will attend incidents involving hazardous materials or presenting a risk of harm to the environment, such as flooding. Beyond that there is considerable variation between brigades as to what special services they will undertake....”*

51. If the Scottish Fire Service is to respond to future trends it needs to establish consistent national standards for the delivery of “special services”. Any change in role might require new legislation and a redirection of resources. The same review working group commissioned an independent survey of the public’s expectations of the fire service and those respondents identified a requirement for “clear national standards of service” which would be complementary to the local autonomy of the Firemaster.

The Executive recommends that views be sought from stakeholders and the wider community on what the fire service should be doing in the area of “special services” and, if required, the Executive will ensure that the appropriate legislative changes are made.

How best to incorporate the existing special service activities undertaken by the fire service and take forward any new role in the non-firefighting arena will be given careful consideration. This will explore the importance of distinguishing between duties and powers.

*“Has a well equipped, skilful and highly-motivated workforce, able to work safely and whose composition reflects the diverse communities it serves.”*

<sup>7</sup> *In the Line of Fire* – Audit Commission Report (1995), followed by the Community Fire Safety Task Forces’ *Safe as Houses* (1997), *Out of the Line of Fire* a Report of the Joint Committee on the Audit Commission Report to the CFBAC (1998), and the HMI’s thematic inspection report *Making a Difference* (2000), *Risk Assessment and Provision of Fire Cover in Remote Rural Areas of Scotland* – Entec UK Limited (Oct 1998)

<sup>8</sup> *Scottish Executive Police and Fire Service Structure Review Steering Group* – Interim Report of the Fire Sub Group (2000)

## SECTION 5 – DELIVERING THE VISION – THE WORKFORCE

### Leadership and People

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52. The delivery of a balanced prevention and intervention agenda requires an examination of how best to organise, manage and develop the fire service and the workforce. The workforce will continue to be the key resource and the contribution that they are allowed to make will be essential to the delivery of a full and developing agenda. Key issues are:

- *the health and safety of the workforce;*
- *the proactive encouragement of equal opportunities;*
- *a review of training to meet the requirement to update skills;*
- *the development of leadership through the introduction of an Integrated Personnel Development System; and*
- *using effective occupational health provision in tackling both sickness and absence rates and the continuing high rate of retirement on ill-health grounds.*

53. This approach echoes the wider programme across the UK. The Integrated Personnel Development System (IPDS), for example, represents a major UK initiative in which Scotland intends to play its full part. IPDS provides the framework to enable individual members of the fire service to meet the increasing skills and educational requirements placed upon them and to be able to demonstrate their proficiency. It is therefore a most significant development, which the Executive recognises and supports. Furthermore, increasingly, training for firefighters needs to reflect the wider EU and international environment and Scotland has a role to play on this stage and at the same time working to continue the open cross border movement of personnel, which is essential within the UK.

54. This open movement of personnel commences from a position of common entry standards supported by legal controls and continues through the appointment process. There is no intention to break this link and although different legal requirements already exist for appointments at the most senior rank, between Firemaster and Chief Fire Officer, the drive from the Executive is for complementary action to retain the common standards of the UK Fire Service.



55. The task of modernising cannot be underestimated. There is a need to review a range of cultural and leadership matters.<sup>9</sup> This needs to be targeted on introducing non-discriminatory standards across the board, tackling issues such as bullying and harassment and equipping the fire service leaders of the future with the full range of relevant management skills. Although the fire service is a “uniform” service, the number of ranks and the organisational structure varies from brigade to brigade. In Scotland, three of the brigades are organised on a traditional divisional structure with the remaining five organised on a functional structure. Much of this reflects the diverse establishment and coverage of each brigade. For example, Fife Fire and Rescue Service covers a population of just over 350,000 within 1.7% of Scotland’s total land area, whereas Highlands and Islands Fire Brigade covers a smaller population of around 279,000 but this is spread across nearly 40% of Scotland’s total land area.

56. Firefighters fall into three categories:

- *wholetime – employed on a full-time basis operating 24 hours on a rotating “watch” system.*
- *retained – part-time employees who receive an annual retained fee and other fees for turnout; and*
- *volunteers – who receive an hourly fee for any authorised duty that they undertake.*

The uniformed complement of a fire brigade also includes the fire control staff, who operate the command and control systems. In addition there are support staff and managers who work in the areas of Information Technology, Finance and Human Resources, etc.

57. The breakdown of the Scottish Fire Service workforce by gender and ethnicity is given below.

	Men White	Women White	Men Ethnic	Women Ethnic
Wholetime	4,471	64	8	0
Retained	2,458	97	0	0
Volunteers	1,175	87	2	2
Control	30	188	0	0
Support Staff	315	484	1	3

Table 2: A breakdown of Scottish Fire Brigade establishment by gender and ethnicity

<sup>9</sup> *Towards Diversity – Promoting Cultural Change, The Fire Service Equal Opportunities Action Plan (2000-01), Towards Diversity II – Promoting Cultural Change, The Fire Service Equal Opportunities Action Plan (2001-02) and Managing a Modernised Fire Service – Bridging the Gap, HMI thematic inspection report (May 2000)*

58. The requirement to deliver *Best Value* underpins the need for an improvement in health and personal well being through effective occupational health provision, dignified and fair working arrangements, and personal development. These help address issues such as inequality, sickness, ill-health retirement, absence and skills gaps all of which mitigate against effective performance. Any changes in this area will inevitably impact on the role of the Scottish Fire Service Training School (SFSTS) and the Fire Service College.

### Equal Opportunities and Cultural Changes

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59. Employment in the fire service is open to all members of the community but is sometimes seen as exclusive. This matters a great deal to those who want to join or use the service and is also recognised by the service itself. In December 2000 the Scottish Fire Service, represented by CACFOA, CoSLA and the FBU in partnership with the Executive confirmed its commitment to equality and social inclusion by signing an *Equity for All* agreement developed by the Scottish Fire Service Fairness and Diversity Forum. The Executive and SFSTS will seek to ensure the principles of that agreement are fully supported.

60. The commitment is clear but the service now needs to take tangible steps to ensure that in terms of recruitment, selection, advancement and training it can unequivocally demonstrate the reality of a fair organisation. Work is already underway including the production of good practice guidance; evaluation of premises; promotion of fire career awareness for women and support on diversity issues for managers. The HMCIFS in his most recent annual report<sup>10</sup> has highlighted the need to demonstrate continued commitment to encourage under-represented groups to join the service. Initiatives such as working in partnership with ethnic community leaders, with women action groups and supporting the networking activities of the minority groups within the service would all help.

The Executive is disappointed that there is not more women and people from ethnic backgrounds attracted to a career in the fire service. It will look to the Fairness and Diversity Forum for initiatives and ideas to address this situation.

<sup>10</sup> Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire Services for Scotland – report for 2000-2001.

## SECTION 5 – DELIVERING THE VISION – THE WORKFORCE

### Other Influences

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61. EU employment legislation is already having an impact on the fire service. For example the EU Working Time Directive which was given effect in the UK under The Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000 is being used to challenge retained firefighters entitlement to the Firefighters Pension Scheme and other elements of pay and conditions. Other relevant influences have included, Council Directive 76/207, which introduced the principle of equal treatment for men and women on access to employment, vocational training, promotion and working conditions; and Council Directive 89/656/EEC, which introduced minimum health and safety requirements for the use of personal protective equipment in the workplace.

62. Similarly, developments within the EU on a cross-section of different policy areas are affecting the fire service. In particular, these policies may influence vocational training through a European-wide standard of technical and professional attainment. A project on this work was completed under the EC Leonardo da Vinci programme.<sup>11</sup>

63. A further significant EU initiative is in the area of fire safety where new harmonised standards for fire safety systems and products are under development, mainly as part of the implementation of the EC Construction Products Directive. There is an increasing trend towards European standardisation as reflected by the EC Directives implemented by the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997 as amended. This placed responsibility for fire safety on the employer and, in turn, has led to a much stronger enforcement role for the fire service.

### Health and Safety

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64. The health and safety of those who risk their lives in protecting the public is a matter of high importance to the Executive. The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 has applied to the fire service since it came into operation. More recently, however, the development of the health and safety agenda has been given added impetus<sup>12</sup> by setting targets for reducing health and safety incidents as a precursor to tougher sentences for health and safety offences.

<sup>11</sup> *European Firefighter Vocational Study* report (April 1999)

<sup>12</sup> *Revitalising Health and Safety* – a government strategy statement, DETR (June 2000)

65. This change requires the fire service to develop stronger partnerships with the Health and Safety Commission and bodies representing staff to ensure that exemplary standards of health and safety within the service can be demonstrated. This will remain an important activity for the Scottish Fire Service and the Executive will continue to work with the Health and Safety Executive to improve the health and safety of the fire service workforce.

### Working in Harmony

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66. The Executive recognises the complexities of a workforce which comprises full- and part-time workers with variable working conditions. However, it does not propose a departure from the current approach of developing matters relating to discipline, appointments, recruitment or general conditions of service on a UK basis so long as it is clear that they work to the benefit of the people of Scotland. It remains content that the proper place for these discussions, negotiations, consultations and agreements is the National Joint Council for Local Authorities' Fire Brigades.

### A More Professional Fire Service

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67. The term "firefighting" is part of everyday language simply because it means providing an immediate and effective response. The "can do" attitude of fire service personnel is widely appreciated and praised. The fire service of the future will require even wider skills. Educational development, improved self-assurance and higher technical and managerial skills will have to be developed so that identification of the firefighter as a skilled manual worker will progressively change into the firefighter as a skilled technician.

68. Increasing responsibility for fire prevention and an expanding emergency role will add to the already extensive training requirements. Keeping skills up to date in essential areas will require new thinking and attitudes to learning. How the fire service adapts to these changes will become the measure of how it is perceived as a profession. Agreement between those who represent the public and those who provide the service on what the modern firefighter of each rank is expected to contribute, will be an essential step towards ensuring the fire service delivers what communities require.

The Executive recommends that all fire service personnel be developed in a way that will enable them to meet the challenges of delivering a balanced prevention and intervention agenda and improved public standards.

## SECTION 5 – DELIVERING THE VISION – THE WORKFORCE

### Training

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69. To deliver this challenging “people” agenda requires a well trained and competent workforce. Already considerable effort and investment to achieve this is made locally, nationally and at a UK level. Brigades provide local courses. The Scottish Executive, both at its own establishment – the Scottish Fire Service Training School (SFSTS) in Gullane, near Edinburgh – where recruit and continuation training occurs, and through the funding of progressive training for fire officers at the Fire Service College at Moreton-in-Marsh in England, contributes significantly.

70. All stakeholders recognise that the current level of provision needs to increase if fire service personnel are to be able to acquire and maintain new skills and realise their potential. Complementary work at a UK level, to introduce new learning regimes and deliver systems to enhance competency, reinforces the point.

71. The Scottish Executive has therefore begun to restructure its own commitment and approach to fire service training. It has put in place a system for co-ordinating and developing a national strategy for training. This strategy, centred more on analysis of needs and delivery outcomes, will seek to promote a proactive and co-ordinated delivery of fire service training to all staff. Modern delivery methods and rethinking of existing local, national and UK practices will be used to ensure value and quality are maintained.

72. Scottish Fire Service interests are all agreed – not least because of the significant expenditure involved – on the need for this strategic approach to the delivery of fire service training in Scotland. The first steps are already underway to deliver this with the appointment of a Director of Training at the SFSTS who will have the role of directing the strategy and delivery of training. This management structure has been further strengthened by the appointment of a Head of School and Chief Instructor. A Central Training Advisory Committee representing all the stakeholder interests, to set the strategic direction and monitor the effective delivery of training, has also been established.

73. Demands to meet the challenges described in paras 52-53 require skills and practices which increase public and firefighter safety. Ensuring the health and safety of firefighters in new and demanding situations must remain a priority. A balance has to be achieved, which, in recognising the role of the fire service at the centre of rescue and emergency relief operations, does not over extend or encroach upon the responsibilities of other organisations.

74. Seeking this balance will become the focus of further attention as the role of the future fire service evolves. The Scottish Executive is not seeking to expand the firefighter's role other than where it is clearly in the public interest and where safe practices can be properly applied. Wider roles will create demands both for flexibility and the maintenance of core duties.

75. The proposed change in fire service priorities discussed earlier will require the adoption of new skills by all of those working within the service. Equally a number of reviews and working groups have reported on the need for consistent national standards.

76. It is encouraging that the evidence gathered from the eight Scottish brigades during the Steering Group Structure Review confirmed that they all believed there was scope for sharing training resources with both other brigades and external organisations. Collaboration already exists with some brigades offering courses aimed at the external market. Those concerns which were highlighted related to the limited opportunities for collaboration due in the main to the geographical distribution of personnel. All of this points to developing more creative means of delivering the right training to the right people at the right time in their careers. In the *Best Value* context, there is a need to balance local and national delivery at all times.

77. The Structure Review showed that some of the smaller brigades within Scotland were unable to provide the full range of internal training that is delivered by the larger brigades. In terms of national delivery there is scope for more collaboration in this area and the role of the Scottish Fire Service Training School (SFSTS) needs to be examined. This examination cannot be carried out in isolation. The plans for developing the role of the fire service College in England, relevant and compatible training offered by other institutions and organisations, training requirement in the wider EU context and the potential for localised delivery of national training through e-technology, have all to be taken into account.

## SECTION 5 – DELIVERING THE VISION – THE WORKFORCE

The Executive recommends the development of a strategic approach to the delivery of fire service training. This is being achieved through the establishment of a new Central Training Advisory Committee and the appointment of a new Director of Training who will:

- Consult with key stakeholders to develop a strategic plan for the organisation and development of fire service training in Scotland. This plan will meet the identified competencies, skills and professional requirements of uniformed staff.
- Lead, represent and participate in agreed working forums to develop and improve training.
  - Seek to achieve, through collaboration, advice and joint working **Best Value** in all matters related to fire service training.
  - Develop and co-ordinate generic training publications and guidance.
    - Support the successful implementation of key recommendations.

## SECTION 6 – DELIVERING THE VISION – PERFORMANCE

*“Continuously improves its performance to deliver Best Value.”*

### Collaboration

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78. Full involvement with communities, stakeholders, private commercial business and the other emergency services as well as within the Scottish Fire Service arena should serve to strengthen service delivery. A key building block in the Executive’s agenda is the concept of partnership working.

79. There is now a need to move from local co-operation to a strategic approach if the communities we serve are to be convinced that their needs are being reflected and that service delivery is fully satisfying *Best Value*. Collaboration is also the key to the effective delivery of the challenging new agenda. The Executive will facilitate this strategic approach to ensure *Best Value* is being delivered throughout the fire service. This may include the provision of funding through pump priming as well as the re-alignment of costs in order to ensure economies of scale and efficiencies are realised.

80. Work completed during the Structure Review identified a number of both internal and external activities which could benefit from collaboration (see Appendix 1). At the Fire Conference 2001, the Deputy Minister for Justice stated that “Sound internal and external relationships will be a prerequisite [to successful collaboration]. Some of those relationships may be commercially based; others founded in mutual benefit. All need protocols, agreements or contracts and some may be better structured on a national basis.”

81. Progress in developing suitable collaborative partnerships sits firmly within the *Best Value* framework. Under that framework authorities are charged with a clear commitment to challenge, compare, consult and compete in the pursuit of service delivery.

The Executive recommends that the fire service be included within the proposed *Best Value* statutory duty to be contained within new local government legislation.



## Procurement

82. Spending public money wisely is the responsibility of every public service. Scottish brigades currently spend around £30m of their annual capital and revenue budgets on procurement. Brigades vary widely in size but all should ensure that they avoid unnecessary duplication of effort and that full advantage is taken of opportunities for working together.

83. A review of procurement within the Scottish Fire Service was established in 1998 in the form of a joint Scottish Executive and Brigades Purchasing Arrangements Working Group. This group has recently re-established itself with the agenda of producing Best Practice Guidance – drawing on recent Audit Commission work.<sup>13</sup>

84. In addition, the Executive has, following discussion with key stakeholders, taken initial action to develop a framework for a strategic approach to procurement, with agreed measures which will enable procurement performance to be benchmarked. Further development of common specifications for appliances, operational equipment and PPE linked to evaluation of consortia procurement and collaborative initiatives will enhance the Group's earlier work. The Executive is therefore already committed to exploring how best to improve fire service procurement and it will examine a wide range of options, as developed by consultants, in this area.

The recommendations and guidance of the Purchasing Arrangements Working Group will be considered by the Executive who will ensure that all necessary work is taken forward to implement a more cost-effective and efficient procurement strategy.

85. Working together is also a key component to achieving best use of public expenditure. In March last year the Deputy Justice Minister announced that the Scottish Executive would support a new Operational Support Centre at Newbridge in Edinburgh for Lothian and Borders Fire Brigade. It was recognised that this would co-locate the Brigade's support facilities, which are currently spread over five different sites and that this would free-up savings, which could be redirected to other priorities. This new centre is regarded as an ideal opportunity for collaboration with neighbouring brigades – namely Fife and Central. It would be the intention of the Executive to ensure more collaborative ventures and conversely to restrict independent developments through the use of capital support.

The Executive recommends brigades exploit collaborative project working in order to realise tangible savings and increases in efficiency.

<sup>13</sup> *A Uniform Approach – a study of fire service procurement and A Uniform Approach – a good practice guide on fire service procurement* – Audit Commission (2001)

## Command and Control

86. The surveys carried out under the auspices of the Structure Review indicated that nearly all brigades agreed that there was scope for sharing and collaborating across brigades and with the other emergency services in terms of joint controls for the mobilising of resources, providing it demonstrated value for money. An example is Strathclyde Fire Brigade who benefited from a move to one control room from five.

Given the size and scope of Strathclyde there is an obvious read across to national opportunities in this area. It is the clear view of the Executive that major expenditure in this area has to be focused to achieve maximum benefit.

87. There are other issues in this context, which currently inhibit progress. These centre around the establishment of clear procedures in managing priorities across the emergency services, harmonisation of technology, clarity about maintenance and repair, quality assurance issues and statutory issues around command and control. The need to invest in replacement telecommunications across the emergency services in Scotland adds urgency to progressing this issue.

88. Due to the high costs involved in maintaining and replacing control rooms the Executive is keen to ensure that the emergency services exploit the advances in IT when considering the replacement or refurbishment of facilities.

A recent report<sup>14</sup> explored the potential for collaboration through the replacement of control rooms in England and Wales that span more than one brigade and co-locate other emergency services. Building on this earlier work the Executive is interested in examining the potential for an approach which is particularly relevant for Scotland.

The potential for developing control room facilities specifically in a Scottish context should be further explored and evaluated. The Executive will appoint consultants to examine this issue and provide a clear set of recommendations in order to increase service collaboration.

## Information Technology

89. Scotland must be at the forefront of using new technology if it is to compete in the wider world. That is why it is a stated aim of the Scottish Executive<sup>15</sup> to ensure that Scotland embraces the opportunities provided by digital technology so that Scotland can become “a world class digital nation”. The Scottish Executive already has in train a range of actions to take this issue forward particularly in respect of the public sector becoming an exemplar of best practice. Specifically the Executive:

*“... recognises the importance of maximising integration of back-office functions as well as customer-facing services. Such integration has the potential to provide an improved basis for joined-up government.”*

<sup>14</sup> *The Future of the Fire Service Control Rooms and Communications in England and Wales – Home Office study 2001*

<sup>15</sup> *Digital Scotland – The Way Forward – Scottish Executive publication, September 2000*

## SECTION 6 – DELIVERING THE VISION – PERFORMANCE

90. Historically, brigades have developed their Information Technology systems on an individual basis. Although there is some collaboration it does not apply across all eight brigades. For example, all eight brigades use the FINDS system with only some collaborating at national User Group level. The downside of this is duplication in effort and resource in procurement, maintenance and administration of systems, which will be common across brigades.

91. Information Technology is the key to the delivery of an effective risk management approach. The vision for the future is one where Fire Authorities maintain a database perhaps in the form of a dynamic risk map of the entire brigade area. This database will detail information about the risk posed by individual buildings. This risk map would inform all aspects of work from Community Fire Safety through to the provision of fire cover.

92. Having a more integrated digital fire service could help improve performance and benefit the front line firefighter by reducing bureaucracy and providing greater access to both training and operational information. For example, brigades currently provide monthly statistical information on a form FDR1 about attendance at incidents. It is recognised that the FDR1 return does not supply the type and quantity of management information required. As a consequence individual forces are building up their own databases to supplement the FDR1 data. The result is fragmentation and duplication. The joint funding of a corporate solution would reduce the manual work associated with statistical and data collection and improve significantly the quality and timeliness of information available to brigades.

93. As the potential for collaboration in training is essential, new technology will have an important role to play in the delivery of interactive local based e-training, thus providing a flexible solution to improving access to national training courses and information.

94. However, Information Technology can be a costly resource. The development of a Scottish IT corporate strategy could therefore be very beneficial and assist in maximising the benefits of IT. This would develop the themes detailed in HMCIFS's Annual Report for 1999-2000 of a common national database and service-wide gathering of statistical data.

### Radio Communications

95. The quality of its communications helps the fire service to respond better to public calls for assistance. With Scottish police forces planning to migrate from the system they share with the fire and ambulance services in 2004-05, brigades will have to consider replacing their existing radio system by 2005.

The Executive will appoint consultants to examine the cost of IT to brigades and evaluate the cost benefits of a shared MIS and the scope for collaboration and rationalisation in order to reduce bureaucracy and achieve **Best Value**.

The Executive recommends a comprehensive review of all of the options in respect of radio communications. Funding will be provided for this review process and the Executive will then consider any future procurement strategy accordingly.

## Special Services and Mutual Aid

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96. The fire service has rightly been asked by the public to respond to more types of non-fire emergencies. As discussed in earlier paragraphs, there is now a fairly wide variance in the provision of non-fire-related services. Yet, for some more specialised services there is infrequent demand. Potentially each individual brigade replicates the holding of specialised equipment and other resources. For example, all brigades provide a service in respect of line rescue, waterborne rescue and dealing with hazardous materials.

97. The co-ordination of provision in one national centre could be beneficial and indeed may allow for greater and better equipment to be purchased on the basis of economies of scale. Concerns about the location of such a centre and the speed at which equipment and firefighters could be mobilised to any given area would have to be fully addressed. In this regard the Executive has already given a lead – triggered by the events of 11 September – in providing additional funding for the provision of specialist equipment which will allow a national response to a wide range of major incidents. The equipment is for national use although the specialist vehicles will be located at three brigades. This approach demonstrates a pragmatic solution to concerns about location and mobilisation.

The Executive recommends the exploration of collaboration opportunities in the provision of special services. This will be achieved through the appointment of consultants to report on the feasibility and cost benefits of co-ordinated special services across the eight Scottish brigades to achieve increases in the effectiveness of these services.

## Support Functions

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98. While delivery of front line services will remain locally based there may be scope for centralisation of non-operational support functions across the brigades, i.e. human resources, finance, purchasing, information technology and the provision of statistics, etc. Indeed, with the desire to ensure recruitment in key skill areas and the need to ensure equal and consistent standards across the board, a common human resource approach has much to commend it.

99. While some brigades currently share some of these services with their local authorities, there is not a consistent approach nor a clear commitment to consider all of the options for support service delivery in order to achieve best practice. It is clear that, whatever conclusions are implemented from the joint Purchasing Arrangements Working Group and other agreements reached on inter-brigade collaboration, the staffing structure needs to be organised in such a way as to best support, complement and reflect the intended levels of service delivery.

The Executive recommends that a framework for support functions with benchmarked evaluation is introduced and this information is available on the Scottish Executive website for public scrutiny.

## SECTION 6 – DELIVERING THE VISION – PERFORMANCE

### Servicing the Service

100. The issues identified in the paragraphs above suggest that there is scope for fresh thinking on how best to achieve improvements without either major new resources or “reinventing the wheel”. The Structure Review Working Group identified common threads and Ministerial support has been given to expanding collaborative ventures between brigades still further.

101. Meeting these challenges may require a new solution. Certain defined tasks, such as research and development activities, could be undertaken by a joint team of seconded staff for the benefit of all. The team's business would be directed by all brigades through a management board and the outcomes would reflect the service's requirements. Informal working arrangements of this kind have already produced examples in areas like Health and Safety, Diversity and Community Fire Safety. Progressing these informal initiatives in a more structured way, in the direction that will help the service, is something that deserves consideration. This could, especially where existing management and technical resources are limited, assist brigades meet new demands and allow service management locally to concentrate on core service delivery with a community focus. Currently around £16m per annum is spent across fire brigades on support staff.

102. Establishing both the working arrangements and agenda for such a common fire service Agency is challenging. The current initiative to establish a more effective national training strategy and delivery of the programme through the Scottish Fire Service Training School may be helpful in providing a possible template for the way forward. What cannot continue, however, in the interests of promoting and improving the fire service in Scotland, is any disjointed or inefficient use of resources.

The Executive recommends the commencement of discussions with stakeholders about the formation of a common Fire Service Agency with the aim of assisting brigades in meeting common service needs.

103. Revisiting the Structure Review recommendations through a detailed examination of the issues raised in relation to collaboration and co-operation, either in the operational or support functions of brigades is essential. In acknowledging the statutory position of Fire Authorities the Scottish Executive is also conscious of its own responsibilities to achieve *Best Value* and sound governance. It would, therefore, be appropriate to commence a detailed investigation into aspects of fire service joint working to identify those areas, which might offer better use of financial resources and improved quality delivered centrally, or through other arrangements whilst retaining local accountability.

The Executive recommends the appointment of consultants to report on the feasibility and cost benefits of shared functions across all eight brigades with a view to developing common services as a means of delivering economies of scale.

## Funding – Revenue

104. Mention has been made already of the importance of spending wisely. Fire expenditure forms part of Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) and arrangements for the revenue funding of the Fire Service are much the same as for other local authority services. The Executive funds some 80% of fire service expenditure through Aggregate External Finance (AEF) with the remaining 20% being raised by local authorities. It is the Fire Authority's responsibility to set the budget for its brigade. In the main this is determined by the size of the establishment needed to provide the national standards of fire cover as detailed in paragraphs 38-40 above.

105. In addition, the fire service pension scheme is not a funded scheme and provision for the net cost of pensions is made in the Fire Service GAE. There is a current shared concern between service stakeholders and the Executive about an expected increase in pension costs. Currently, two UK-wide reviews of the pension arrangements are ongoing – one specifically examining the funding aspects of the scheme. There has been national consultation on these reviews and their outcome is awaited to inform the way forward. There is clearly a need to assist Fire Authorities in the resolution of the funding arrangements for pensions. In recognition of this the Deputy First Minister recently met with the Conveners of all eight Fire Authorities and joint boards and announced the formation of a short-term working group to examine these issues. The group will draw on both the outcome of the national consultation and local stakeholders' views in seeking to determine the best way forward.

106. As a general indication of the cost of the Fire Service within Scotland the following table details the financial returns for each brigade in the 2000-2001 financial year.

Fire Brigade	Revenue £	Income £	Capital £
Central Scotland	11,199,000	763,000	587,000
Dumfries & Galloway	6,088,000	372,000	635,000
Fife	16,497,000	1,319,000	914,000
Grampian	17,058,000	1,154,000	2,463,000
Highland & Islands	10,694,000	403,000	2,061,000
Lothian & Borders	30,843,000	2,347,000	1,189,000
Strathclyde	89,245,000	6,472,000	6,096,000
Tayside	18,790,000	1,278,000	1,135,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>200,414,000</b>	<b>14,108,000</b>	<b>15,080,000</b>

Table 3: Extract from HMCIFS Annual Report<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire Services For Scotland – Report for 2000-2001 – The Scottish Executive 2001

## SECTION 6 – DELIVERING THE VISION – PERFORMANCE

107. The current system does generate some tensions as detailed in the Structure Review questionnaires.<sup>17</sup> The level of GAE is often regarded mistakenly as a spending guideline. In addition, although funding for the Fire Service is now set on a three-year basis, allocations to each authority are still made on an annual basis. This does not assist with medium to long-term planning, nor does the GAE distribution necessarily target those brigades most in need: the formula is weighted towards uniformed staff numbers.

108. There is a range of factors identified in this paper which will impact on funding, for example, the anticipated shift from the current standards of fire cover. If it becomes apparent that the current GAE formula is inadequate, alternative formulae for grant distribution can be considered within the context of more general work on the distribution of all central government support for local government, which is expected to take place in preparation for the next spending review which will get underway this year.

### Funding – Capital

109. Since 1996 there has been a separate fire service capital programme. The Scottish Executive determines the overall capital borrowing consent and its distribution. This is achieved through a combined “top-slice” and formula distribution to the brigades.

Fire Brigade	2001-02 Capital Allocation
Central Scotland	£845,000
Dumfries & Galloway	£558,000
Fife	£911,000
Grampian	£2,126,000
Highland & Islands	£2,750,000
Lothian & Borders	£3,363,000
Strathclyde	£7,187,000
Tayside	£1,270,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£19,010,000</b>

<sup>17</sup> *Scottish Executive Police and Fire Service Structure Review Steering Group – Interim Report of the Fire Sub Group (2000)*

110. The Structure Review made a number of recommendations in relation to funding. The main one being:

*“Work should be undertaken on how the arrangements for fire service funding, both revenue and capital, within the current structure could be improved. In particular, a study should be undertaken to identify the best indicators of relative need in the context of maintaining acceptable levels of service.”*

111. The Executive is undertaking a review of the arrangements for local authority capital investment and this will extend to Fire Authorities.

In addition the Executive wishes to ensure that capital investments are used effectively and, where appropriate, the risk and exposure of public expenditure benefits from partnership with the private sector. The wider use of initiatives like PPP and PFI is one way of delivering these benefits. Innovative use of funding and the release of staff time to concentrate on core business activities is seen as imperative and the Executive intends to explore and fully consider all of the mechanisms available. The Executive is currently reviewing a number of PFI models and “total care packages”, the concept of which is to effectively outsource the provision and maintenance of equipment and vehicles over a long time period.

The Executive will appoint consultants to evaluate the suitability of implementing the PFI model as a means of reducing public expenditure.

### Supporting Committee Structure

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112. Internally, the new direction and role of the modern Fire Service needs to be properly supported by an effective national advisory structure. The Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council (CFBAC) and its Scottish counterpart the SCFBAC were established under the Fire Service Act 1947. The structure is an integrated UK one, which properly took cognisance of UK wide – and now an ever-increasing EC wide – requirement for parity in standards within the Fire Service.

113. It has been widely acknowledged that the previous UK arrangements have not worked well as they were seen to be slow, bureaucratic and unable to deliver the required strategic guidance. A new configuration of advisory boards and working groups has now been agreed with Scottish stakeholder representation and the Executive welcomes this move. The need to reflect how these UK changes might be combined with the response to the proposals contained in this paper to improve arrangements in Scotland has still to be determined.

114. The issue is about the extent to which the Scottish Fire Service – in its now devolved context – should remain within the UK advisory committee structure. Or, whether a separate Scottish advisory committee structure should be put in place. A hybrid arrangement may be an attractive proposition.

The Executive recommends views be sought about the more streamlined working structure and national framework.

## SECTION 6 – DELIVERING THE VISION – PERFORMANCE

### *Best Value* Performance

115. The key driver for these areas is *Best Value*. *Best Value* itself has been inevitably an evolving process and one which involves shared responsibilities between the Executive, Audit Scotland, HM Fire Service Inspectorate and Fire Authorities and their brigades. There has been, in the evolving process, considerable discussion around measuring performance and benchmarking standards. Monitoring of performance has to date been undertaken jointly by Audit Scotland and the Inspectorate.

116. The importance of the entire *Best Value* approach cannot be underestimated. Setting stretching performance targets, adopting more explicit local indicators and introducing wider public reporting of the output performance is seen as an important next step.

117. The Executive, in wishing to hear from consultees on this issue, would therefore propose to outline broad activities to be incorporated into its overall *Best Value* approach for the fire service.

- Setting meaningful, specific but challenging targets designed to achieve the vision outlined in Section 2. These may include performance in areas of operational activity; enforcement; personnel and financial expenditure.
- Identifying performance indicators for all brigades that go beyond the current national key performance indicators.
- Confirming the function of HM Fire Service Inspectorate in the public monitoring and reporting of performance in these areas.
- Publishing guidance, through HM Fire Service Inspectorate, on best practice and priority areas for review.

118. There will be an expectation of clear performance improvements aligned to achieving safer communities and efficiencies linked to the *Best Value* agenda. A key part of this process will be agreeing – in consultation with service stakeholders – measurable performance improvements, which reduce unwanted losses and activities, whilst increasing other desired improvements. Areas for consultation would include:

Reductions in:   Number of Fires  
                          Fatalities and Injuries to the Public and Firefighters  
                          Automatic Fire Alarm False Calls  
                          Hoax Calls

Increases in:    Membership of the Fire Service from Under-Represented Groups  
                          Numbers of Part-Time Members  
                          Community Safety Achievements  
                          Efficiencies and Expenditure

The Scottish Executive recommends the further development of *Best Value* for the fire service with clearly defined targets, performance indicators, monitoring and guidance. Existing best practice will be reviewed and implemented where appropriate.

## SECTION 7 – CONSULTATION ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS

### Consultation

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119. This paper sets out a number of key recommendations designed to both support the Scottish Fire Service and ensure that the Scottish Fire Service can meet the Vision set out in Section 2. The recommendations are:

1. The Executive recommends that Community Fire Safety work be placed on an equal footing with existing statutory duties for brigades and authorities. (Paras 25-26)
2. The Executive recommends that all fire brigades participate in their local Community Safety Partnerships to advance the multi-agency approach to community safety. The involvement of CACFOA on the national forum will also give the fire service a voice in influencing the agenda. (Paras 27-29)
3. The Executive recommends that the fire service should have closer involvement with young people, to enable them to realise their potential, with the aim of promoting responsible citizenship. The Executive will examine the possibility of channelling funds through the Community Fire Safety arena to brigades for worthwhile schemes. (Para 30)
4. The Executive recommends the development of partnership schemes with the private sector and recommends that brigades work to identify partnership opportunities. (Paras 31-32)
5. The Executive recommends that the enforcement role of the fire service be placed on an equal footing with existing statutory responsibilities for firefighting, by ensuring that the required statutory provisions are introduced through legislative change. (Para 33)
6. The emerging recommendations of the Wilful Fire-Raising thematic inspection will be considered by the Executive, particularly in relation to any legislative changes identified. (Para 34)
7. The Executive recommends that the merits of domestic sprinklers are kept under consideration in the light of current research. (Para 35)
8. The Executive recommends that Fire Authorities open up fire service facilities for wider use by the community. (Paras 36-37)
9. The Executive recommends a public awareness campaign on the risk management approach to intervention once the Pathfinder trials have concluded. (Paras 42-46)
10. The Executive recommends that the Fire Services Act be amended to reflect changes arising from the risk management approach. (Para 47)
11. The emerging recommendations of the thematic inspection on rural and retained firefighters will be considered by the Executive, particularly in relation to the need to introduce any legislative changes. (Para 48)

12. The Executive recommends that views be sought from stakeholders and the wider community on what the fire service should be doing in the area of "special services" and, if required, the Executive will ensure that the appropriate legislative changes are made. (Paras 49-51)
13. The Executive is disappointed that there is not more women and people from ethnic backgrounds attracted to a career in the fire service. It will look to the Fairness and Diversity Forum for initiatives and ideas to address this situation. (Paras 59-60)
14. The Executive recommends that all fire service personnel are developed in a way that will enable them to meet the challenges of delivering a balanced prevention and intervention agenda and improved public standards. (Paras 67-68)
15. The Executive recommends the development of a strategic approach to delivery of fire service training. This is being achieved through the establishment of a new Central Training Advisory Committee and the appointment of a new Director of Training who will:
  - Consult with key stakeholders to develop a strategic plan for the organisation and development of fire service training in Scotland. This plan will meet the identified competencies, skills and professional requirements of uniformed staff.
  - Lead, represent and participate in agreed working forums to develop and improve training.
  - Seek to achieve through collaboration, advice and joint working *Best Value* in all matters related to fire service training.
  - Develop and co-ordinate generic training publications and guidance.
  - Support the successful implementation of key recommendations.(Paras 69-77)
16. The Executive recommends that the fire service be included within the proposed *Best Value* statutory duty to be contained within new local government legislation. (Paras 78-81)
17. The recommendations and guidance of the Purchasing Arrangements Working Group will be considered by the Executive who will ensure that all necessary work is taken forward in order to implement a more cost-effective and efficient procurement strategy. (Paras 82-84)
18. The Executive recommends brigades exploit collaborative project working in order to realise tangible savings and increases in efficiency. (Para 85)
19. The potential for developing control room facilities, specifically in a Scottish context, should be further explored and evaluated. The Executive will appoint consultants to examine this issue and provide a clear set of recommendations in order to increase service collaboration. (Paras 86-88)

20. The Executive will appoint consultants to examine the cost of IT to brigades and evaluate the cost benefits of a shared MIS and the scope for collaboration and rationalisation in order to reduce bureaucracy and achieve *Best Value*. (Paras 89-94)
  21. The Executive recommends a comprehensive review of all of the options in respect of radio communications. Funding will be provided for this review process and the Executive will then consider any future procurement strategy accordingly. (Para 95)
  22. The Executive recommends the exploration of collaboration opportunities in the provision of "special services". This will be achieved through the appointment of consultants to report on the feasibility and cost benefits of co-ordinated "special services" across the eight Scottish brigades to achieve increases in the effectiveness of these services. (Paras 96-97)
  23. The Executive recommends that a framework for support functions with benchmarked evaluation is introduced and this information is available on the Scottish Executive website for public scrutiny. (Paras 98-99)
  24. The Executive recommends the commencement of discussions with stakeholders about the formation of a common Fire Service Agency with the aim of assisting brigades in meeting common service needs. (Paras 100-102)
  25. The Executive recommends the appointment of consultants to report on the feasibility and cost benefits of shared functions across all eight brigades with a view to developing common services as a means of delivering economies of scale. (Para 103)
  26. The Executive will appoint consultants to evaluate the suitability of implementing the PFI model as a means of reducing public expenditure. (Para 111)
  27. The Executive recommends views be sought about the more streamlined working structure and national framework. (Paras 112-114)
  28. The Executive recommends the further development of *Best Value* for the fire service with clearly defined targets, performance indicators, monitoring and guidance. Existing best practice will be reviewed and implemented where appropriate. (Paras 115-118)
120. Your views are sought on the recommendations as set out above.
121. In paragraph 13 the need for legislative change has been discussed. We would welcome specific or general suggestions about those areas which require reform or a new statutory basis.

# APPENDIX 1

## THE STRUCTURE REVIEW

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1. Ministers announced a structure review of both the police and fire services in Scotland in 1998. The review was taken forward through the establishment of a Steering Group. The following organisations were represented on that Group: the Scottish Executive Justice Department, the HM Inspectorate's of Fire Services and Constabulary, the Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officer's Association (CACFOA), the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), the Retained Firefighters Union (RFU), The Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (ACPOS), the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents (ASPS), the Scottish Police Federation, UNISON, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) and a Research Co-ordination Team. Their remit was:

*"To review having regard to the principles of Best Value, ways to maintain and where possible improve the quality of service provided by ... the fire service in Scotland. The review will consider options for the best means of delivering ... fire services in the future, including existing central functions and their organisation, considering the costs and benefits of the current arrangements and of other options for each service, of possible changes in demand and in technology, which may affect the way in which each service is delivered, and the need to maintain local accountability."*<sup>18</sup>

2. There were in total some 10 recommendations in relation to the fire service. The main recommendations were:

- *further work be undertaken to introduce closer collaboration and the provision of services on a common basis, in order to provide improved delivery and eliminate unnecessary duplication;*
- *appropriate structures for funding and managing common fire services should be investigated including future arrangements for the Scottish Fire Service Training School;*
- *to maintain the principle of local involvement with the fire service in any revised structural arrangements; and*
- *a standardised charging policy for special services, fire certification and other chargeable items should be investigated further.*

3. The Deputy First Minister announced on 6 November 2000 his response to the recommendations of the Police and Fire Structure Review Steering Group. He agreed that the emphasis now should be on the development of collaboration between brigades with a view to improving service efficiency. This statement effectively moved the agenda, at this time, away from formal amalgamations of brigades and towards evolving improvements through stronger collaboration. In Sections 2-6 of this paper we outline how we intend to take these recommendations forward.

<sup>18</sup> *Review of Structure of Police and Fire Services – Background Papers – Fire Service Sub-Group (2000)*

## APPENDIX 2

### THE FUTURE SHAPE OF SCOTLAND

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#### Geography

1. With the exception of Edinburgh, the population in Scottish cities is projected to fall and there is evidence of some general movement from urban areas to more rural areas. This will result in a more widely spread population. The consequence of this will be a growth in commuting and higher traffic volumes. The latter is forecast to increase by 27% over the next 20 years. The Scottish Executive has brought forward an Integrated Transport Bill aimed at improving our transport infrastructure. The key priorities of this are:

- Tackling urban congestion.
- Improving transport networks.
- Delivering readily accessible and accurate transport information.
- Maintenance of lifeline links to remote and rural areas.

2. The number of households is projected to increase by 10% between 1996 and 2010. Within that the percentage of single householders is projected also to increase as the actual size of the average household falls.

3. Paralleling the fall in the population of Scotland's major cities as detailed in paragraph 1 above, there is evidence of population migration from urban to rural areas. Retirement is a significant cause of the growth of population in peripheral rural areas.

#### Demographics

4. The population of Scotland is currently in decline and it is predicted that it will continue to do so. Within that context, the proportion of population in older age groups is increasing as the number of young adults decreases. Specifically in the 20-24-year-old age group, between 1998 and 2021 the number will have fallen by 6.2%. By 2010 the retirement age group will rapidly increase reflecting the post-war baby boom. An increase in those undertaking higher education is also expected.

## Economics

5. The output of Scottish production industries, in particular electrical and optical engineering, has increased, but employment within that sector and the construction sector has in fact fallen. The service sector now accounts for almost two-thirds of output with manufacturing accounting for just over a fifth. Employment growth has also taken place in the service sector. In common with many other industrialised nations, Scotland has seen a long-term decline in its share of output accounted for by manufacturing, although it remains proportionally more important within Scotland than the rest of the UK. 63% of the Scottish population is economically active with 24% of employment part time.

6. Fires and preventing them have an economic cost to society. Unfortunately the limited work that has been carried out in this area relates only to England and Wales and is dated as it draws on 1993 data.<sup>19</sup> However, for illustrative purposes, this research concluded that for England and Wales the annual cost of fires was a little over £4.5 billion or around 0.9% of the Gross Domestic Product at that time.

7. In an effort to improve the information available on the cost of fires the Fire Safety Advisory Board (FSAB) established a Cost of Fire Sub-Group which met for the first time in October 2000. This group is giving priority to the development of cost per fire measures – a powerful tool for policy analysis. They have already reached some agreement on what the costs should cover both in terms of direct losses such as property damage, health service costs and lost production as well as indirect costs such as prevention activity and insurance administration.

## Climate Changes

8. Recent research<sup>20</sup> suggests that the Scottish mainland and its Islands will experience an increase in annual average warming of 2-3°C and annual rainfall increases of around 20%. In addition, extreme rainfalls are set to increase throughout the year and throughout Scotland, as are the daily mean windspeed thresholds. In terms of the annual warming this means that “hot” days will become more frequent although these will mostly occur in the winter season.

<sup>19</sup> *The Cost of Fires – A Review of the Information Available* by Donald Roy Home Office Publication (1997)

<sup>20</sup> *An Exploration of Regional Climate Change Scenarios For Scotland* Scottish Executive publication (February 2001)

## Implications

9. All of the above has implications for the fire service. These implications are listed below:

- In 2001-02, 39% of those who died in fires lived alone. In the main, demographic and household projections mean more properties for the fire service to protect. Again in 2001-02 90% of fire deaths occurred in dwellings.
- Those of retirement age are set to increase and this age group is a high-risk group in terms of fire fatalities. During 2001-02, 41% of fire fatalities in Scotland were over 60 years of age. There may therefore be in future a corresponding increase in the number of fire fatalities within that same age group.
- Socially deprived areas already have an increased risk of fire and will therefore continue to create a demand on the fire service. However, in terms of tackling the causes, the fire service has a significant contribution to make through the delivery of Community Fire Safety.
- A more widely spread population may impact upon the demand for fire stations and other resources outwith city centres. This is noteworthy given that in fire cover terms, two-thirds of Scotland's geographical area is currently designated as "remote rural". This is significantly greater than in England and Wales where their designations stand at 11% and 16% respectively. Fire cover in sparsely populated areas is therefore an important issue for Scotland.
- The Scottish Executive's programme for improvements to transport infrastructure will improve access, which is a positive contribution to fire cover.
- Equally, the prediction of a better-educated population is a positive one as they may be more receptive to fire safety messages.