



NI Fire and Rescue Service

August 2006



Requirement

- To transfer the NIFRS to local government as a shared service responsibility
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Background

- Executive NDPB of DHSSPS
 - New Board appointed 1 July 2006
 - 12 members-Chair, CFO, 4 from councils, 6 lay
 - HQ in Lisburn
 - 1800 firefighters-50% fulltime
 - Annual running cost-£70m
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Arrangements in GB

- 4 different models
 - Fire Authority always owns assets
 - London works best
 - Council tax payers know what it costs
 - Council tax contribution does not reflect risk
 - Going against better model
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Principles

- Retain as single unitary body-avoid splitting into 7
 - Keep line of accountability clear with strong challenge function at local and regional level
 - Transfer should not disrupt current excellent service
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Ideal model characteristics

Should:

- deliver principles
- shift from central govt control to DC control
- ensure DCs oversee performance and delivery
- be funded from district rate
- be simple

Should, if possible:

- link local taxation levels to service costs
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Possible models

1. Control: NIFRS remains DHSSPS NDPB; Board acquires 7 DC reps, rather than 4.

2. Ownership:

(a) *Split* -individual councils acquire assets in their areas; or

(b) *shared service* -assets transferred to new body established to deliver shared services; or



Or

(c) *Single ownership* -assets transferred to one council to deliver service for all councils; or

(d) *Shared responsibility* - create new Authority for specific purpose; assets remain with NIFRS; or

(e) *New NIFRS* – reconstitute board with council reps only; statutory management board



Control model

(Retain as NDPB; increase Council representation)

- Keep NIFRS Board-majority council membership
 - Retain NDPB status-clear accountability & governance
 - Strengthen council relationship with district commanders
 - Transparent local contribution from rates
 - Could be interim step
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Control

□ Pros

- Simple
 - accountability, funding arrangements intact
 - Board continuity
 - Gives councils overall control
 - All councils equal weight
 - Easily implemented
 - Could be interim arrangement
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Control

□ Cons

- May not satisfy SofS requirements
 - No linkage between rates and service cost
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Ownership

- (a) Split: 7 services? Boundary payments?
 - (b) Shared service: New body?
 - (c) Single ownership: Assets in other Council areas? Owner has power? How would other Councils exercise control?
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(d) Ownership: shared responsibility

(Create new Authority; assets remain with NIFRS)

□ Pros

- New Authority with equal council representation
 - Assets still held by NIFRS
 - Accountability, governance not diluted
 - Continuity
 - Keeps regional service intact
 - Looks 'new'
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Ownership: shared responsibility

□ Cons

- Requires new public body
 - Might be regarded as cumbersome structure
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(e) Ownership: New NIFRS

(Reconstitute Board with Council reps. only; statutory management board)

□ Pros

- Legislatively straightforward
 - No new public body needed
 - Strong governance
 - Puts councils in control-equally
 - Keeps regional service intact
 - Funding can be straightforward
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New NIFRS

□ Cons

- Needs formal management structure
 - Breaks continuity
 - Doesn't 'look' new
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Funding

□ Principles

- No additions to rates burden
 - No hypothecation of rates
 - Should link costs and service delivery
 - Should be assured once budget agreed
 - Apportionment of costs to be agreed by Councils
 - DHSSPS contribute towards regional/national priorities
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Finally

- Models (d) & (e) seem only realistic possibilities
 - Funding is the key to change
 - Neither model produces any real benefit
 - Keep it simple
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