Chapter 13

Reform of Scottish Fire and Rescue Services from 2010-2015

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Introduction

Shane Ewens' excellent history of the Fire Service *'Fighting Fires'* (2010) shows how Scottish firefighters and Scottish services have been integral to the development of the UK fire service since James Braidwood established the first municipal service in Edinburgh following the great fire of 1824. Generally known as the father of firefighting he was the first person to try to introduce a systematic method of controlling firefighting rather than simply responding and trying to cope. Braidwood transformed the perceptions and realities of urban firefighting during the industrialization of the 19th century. He went on to establish the London Fire Engine Establishment in 1833, the precursor to the Metropolitan Fire Brigade of 1866. From the early 19th century to the end of the 20th there was little to differentiate the scale scope and nature of the service in Scotland from those south of the border, as the Edinburgh 'model' has been adopted by in all the great Victorian cities, such as Glasgow, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds and many more.

Recent studies (Audit Scotland 2015, NAO 2015a 2015b, Murphy 2015a 2015b) have highlighted significant differences in the governance, performance and the response to the challenges of the current era of austerity in the two countries. Although the arrangements prior to 2010 were remarkably similar, since 2010 they have diverged as public sector reform in general, and reform of the fire sector in particular, have generated alternative policy and delivery responses, although both have embraced the move from a reactive service to a greater emphasis on prevention and protection. Nevertheless it provides an excellent opportunity to evaluate the alternative approaches in what where previously two very similar regimes.

This chapter therefore explores how Scottish fire and rescue services have evolved in the 21st century, after the Scottish Parliament was established in 1999 and focusses more specifically on the period 2010-2015, when the purpose, legislation, structure, objectives, and performance all began to diverge from their English equivalents. Following devolution, the transfer of

responsibility for fire and rescue has gradually moved from Westminster to the Scottish Executive. Although Scotland, is still regulated by UK-wide legislation such as the Civil Contingencies Act (2004), the country now enacts its own legislation on the delivery of most public services, including fire and rescue (Mackie, 2013).

Scotland was not subject to the Fire and Rescue Service Act of 2004 but had its own (very similar) Fire and Rescue Services Act of 2005, to embrace the challenges of modernizing the service outlined in Chapter 2. The subsequent Police and Fire Reform Act[1] (2012) however, culminated in the establishment of both a single national Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) for Scotland and a new Fire and Rescue Framework in 2013, both significantly different to their equivalents in England. The equivalent arrangements in Wales are discussed in Chapter 13.

This chapter will examine Scotland's recent approach to the structure and management of its fire and rescue services. Moreover, the period from 2010 to 2015 reflects considerable changes to public service management and delivery across the UK. Despite being subject to similar funding constraints under the Coalition governments macro-economic approach to 'austerity' (Blyth, 2015; O'Hara, 2015; Schui, 2014), Scotland has taken a very different approach to its public service design and delivery than that adopted by England. By 2015, the new governance structure in Scotland was very different to England and despite a significant transition clear demonstrable improvement was being achieved in terms of both operational performance and efficiency savings (Audit Scotland 2015). Whilst an explicit comparison of Scotland with England is not the main aim of this chapter, the focus on Scotland nevertheless invites comparisons to be drawn by readers who are familiar with the English context. The chapter concludes with brief identification of what might be some of the challenges facing the ongoing development of the single fire and rescue service in Scotland.

Setting the scene for reform in Scottish fire and rescue services

In 1973, as a result of local government re-organisation 11 fire brigades were amalgamated into eight based on the 32 local authority areas. In 2010 the eight Scottish services eight separate Fire and Rescue Services (FRS), comprised eight separate headquarter buildings with 76 whole-time fire stations, 241 retained stations and 63 volunteer stations. There were approximately 4,300

whole-time firefighters, 3,000 retained duty firefighters, 234 control room staff, and 1,129 other support staff. The service was also assisted by 473 volunteer firefighters (Scottish Government, 2011c).

<mark>Insert Map</mark>

The Fire Scotland Act (2005) continued the status of the services as 'local' authority services with governance overseen by Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRA). Although Scottish ministers were given powers to further combine areas of two or more FRAs into a joint fire and rescue service (Scottish Government, 2011). Thus, at 2010 there were two unitary fire services which covered the local authority areas of Dumfries and Galloway and Fife; and six joint fire services, which served more than one local authority area, in Grampian, Tayside, Central, Lothian and Borders, Highlands and Islands and Strathclyde.

As with the 2004 Act in England (see Chapter 3), the 2005 Act generally increased the roles and responsibilities of the Scottish services. Whilst the eight FRAs were granted more freedom to determine how resources were allocated based on local needs, this was balanced against greater responsibilities in delivering a broader role for the service, including greater emphasis on fire prevention and protection and the need to build greater national resilience against increased threats from global terrorism and extreme weather conditions. The establishment of 'Scottish Resilience', in 2008, combined the Scottish Fire Services College (the sectors national training and organisational development centre), with the Scottish Government's Fire and Civil Contingencies Division in order to strengthen Scotland's resilience to major emergencies.

Scottish minsters were also given more autonomy to determine the strategic direction of the service. A new governance structure replaced the previous statutory central advisory structure with a non-statutory arrangement through the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG). The Fire Scotland Act (2005) expected the strategic direction of the service to be informed by a National Fire and Rescue framework which would set out priorities, objectives and guidance for the FRAs. Between 2005 and 2010, Scottish FRS were subject to less independent scrutiny and audit than in England. English FRS had been independently audited under the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) and Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) regimes both of which published regular reports on service performance. In Scotland, under the Best Value process, there was only one independent review of the process in 2006 (Grace et al 2007), followed by a progress review in

2007/8. The lack of regular independent performance review made it more difficult to measure progress in improvements in outcomes against the first national framework. By 2010, it was recognised that the development of more robust independent review was critical to the successful evolution of Scottish FRS (e.g. Scottish Government, 2010).

In a consultation document on the future of the fire and rescue service in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2011), the Scottish Government set out the following vision:

> [The Scottish] "Government is committed to working with stakeholders to ensure that the SFRS becomes a world class, public-focused emergency service at the heart of community resilience, with the capacity, flexibility and scale to provide 21st century fire and rescue capabilities to protect the public." (Scottish Government, 2011, p.5)

This vision was underpinned by key objectives to make Scotland *'wealthier and fairer, smarter, healthier, safer and stronger and greener',* and supported by 15 national outcomes for Scotland. The consultation argued that the Scottish fire and rescue service has an important role to play in the delivery of these outcomes. In particular, it contributed directly to outcome 11: *'strong resilient and supportive communities, where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others'* and outcome 15: *'public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs'.* It is notable that the language used by the Scottish government to describe its public services reflects a strong orientation towards ideas of 'public value', 'public governance' and 'public service' (see Benington & Moore 2014, Bovaird & Loeffler, 2016; Osborne, 2010, Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015), whereby the users of public services are seen as citizens with responsibilities rather than from a managerial or NPM perspective where they are merely consumers of services. Indeed, in its key principles for fire and rescue, the consultation document stated that the service should 'demonstrate best practice in public sector governance'. As such, its key principles and vision revolved around creating a public service which was (to be) sustainable, locally responsive and accountable[2].

Despite a clear vision, the Scottish government recognised some key challenges faced by the service (Scottish Government, 2011). These included the need to improve community fire safety and respond to increased expectations from the public. Yet, despite positive performance based on data in 2009-10[3], fire deaths in Scotland remained high, relative to the rest of the UK. Overall deaths were 50% more likely in Scotland than England In vulnerable groups, such as people with mental health problems, a particular high group for risk of death from fire. As in England the 2005 Act resulted in a move away from prescriptive standards of fire cover determined centrally, towards Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP). Under IRMP, each service is required to prioritise

its resources based on a systematic assessment of the risks to life and property in its area. The aim of IRMP is to recognise the relationship between risks and resources, and to use this information as a planning tool to ensure consistent service delivery. IRMP recognises the critical role of prevention as part of the vision for fire and rescue. Yet despite the local focus of IRMP, a review in 2010 recommended the development of a complementary national/regional IRMP to enable economies of scale, collaboration and sharing of services such as human resources, IT and fire investigation (Scottish Fire and Rescue Advisory Unit, 2010).

In order to deliver a more economic, efficient and effective FRS, the need to improve training and development and develop wider collaboration with other blue light services was also recognised. However, the structure of eight separate FRAs had resulted in considerable duplication of training provision. Moreover, it was argued the ability to work collaboratively with partner agencies was potentially inhibited by the need to have eight separate but simultaneous discussions on similar areas of interest.

The unprecedented budget cuts facing Scotland (and England)only exacerbated these challenges. The coalition government's policy response to the recession led to direct cuts in public spending across the whole UK, including those available for fire and rescue services. Given this financial climate, a structure of eight separate services for a relatively small country such as Scotland made significant improvements of the service appear difficult. It was also likely that under the existing structure, individual fire services would have needed to make cuts in expenditure that would have disproportionately reduced frontline services in some areas more than others. However, the Scottish Government believed the public increasingly expected consistent delivery of services, whichever area they live in.

In their manifestos for the 2011 Scottish elections, all three of the biggest parties, at that time the Scottish National Party (SNP), the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats, acknowledged the potential benefits of a single service with the SNP and Labour the strongest advocates.

By 2011 the Scottish Government, (which was now under a majority Scottish National Part government) and the main opposition parties were individually and collectively beginning to acknowledge a potentially strong case for structural reform of the Scottish fire and rescue service. Within the context of significant financial challenges and the need to provide Best Value, the Scottish government commissioned a report on the future delivery of its public services (Christie

Commission, 2011). This was soon followed by 'Renewing Scotland's Public Services' (Scottish Government, 2011b).

The reform of public services in Scotland

The Christie Commission[4] report (2011) set out the context for change in Scottish public services mentioned above earlier. The priorities for reform were outlined in 'Renewing Scotland's Public Services' (Scottish Government, 2011b).

> "The pressure on budgets is intense and public spending is not expected to return to 2010 levels in real terms for 16 years…unless Scotland embraces a radical, new collaborative culture throughout our public services, both budgets and provision will buckle under the strain." (Christie Commission, 2011, p. viii)

Demographic[5] and social factors also put a strain on the demand for public services. Inequalities across Scotland accounted for a significant element of this increased demand. In general, it was estimated that up to 40% of all spending on public services was on interventions that could have been avoided by taking a more preventative approach. Focussing resources on further preventative measures in order address these inequalities therefore became a key objective of reforms. Yet, it was also recognised that the organisation of public services prior to this review was plagued by systemic problems which made addressing these inequalities difficult. Services were fragmented, complex and lacking in transparency and accountability. They were also organised in a top-down way with the Scottish Government as the main arbiter, and were thus unresponsive to the needs of their local communities. These problems made working with other partner agencies difficult, and therefore limited the ability of the services to deliver improved outcomes and address inequalities. The priorities for renewal of Scottish public services (Scottish Government, 2011b) aimed to align public services with the key objectives of the Christie review. This centred on four areas; *Prevention, Integrated Local Services, Workforce and Leadership,* and *Improving Performance.*

Whilst the case for reform of fire and rescue services had been made in the public consultation (see above), it was not yet clear how fire and rescue services should now be structured and delivered. The case for *how* reform should happen was put forward in an Initial Options Appraisal Report (IOAR) and further reviewed in the Outline Business Case (OBC) (Scottish Government, 2011c, 2011d). The IOAR included full evaluations of 14 options and was presented to the MAG at the end of 2010. The MAG agreed that further work was needed to appraise the shortlisted options with all relevant stakeholders. Stakeholder workshops were held with acknowledged

experts. In addition, a series of visits to each separate fire and rescue service were undertaken with a view to building a comprehensive understanding of how fire and rescue services were delivered in relation to six key aspects;

- customers,
- outcomes and products,
- processes,
- people and governance,
- physical assets, and
- information and technology.

This information was used to further evaluate the cost, benefits, opportunities and risks of the options shortlisted by the IOAR.

The 3 options for reform considered most viable[6], included in the public consultation on reform (Scottish Government, 2011), and fully evaluated in the OBC, were:

- The existing eight service model but with greater collaboration encouraged and facilitated;
- A regional model with an, as yet unspecified number of regions (but commonly assumed to be 3), to fit with wider public service reforms
- A single national fire and rescue service

It was calculated that, even after accounting for the costs of transition, option three would deliver significantly greater long-term efficiency savings[1] and greater recurrent annual financial savings than either option one or two. Such savings could then be re-invested to protect frontline services. Option three also scored more highly in terms of non-monetary benefits and outcomes, including the ability of fire and rescue to engage closely with local communities, respond quickly to future challenges, and simplify its delivery mechanisms.

The potential improvement of outcomes cannot be as easily quantified as other benefits but were nevertheless important. The ability of the service to improve outcomes such as fire deaths was a key factor underpinning the need for reform of fire and rescue and of Scottish public services more generally, as discussed by the Christie Commission (2011). The most important outcome identified for FRS was the improvement of service outcomes. These are described along with examples to illustrate how they might be achieved in Table 1. The OBC concluded that option three had the most potential to deliver desired key outcome levels.

Table 1. Outcomes with examples to indicate how they might be achieved

Improved service outcomes	Examples that might illustrate success
Translation of the national outcomes into local priorities through the contribution of FRS to deliver of Single Outcome Agreements (SOA).	The delivery model should facilitate enhanced participation in the SOA processes and in local partnership working.
Improving preparedness for, response to and recovery from emergencies.	A standardised and more resilient approach to any emergency which occurs anywhere in Scotland, facilitating the movement of personnel, vehicles and equipment through the standardisation of equipment and procedures and a clearly defined command structure.
Improving both community and fire fighter safety.	Standardisation of policies, procedures and partnership agreements as well as the strategic distribution of assets across Scotland to ensure adequate cover for the whole country.
Ensuring appropriate and risk-based provision of fire stations, fire appliances and crews and civil contingencies specialists to secure improved service.	How the delivery model offers opportunities to ensure that an appropriate and risk-based provision of resources is maintained across Scotland to ensure adequate deployment times when they are required.
Contributing to overall economic growth by mitigating the social and economic impact which fires and other emergencies can be expected to have on individuals, commerce, industry, the environment and heritage.	The delivery model offers opportunities to develop more co-ordinated and consistent approaches across Scotland to targeting groups at increased risk, through more effective education, awareness and enforcement of the delivery process.

Source: Adapted from Outline Business Case (Scottish Government, 2011d)

A single service structure would cover the whole of Scotland with a single leadership and governance structure and national approach to service delivery. National standards would help to deliver consistency in performance across Scotland. A single service structure would also enable a uniform approach to IRMP, recognised as important during its review in 2010 (see above).

Although reform towards a single service required a greater move from the status quo and was therefore considered a greater risk, it nevertheless emerged as the preferred option. Following public consultation, the decision was made to implement option three, i.e. to establish a single national fire and rescue service and to provide a new fire and rescue framework with objectives against which the performance of the new service could be measured.

The new Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) and Fire and Rescue Framework

The single Scottish fire and rescue service (SFRS) and Fire and Rescue Framework were both established in April 2013. The Police and Fire Reform Scotland Act (2012) provided a statutory basis for the merger of eight separate FRSs each with their own sets of executive and command staff as well as back office functions. The SFRS is now a single body which is governed and managed by a board and strategic leadership team appointed by Scottish ministers. The board

provides strategic direction, support and guidance to the SFRS, ensuring that it operates effectively and that the Scottish Government's priorities are implemented. Board members are personally and corporately accountable for the board's actions and decisions. They also scrutinise plans and proposals and hold the Chief Officer and Senior Leadership Team to account.

The service is organised into three Service Delivery Areas (SDAs) each with its own headquarters; one in Aberdeen (North SDA); one in Edinburgh (East SDA) and one in Hamilton (West SDA). Across the three SDAs there are 17 Local Senior Officers (working with clusters of co-terminus local authorities) responsible for resource management and engagement with local partners to deliver response and community safety strategies. The running of the local service areas is overseen by a Deputy Chief Officer, responsible for corporate performance of the service. The whole of the service delivery and strategic planning is overseen and managed by a single Chief Officer.

Although the decision had now been made, this was recognised as only the start of a significant period of reform for Scottish fire and rescue. The framework for fire and rescue (Scottish Government, 2013) set out the strategic priorities and objectives of the new service; these priorities cover three key areas; improving service outcomes; equal access to specialist services and stronger engagement with communities. It also mirrored the shift in emphasis from property to people and from response to prevention. The intentions of each and how the service intended to meet them are summarised below:

Improving service outcomes and protecting frontline services

The key priorities within this area cover 'risk management', 'prevention and protection', 'response and resilience', and 'the workforce'. In terms of risk management, the SFRS is responsible for reducing (fire-related) deaths in communities, and mitigating the economic and social impacts of fires on those communities. As such, it needs to both identify the risks and assess them so that they can be prioritised and adequate resource can be targeted to those communities most at risk. Risk management processes and mechanisms of service delivery (prevention, protection and response) are complementary, with each informing the other. To be effective in improving outcomes, all depend heavily on planning and forming close partnerships with other agencies. For instance, the SRFS needs to maintain close links with other agencies such as the coastguard and Mountain rescue, so that its responders are provided with relevant and timely risk information. To

aid in prevention, Local Senior Officers (see above) need to work with partners to identify areas most at risk, i.e. vulnerable communities, properties and the individuals that live within them.

There is an explicit emphasis on a highly skilled 'workforce' which focusses on Learning and Development. The intention is for learning and development systems to play a crucial role so that the workforce is able to learn from operational incidents and use this knowledge to improve service outcomes. The Scottish Fire Services College was to become a centre of excellence to assist in this learning and development[8].

More equal access to specialist resources and national capacity

In addition to fire-related duties, the SFRS have a broader remit as set out within the 2005 Act to can respond to any incident or emergency where there is a threat to life or to the environment. These other incidents or emergencies include rope and water rescue. The SFRS also provides wider services, such as rescue of people trapped in lifts, animal rescues, or making buildings safe. Within the context of a single service structure it was recognised that there should be a conscious effort to ensure that all communities have equal access to specialist services, resources and national capacity where necessary (e.g. to respond to severe weather conditions such as flooding).

Strengthened connection between the SFRS and communities

The move away from eight services could have been considered or counterintuitively, risky and potentially counter-productive in light of the need for Scottish fire and rescue to become more responsive to the needs of local communities. Any single service would need to be underpinned by a structure that strengthened rather than weakened engagement with, and understanding of, local needs. Dedicated Local Senior Officers were appointed by the Chief Fire Officer (in consultation with the local authorities) to be the primary point contact and accountable for local service delivery. Each of the 17 Local Senior Officers have to work with their local authorities to develop priorities and objectives that reflect the needs of their local areas.

Insert Map

Local authorities are therefore now playing a key role in setting the national strategic direction of the SFRS. They also have a statutory duty to scrutinise the delivery of services in their local areas,

and provide feedback and recommendations on the improvement of the service to the Local Senior Officers. The 2012 Act expects local delivery of fire and rescue services to become better integrated with community planning. As such, the Local Senior Officers are responsible for developing local fire and rescue plans, which must be approved by the local authority. In order to strengthen the links to local communities and become more responsive to their needs, the Local Senior Officers are responsible for describing *how* a local fire and rescue plan aims to meet locally identified priorities and outcomes.

Governance and performance management in the new SFRS

The new SFRS brought with it a new 'landscape' for structures of governance (Scottish Government, 2013). New governance and accountability arrangements are set out in the 'Governance and Accountability Framework Document' (Scottish Government, 2013a). Public sector governance arrangements generally involve accountability mechanisms relative to the stated goals of the sector, e.g. effective service outcomes as in the case of the SFRS. It also usually includes the structures that clarify the responsibilities of the various stakeholders to the organisation, and the tools that could be used to assure accountability both internally and externally (Annisette, *et al,* 2013). National and local democratic accountabilities are the dominant mechanisms by which those in authority are held to account for the effective running of the SFRS. The new accountability framework includes the roles and responsibilities of Ministers, Scottish Government, the SFRS chair, board and Chief Officer.

Roles and responsibilities demand good conduct from those in authority in order to meet the stated objectives of the SFRS. For instance, the Chief Fire Officer must ensure "*…robust performance and risk management arrangements…to support the achievement of the SFRS's aims and objectives and that facilitate comprehensive reporting to the board, the Scottish Government and the wider public*" (Scottish Government, 2013a, p.6). Comprehensive reporting refers to transparency, which is also a key mechanism for ensuring effective governance by providing the openness needed to, amongst other things, prevent the abuse of power (Bovens *et al.*, 2014). The SFRS has a statutory duty to provide the public as well as national and local government with access to its proceedings, papers and reports.

Audit and scrutiny arrangements provide the tools needed to assure the accountability of the SFRS both internally for the purposes of internal control (to prevent fraud and theft), and externally for

its stakeholders including the Scottish Government and wider public. The Auditor General for Scotland (Audit Scotland) has the powers to examine value for money and financial performance. In addition, Her Majesty's Chief Fire Service Inspector in Scotland (HMCFSIS) oversees operational inspection of the SFRS, including community safety engagement, staff learning and development, and policies and practices. Both bodies, i.e. HM Fire Service Inspectorate in Scotland (HMFSI) and Audit Scotland have a duty to undertake complementary scrutiny activity covering areas such as outcomes, service performance, partnership working and community planning. In practise they liaise closely and operate collaboratively. Since 2010, Scotland has strengthened independent scrutiny of its FRS. In contrast in England unlike England, governance and performance management of the English fire and rescue service has been more influenced by notions of localism and sector-led improvement with a greater emphasis on 'New Public Management', particularly since the Coalition Government came to power in 2010 (DCLG, 2012, Downe *et al.*, 2014, Murphy and Greenhalgh 2014, Murphy and Jones 2016).

Arguably, the ultimate aim of effective governance is to help organisations achieve their objectives. Performance information can help with effective internal control and inform external stakeholders about how well the organisation is doing (Annisette, *et al,* 2013). Performance management regimes based upon notions of 'Public Value' would expect those responsible for service delivery to develop publicly accountable measures which demonstrate that objectives have been achieved and would emphasis public involvement (Moore, 1995, Benington and Moore, 2014). As such, the Scottish Government and the SFRS independent board define specific performance targets and the system uses independent audit and scrutiny arrangements to hold the SFRS accountable for their achievement. Scottish ministers hold the SFRS to account for performance against key targets. As detailed within the Fire and Rescue Framework and the SFRS's Planning and Performance Management Framework (SFRS, 2014) these targets are:

- Reducing fire fatalities and causalities
- Reducing special service fatalities and casualties
- Reducing accidental dwelling fires
- Reducing the number of non-domestic fires
- Reducing firefighter injuries
- Reducing staff sickness absence

The aim of the targets is to assess the realisation of reform benefits but also provide a basis for continuous improvement of the service. It is recognised that not all targets would be applicable at

the local level, and targets may need to be adapted to suit local risk profiles. The Planning and Performance Management framework developed by the SFRS in 2014, builds on the Fire and Rescue Framework to show how the SFRS plans to achieve the relevant targets. For instance, the document contains a high level strategy map to show the performance indicators which underpin the achievement of the high level targets and how the targets map to outcomes and the SFRS's strategic aims.

Conclusions

Within the broader context of public service management and delivery, this chapter has sought to understand how and why Scottish fire and rescue services have evolved and changed since devolution. In particular, the chapter has emphasised reform of the Scottish fire and rescue services from eight separate services to a single service structure. The reasons for such reform were not unique to Scotland but indicative of a range of similar internal and external factors also experienced by other countries. For instance, most OECD countries (and many others) have experienced recession since 2008, producing falling tax revenues, increasing welfare payments and rising fiscal deficits (Bovaird and Loeffler, 2016). Cutting the cost of public services (rather than increasing taxes) has been adopted as the most appropriate response by many countries, including the UK.

Nevertheless, despite the financial (and other) pressures faced by Scotland (which have been similar to the rest of the UK) the answer has not been a further entrenchment of 'New Public Management' philosophy, e.g. though the use of internal market mechanisms; often couched within the language of 'choice'. Rather, in Scotland the aim has been to maintain a more 'public interest/public value' ethos behind the delivery of its public services; one that is built on reducing inequalities and generally aiming to improve the social and economic aspects of the lives of those in local communities. Notably, it is not assumed, that creating competition (through means of private sector involvement) is a more efficient way of doing so. The priority for reform of fire and rescue has been based around a philosophy that aims to deliver an improved service by reducing the duplication of services that could be shared as an alternative to cutting frontline services, which they argued would have made inequalities even worse in some communities. In conclusion, although there were evident financial constraints, the *way* in which Scotland has chosen to reform its fire and rescue service was based around notions of creating 'public value' and the delivery of an economic, efficient and effective service within a central ethos of fairness and equality across Scotland.

Democratic accountability is a key feature of Scottish public services. As such, in the SFRS governance mechanisms have been improved in order to strengthen (rather than weaken) public assurance. In addition to the government itself and the Board, Audit Scotland[9] and HMSSI[10] provide strengthened independent scrutiny and oversight of the service against the 2013 Fire and Rescue Framework[11], including the performance targets outlined earlier.

In May 2015 Audit Scotland (Audit Scotland, 2015) concluded that the Scottish Government and the SFRS had managed the 2013 merger of the eight legacy services effectively – The reform of Scottish fire and rescue through creation of the SFRS had no detrimental impact on the public and its performance was improving. The move from eight local fire and rescue services to a national organisation had enhanced the scrutiny and challenge of the fire and rescue service. Reported savings to date puts the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service on track to exceed expected savings of £328 million by 2027/28". (2015 p5).

Scotland, at least in terms of its Fire and Rescue Service, had witnessed a successful transformation project that demonstrated individual and collective leadership and a strategic and holistic approach to the service. It led to more robust Governance and Scrutiny arrangements and improved service outcomes. During the same period England saw an abdication of leadership responsibilities, particularly from the DCLG minimal and ad hoc restructuring, resulting in loss of public accountability, sub-optimal delivery and significant risks to the achievement of Value for Money (NAO 2015a 2015b, Murphy 2015a, 2015b),

During the time period covered in this chapter the nature, purpose and organisational structure of the service have changed. However, SFRS had not yet addressed reform of the services operational stations which were scheduled for a later phase of reform. At the time of writing this chapter, the UK macro-economic policy which involves restricting resources to the public sector has been reconfirmed in a further three-year spending review. The outcome of the EU referendum has led us into a further period of economic turmoil and uncertainty. Moreover, in the Scottish elections of 2016, the SNP lost their overall majority and emerged as a minority government.

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Notes

1. Although the legislative framework and timetable have been similar for Fire Service and the new Police Services, implementation of reform in the police has proven far more problematical than in the Fire Service to-date.
2. Sir Peter Housden the former Permanent Secretary of the ODPM and Department of Communities and Local Government (2005-2010) was Permanent Secretary of the Scottish Government from June 2010 to June 2015.
3. 2009-10 data indicates a general decline in the number of all types of fires in Scotland, with rates down by a third across both primary and secondary fires. Dwelling fires - where most fire fatalities occur - have shown a continuing decline, reflecting the focus on prevention activities. The figures for dwelling fires show a decrease of 30% since 1999 (Scottish government, 2011d).

4. The make-up and conduct of the Christie Commission was very much in the spirit of former Royal Commissions of the past

5. Projections suggested that the population of Scotland will rise from 5.19 million (as of June 2009) to 5.54 million by 2033. It will also age significantly, with the numbers of people aged 60 and over increasing by 50% from 1.17m to 1.75m. This, combined with the trend towards increasing numbers of elderly and single occupancy households, will increase dwelling fire risk". (Scottish Government, 2011d, p.28)

6. In the run up to the 2015 general election, the Shadow Fire Minister Lyn Brown MP issued a consultation on proposed structural changes to the Fire Services in England. This had 3 options – voluntary local mergers; a new regional structure based on the nine English regions and a single national service. When the Conservatives won the elction they preferred to bring forward proposals to allow Police and Crime Commissioners to take responsibility for Fire and Rescue Services.

7. Valued at £293m over 15 years compared with £215m for option 2. (Scottish Government, 2011d)

8. In England both the Fire Service College in Gloucestershire and the Emergency Planning College at Easingwold have been sold to private sector contractors.

9. Since 2000 shortly after devolution Audit Scotland has been responsible for auditing both central and local government as well as the NHS in Scotland. In England these were previously divided between the Audit Commission and the National Audit Office.

10. Unlike the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor in England (who is a departmental civil servant), HMFSI in Scotland is independent of the government.

11. At the time of writing a new Fire and Rescue Framework for 2016 is under public consultation.

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