

Chapter 4

Another Turn of the Screw

Fire and Rescue under the Coalition Government of 2010-2015

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Introduction.

To fully appreciate the Coalition Governments' approach to Fire and Rescue Services, we must contextualise it within public service reform and the wider economic agenda. The global financial crises officially began with the United States entering a recession in December 2007, following a series of housing bubbles around the world and the U.S. subprime mortgage crisis of 2007. Lehman Brothers collapsed on 15 September 2008 and Bear Stearns and Merrill Lynch were already in unavoidable trouble. In the UK, the official start of the recession was the second quarter of 2008, and Gordon Brown announced a bank rescue package of around £500 billion on 8th October 2008. By the time the general election of May 2010 returned a hung parliament and the first modern coalition government between the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties, local government in general and Fire and Rescue Authorities had been preparing for significant reductions in central government funding for some time.

When annual budgets were being prepared in late 2008, it was the second year of a relatively generous 3-year financial settlement from the government. Nonetheless, the government, the Local Government Association, the Audit Commission and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives were all strongly advising prudence for local authorities in their short and long term budgetary planning. As contemporary (NAO 2008, 2009, 2010) and retrospective studies (Lowndes and McCaughie 2013) and international comparisons confirm (Barbera et al 2014, Steccolini et al 2014), local authorities reacted positively and rapidly to the challenge of impending austerity as they changed priorities, cut expenditure or built up reserves and, in many cases did all three, in the period from 2008 to 2010. By 2010 Fire and Rescue Services, like their local authority counterparts had become very robust and resilient organisations¹ in terms of their financial management and service delivery (Walker 2015).

Unfortunately, for public services in June 2010 the new Chancellor delivered his emergency budget² and was about to embark on an unprecedented series of missed economic and social targets including a target to reduce the (so-called) long-term structural deficit within the life of the parliament. 80% to come from public expenditure reductions with 20% from the benefits of increased growth. The missed targets, not only had an enduring significant impact on public expenditure, but the governments' failure to achieve its targets meant entrenched and persistent austerity became the dominant discourse or narrative of the Coalition administration, and also led to ever more tighter or punitive targets for locally delivered public services.

“This Budget is the first step in transforming the economy and paving the way for sustainable, private sector led growth, balanced across regions and industries..... As a result of the Budget measures the richest will contribute the most to deficit reduction, and the impact on child poverty in 2012-13 is statistically insignificant.” (HMT pp. 3-4).

The LGA later produced their financial modelling report ‘*AnyFire?*’ (LGA 2014) which reported fire and rescue authorities preparing to start the 2014/15 financial year, with on average 33% less in government funding than they had four years previously. While Krugman (2012) Blyth (2013) and Schui (2014) chart the policy failure, Stiglitz (2012), O’Hara (2015) Atkinson (2015) Dorling (2015) and others, have graphically illustrated some of the actual consequences. This chapter will highlight the shifting nature of

the governance accountability and public assurance arrangements for Fire and Rescue services as a key feature or consequence of the period.

This chapter therefore looks at the years between 2010 and 2015, which were a period of long-term austerity and immense uncertainty within UK public services. There was a radical shift in the policy of the central coalition government as it adopted neo-liberal economic policies, and imposed significant reductions in public expenditure in response to the recession. Fire and Rescue Services, like all public services throughout the UK, had to adjust to these new financial parameters. However, devolution of powers to Scotland and Wales meant that the organisation and delivery of Fire and Rescue Services diversified between different parts of the union. For example, the governance and structure of the service in Scotland changed radically while arrangements in England hardly altered despite exhortations from the government. On the other hand, accountability, performance management, human resource issues and the services collaboration with key service delivery partners both changed and became more complex throughout the UK. Later chapters will discuss these issues in more detail the changes in both strategic and operational management as well as the consequences for equalities, accountabilities and the relationship of the service to the public. This chapter will attempt to give a brief overview to the coalition period to set the scene, survey the organisational landscape and provide a little perspective for these later chapters.

Localism, dismantling the improvement infrastructure and the strategic review of the national framework.

In June 2010, the new fire minister announced a ‘strategic review’ of the fire and rescue sector, the governments’ role within it and whether or not a national framework was needed. He acknowledged that the government would have to provide assurance about responding to national emergencies and the adequacy of national and local emergency resilience arrangements. However he expected FRS to deliver ‘more for less’, promising greater financial autonomy in the Spending Review in return and announced the abandonment of national diversity targets and national guidance on recruitment and development (DCLG 2010a); Chapter 11 and 12 provide a more detailed discussion.

Within three months David Cameron, the Prime Minister had announced the coming of the Big Society (Cameron 2010) and George Osborne the Chancellor had announced the ‘bonfire of the QUANGOs’ as part of his emergency budget (HMT 2010). Eric Pickles the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government confirmed the abolition of the Audit Commission², the termination of Comprehensive Area Assessments, Local Area Agreements, the National Indicator Set and the ‘era of top-down government’. (DCLG 2010b, DCLG 2010c, Lowndes and Pratchett 2012). The retained firefighter arrangements were however promoted, as these were seen as being congruent to both the Big Society and Localism agendas, and the emphasis on prevention, protection and community safety, together with the requirement for Integrated Risk Management Planning also remained.

The LGA had already been promoting sector led improvement and regulation as a replacement for the Audit Commission’s CAA³ (LGA 2011) and in December 2010 the four *Fire Futures* reports looking at the fire sectors role, efficiency, accountability and its work with other emergency services was published. The government, in its response to the *Fire Futures* reports in April 2011, made it clear it would only take ideas forward in the light of its emerging policy for public sector reform and the localism agenda (DCLG 2011). This anticipated the forthcoming white paper on public sector reform (Cabinet Office 2011) and the development of sector-led improvement, which both the LGA and the government had supported in their evidence and response to the Select Committee examining the decision to abolish the Audit Commission (House of Commons 2011).

By the time the select committee published its report in July 2011, the closure of the Audit Commission was a practical inevitability (as acknowledged by the committee itself) as the vast majority of staff had already found alternative employment, although the commission was only formally closed on the 31st March 2015. It is interesting to note that in the final sessions of the select committee hearings, and whilst

acknowledging the inevitability of closure, various witnesses⁴ were asked directly whether they supported the abolition of the commission including the Chief Fire Officers Association's (CFOA) witness Peter Holland⁵. On behalf of CFOA and the sector, he responded that whilst there were caveats, the commission had on balance been a positive benefit to the service and should be retained and reformed rather than abolished (House of Commons 2011).

The *Open Public Services White Paper* (Cabinet Office 2011) published on 1st July 2011 was the coalition government's flagship policy for public sector reform. It drew a distinction between three types of public services and the governments' intentions towards them.

- Individual or personal services used by people on an individual basis
- Neighbourhood services defined as being provided very locally on a collective rather than an individual basis, and
- Commissioned services – whether commissioned by central or local government – services that cannot be devolved to communities or individuals.

Fire and Rescue services are not mentioned in the white paper, but in the fourth national framework that follows in 2012 (DCLG 2012) it is clear that they are being treated as commissioned services with the Fire and Rescue Authority being the commissioners and the Fire and Rescue Services being the main providers of services⁶.

In commissioned services, there would be separate commissioners and providers, open commissioning and credible independent accreditation of providers. Commissioners are held to account by users and citizens. Providers are held to account through a combination of mutually reinforcing choice (a market of alternative providers), voice (the public as so-called 'armchair' auditors) and transparency mechanisms (more publically available data and information) depending on the service being provided. External audit and inspection would ensure that commissioners and providers both meet acceptable standards and have appropriate financial controls in place.

In 2010 Eric Pickles had also announced the closure of the Government Regional Offices (2010d) that formerly hosted the Regional Resilience Forums established by the 2004 Civil Contingencies Act. Government Regional Offices had been tasked to compile and continually review regional risk registers and to co-ordinate the Local Resilience Forums and community risk registers across the regions. They also co-ordinated with the equivalent national resilience arrangements, including the national risk assessment (Cabinet Office 2015) particularly at times of national or widespread emergencies. The loss of this key part of the infrastructure was particularly exposed in the winter floods of 2013-14 (Murphy 2014), and by the outbreaks of avian influenza ('bird flu') in February 2015.

In summary, the period from May 2010 to July 2012, was dominated by austerity and proposals for reductions in public expenditure, in an attempt to cut the structural deficit and reduce the size of the state. This was accompanied by measures to introduce market mechanisms to reform public services exemplified by the 2012 Health and Social Care Act which led to the extensive (and disastrous) reorganisation of the National Health Service in England. The DCLG were enthusiastic implementers of these policies and Fire and Rescue Services, like all of the services under the department's portfolio, suffered the consequences.

The national framework and the Knight Review.

The fourth National Framework for Fire and Rescue Services was published in July 2012 with an 'open ended duration'. It was specifically addressed to Fire Authorities, as commissioners of services, rather than the whole service or sector. It was much shorter than its predecessors and covered only England as devolution by this time had transferred responsibility for services in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to their respective parliaments. When dealing with issues and responsibilities arising from the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, the framework is careful to refer to the 'national' roles and responsibilities of

both the government and the fire and rescue services. In its desire to avoid saying anything about Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland it actually almost obfuscates the situation.

In his ministerial foreword, Bob Neil summed up the new approach in the following extracts:

“In addition to their historic role of putting out fires and coming to our rescue in other emergencies, fire and rescue authorities also work on fire prevention:

- organising home fire safety visits for older people and vulnerable
- supporting regulatory compliance in the business community and helping minimise the impact of fire on the economy.

There are new challenges. Fire and rescue authorities need to be able to deal with the continuing threat of terrorism, the impact of climate change, and the impacts of an ageing population, against the need to cut the national deficit

The National Framework will continue to provide an overall strategic direction to fire and rescue authorities, but will not seek to tell them how they should serve their communities. They are free to operate in a way that enables the most efficient delivery of their services. This may include working collaboratively with other fire and rescue authorities, or with other organisations, to improve public safety and cost effectiveness. Ultimately, it is to local communities, not Government, that fire and rescue authorities are accountable”.
(DCLG2012 p 6)

Introducing the framework in July 2012 was one of the final acts that Bob Neil undertook in government as, after the summer recess, he was replaced in September 2012 by Brandon Lewis MP.

Delivery and Performance: Sector led improvement, Fire Peer Challenge and Operational Assessments

As mentioned above, the new coalition and the Local Government Association were committed to a sector led improvement and regulatory system since the 2010 election, with local government and DCLG in the vanguard. The dismantling of the previous system between 2010 and 2012 compelled both the local government sector and the fire and rescue sector to take more responsibility for their own regulation and performance. Chapter 5 evaluates the effectiveness of fire peer challenge and the operational assessment of Fire and Rescue Services, the key elements of the sector’s new approach to performance improvement, whilst Chapters 13 and 14 examine some of these issues in Scotland and Wales from a devolved government perspective.

The next part of this chapter will look at the ‘improved’ public assurance, accountability and transparency arrangements that were supposed to be the purpose and hallmark of the new arrangements for commissioned services as envisioned by the coalition governments’ public service reform program introduced by the Open Public Services White Paper and delivered under the 2012 National Framework. At the time of writing these remain in place although, as explained in Chapter 17, central government responsibility for Fire and Rescue Services in England was transferred back to the Home Office in January 2016, and legislative proposals for the transfer of local governance, policy and delivery to elected local mayors or police and crime commissioners are well advanced⁷.

Public and stakeholder assurance arrangements between 2010 and 2015⁸

The development of the public assurance regime in Fire and Rescue Services, under the Conservative led coalition government (which includes the performance management arrangements discussed in more detail in chapter 5, and accountability arrangements in Chapters 8, and 13 to 15) require four inter-related yet independent key areas to be examined. These areas collectively give an indication of the quality, quantity, scope, and maturity of the prevailing arrangements for public and stakeholder assurance. Each is

a necessary element of the assurance landscape but each on its own is insufficient to provide an overall judgement.

The following analysis could be criticised for over-emphasising horizontal and top down assurance, but as one of the prime objectives of the nation state is to protect its citizens, emergency (and security) services, have historically and predominantly been scrutinised hierarchically and vertically. This has been the case within the UK in the past, with the prime responsibility falling to the national government. It is almost certain that the devolution of police, fire and ambulance services to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and the on-going devolution of police and fire service to elected mayors and police and crime commissioners will alter these responsibilities and relationships in the future. The four key factors are:

- a) The adequacy of the accountability and transparency arrangements in place for the service, at national and local levels;
- b) The development and maturity of the data and intelligence that forms the evidential base for the development and deployment of policy and practice within the service;
- c) The adequacy of the service's governance, its leadership and the extent of the strategic alignment within the service and with its key partners such as local government, ambulance and police services; and
- d) The adequacy of public reporting, public scrutiny and the arrangements for intervention in the event of failing or significantly under-performing delivery.

Accountability and Transparency

Hood's (2010) seminal paper examined the complex inter-relationships between accountability and transparency and rhetorically likened them to Siamese twins, matching parts or an awkward couple. He appreciated that they had a complicated overlapping relationship to one another, which distinguished him from the Secretary of State Eric Pickles, who repeatedly sought to claim that greater transparency was the same as greater accountability (DCLG 2012)⁹.

The Secretary of State was however accountable to Parliament for the overall stewardship of fire and rescue services in England between 2010 and 2015. The DCLG's Accounting Officer aka, the Permanent Secretary was accountable to Parliament for the stewardship of resources allocated via DCLG to the 46 Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRA). The Accounting Officer provides assurance to Parliament that grants made by the DCLG are properly accounted for by FRAs, and should ensure regularity, propriety and value for money or, if necessary, advise the Secretary of State on the use of intervention powers.

The roles and responsibilities of the local FRA are contained in the third Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (DCLG 2012) published in July 2012. Individual FRAs oversee the policy and service delivery of a fire and rescue Service. The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) is responsible for the day-to-day command of the FRS and is accountable to the FRA.

Financial provision for fire and rescue is provided through the Local Government Departmental Expenditure Limit (DEL) a local share of business rates under the rates retention scheme, a levy on Council Tax, and fees and charges from services such as training.

Financial controls includes clear responsibilities around expenditure, financial duties and rules for prudence in spending, internal checks for compliance and external checks by an independent auditor.

FRAs are currently subject to the auditing and accounting regime introduced by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, which repealed the Audit Commission Act 1998. This gives local bodies freedom to appoint their own auditors and manage their own audit arrangements. The new audit framework reflects the regulatory roles found in the Companies sector¹⁰. The NAO has produced the code of practice and supporting guidelines and enhanced existing programmes of value for money examinations to carry out a small number of studies to take in local delivery. In November 2015 the

NAO produced both a Local Government Report *Financial stability of fire and rescue services* and a Value for Money study *Variation in spending by fire and rescue authorities 2011-12 to 2013-14* (NAO 2015a 2015b)

Since 2010, the FRS performance management regime, including arrangements for assessing value for money, have in practice been focused around the LGA sector led improvement approach, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. The former independent Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate was decommissioned in 2007, although the NAO report mentioned above and the subsequent Public Accounts Committee hearings based on the report, have called for its restitution. England and Wales are unusual as countries in being without independent fire inspectorates (in Scotland and Northern Ireland the role was retained). The Chief Fire Service Advisor (CFSA) role was created in 2007, and is often mistaken for Her Majesty's Inspectorate. The CFSA is a civil servant subject to the civil service code and answerable to the department the (DCLG between 2010 and 2015 and the Home Office since 2016).

The Local Authority (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 were intended to introduce greater transparency and openness into council meetings and also apply to FRAs. Members of the public can only be refused admission in limited circumstances and they must be able to access documents that relate to meetings and executive decisions.

DCLG's *Code of Recommended Practice on Data Transparency*, also known as the *Local Government Transparency Code 2014* also applies to the FRA. As such, it lists a range of datasets that FRSs must make available to the public. These include publication of annual accounts and each line of spending worth over £500. It also comprises senior employee salaries, including the officer's name (with consent), job description, responsibilities, budgets and number of staff. In addition, it includes councillor allowances and expenses, copies of contracts and tenders, and grants to the voluntary and social enterprise sectors. Furthermore, it includes policies, performance and external audit, and covers key inspections and key indicators on fiscal and financial position.

Evidence, Information and the capacity to interrogate and analyse

A coalition government proposal to outsource the collection, analysis and reporting of the government's Fire Service Statistics by DCLG in 2013 met with little enthusiasm from potential providers and has not yet been implemented. The governments 'Fire statistics', together with financial and performance databases from CFOA and CIPFA, allow for investigation and analysis of expenditure and other performance information, although the latter two are only available to subscribers.

In practice, the collection, analysis, availability, transparency, and interrogation of fire data particularly performance data by independent researchers has become increasingly difficult since 2010. This is due, in part, to the demise of the Audit Commission, which collected and publish national performance statistics and made them publically available on inter-active websites. The Commissions' national reports have been lodged in the National Archives but neither the local reports nor the data on the interactive websites are any longer available.

The Audit Commission produced 28 national reports relating specifically to fire and rescue management between 1983 and 2010, and numerous others with direct and indirect relevance. This loss of capacity has only been partially compensated for by operational research capacity and capability at the NAO, but this is much smaller and NAO databases are not interactive. Historically there has been little independent academic research capacity in the management of fire and rescue (Wankheda and Murphy, 2012).

The Fire Peer Challenge and Operational Assessment (see Chapter 5 below) commissioned by all 46 FRSs in England and Wales, or the Fire Authorities response to the reviews were initially published on the Local Governments Association website although they were withdrawn by the LGA in 2015 and only a minority are available on Authority websites.

Governance Leadership and strategic alignment

As explained in Chapter 2, the years immediately before and after the turn of the 21st century were characterised by poor governance, fragmented leadership and a lack of strategic alignment at local and national levels (Bain et al., 2002). These problems were exacerbated by the national firefighters' strike which lasted over five years from 1998 to 2003. Between 2003 and 2010 central and local government, local FRSS, CFOA, and the Audit Commission sought to re-establish collective sector leadership and facilitate performance improvement, innovation and service delivery.

The Fire and Rescue Act 2004 and the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 were the start of a period of gradual acceptance and engagement (see Chapter 3). This process was characterised by increasing strategic alignment through joined up policy and delivery, improved performance management, and investment in infrastructure and system support. Although the development of tools, techniques, systems and interventions were always some way behind developments in the equivalent health and local government regimes, they were rapidly progressing and generally considered to be ahead of FRSS worldwide. For example, the Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) process received international recognition with Scotland (Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, 2013), Ireland (National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Services, 2012), Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and others, gradually adopting similar approaches or parts of the process.

Since 2010 this collective leadership has fragmented, with significant loss of capacity and coherence, accompanied by a loss of collective vision thereby compromising strategic alignment (Murphy 2015, NAO 2015a, 2015b). The coalition government significantly reduced its own role, as demonstrated in the fourth National Framework (DCLG, 2012). As in previous periods of the FRS's history (Raynsford 2016), leadership and collective responsibility has largely been left to CFOA and there is a clear risk to individual and collective aspirations for efficiency and value for money (Knight 2013, NAO 2015a, 2015b). Although the LGA has offered a Financial Health Check (LGA, 2013) under their sector led improvement programme since 2013, there is no evidence that this has been embraced or had an impact in FRSS. In practice FRSS (and FRAs) in England have been driven by the theory and practice of short-term cutback management throughout the period of the Coalition Government.

Fire Services deal with short and long-term emergencies with other blue light services on a day-to-day basis. The FRA's role is to finance and equip the response to incidents and emergencies and to allow the service to collaborate and deliver strategic and operational efficiencies. It is the local resilience forums that make inter-agency operational response efficient and effective. The emergency services generally, including FRSS, have very mature efficient and effective cross-organisational emergency planning, resilience and interoperability capability at an operational response level developed and this has improved continually since modern emergency services were established after the Second World War. The national interoperability has similarly improved since the Civil Contingencies Act in 2004, however regional planning, co-ordination and response capacity was lost when Regional Risk Registers, Regional Resilience Forums and Regional Government Officers were closed in 2012.

Reporting Scrutiny and intervention

The Chief Fire and rescue Advisor provides strategic advice and guidance to ministers, civil servants, and FRAs on the structure, organisation and performance of FRAs and FRSS, although he has no reporting obligations to Parliament or to the public other than through the DCLG. Apart from annual financial reporting, individual FRSS have no reporting responsibilities, other than statistical returns to Parliament, DCLG, the Secretary of State or other regulators or agencies. Their financial reporting responsibilities are enshrined in the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

The Open Government White Paper (Cabinet Office, 2011) and the third National Framework for England (DCLG, 2012) clearly differentiated the responsibilities of FRAs and FRSS along the 'commissioner provider' split, and scrutiny is largely exercised at the local level through local government structures, regulations and practices. However, there is no demonstrable evidence that this has made any

significant impact in practice, and no discernible impact on either the amount or quality of scrutiny by FRAs.

The relevant inter-agency and collaborative working arrangements are 'horizontally' scrutinised in Local Resilience Forums that emerged out of long standing local emergency planning groups; Health and Wellbeing Boards, that are of relatively recent origin and therefore untested in their 'scrutiny' role, and Community Safety Partnerships.

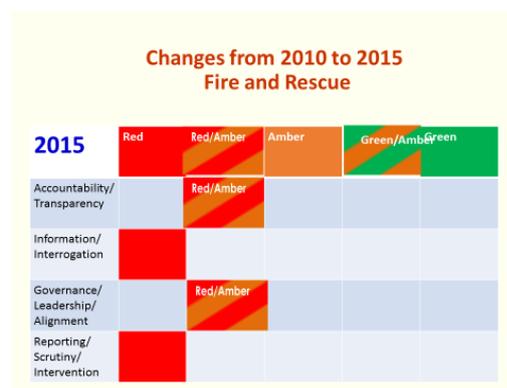
In terms of expenditure and budgeting, all FRSs are able to benchmark through CIPFA's interactive financial database and its interrogative tools. In terms of external scrutiny however, the FRAs and FRSs have considerable discretion to determine what is reported to the public, when and in what detail. As a result their reports and the data behind them are variable, and not particularly useful for the purposes of conducting meaningful comparisons across organisations and scrutinising their activities as Murphy et al (2012) found in a previous survey for Nottinghamshire FRS and more recently for the NAO.

FRAs and FRSs are subject to the duty of Best Value, and the Secretary of State for DCLG has broad intervention powers conferred by the Local Government Act 1999 and the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. Section 28 of the latter Act provides powers to obtain information or to take action in any circumstances where central government may wish to have an investigation or assessment. This could include a major fire incident investigation or where there are serious concerns regarding the discharging of their functions or even corporate failure. Sections 22 and 23 allow the Secretary of State to intervene if there is a risk that a FRA/FRS will fail, provided they consult and demonstrate why this risk is imminent or serious. The Secretary of State is required to have regard to the updated *Protocol on government intervention action on fire and rescue authorities in England* (DCLG, 2013) although this has not been used to date. As explained in more detail in Chapter central governments' expectation is that sector partners will provide initial support. In other words, ministers would only intervene in the most serious of failures, or if sector-support is refused or incapable of turning around the under-performance.

Summary

A report commissioned by the NAO from Ferry and Murphy (2015) assessed the quality and effectiveness of public assurance being provided across locally delivered public services including Fire and Rescue Services. This found that accountability and transparency were generally poorer in 2015 than it was in 2010. The performance management regime was fragmenting, the evidence base diminishing and there had been a significant loss of capacity and capability in the improvement infrastructure and support available to fire services. Major capital funding arrangements (principally the Public Finance Initiative) remained inflexible and expensive, and financial and resource planning was generally short-term and conformance dominated. As Knight (2013) had found earlier, and the NAO later suspected (NAO 2015a 2015b), potential inter-agency efficiency gains were not being captured still less maximised.

In an attempt to illustrate the historical and sector changes and the relative positions of the various services they produced a series of diagrams which showed the level of public assurance and the likely risk to achieving value for money (as defined in traditional terms in relation to economy, efficiency and effectiveness). The relevant diagrams for Fire and Rescue Services are reproduced below. A 'green' rating represented best available practice plus known achievable potential improvements as existing in 2010. The (by then) new Conservative governments' immediate response was to transfer responsibility back to the Home Office in January 2016. This period will be discussed later in Chapter 17.



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Notes

1. There is now an academic journal entitled Resilience Journal
2. This was the first of 15 budgets delivered by the Chancellor between 2010 and 2016, before his dismissal in July 2016
3. There had been a leak and considerably press coverage about the potential abolition of Audit Commission prior to this official statement
4. By end of 13 years of new labour administration, the conservatives overwhelmingly controlled the LGA and dominated the response to the Conservative led coalitions policy and the invited submissions and appearances at the DCLG Select Committee hearings.
5. Later to become the second Chief Fire Adviser to the DCLG. The first was Sir Ken Knight.
6. Prior to the fourth national framework, government legislation and guidance normally referred to services or to authorities and services collectively – for the first time this framework was exclusively addressed to Fire and Rescue Authorities. The change was also meant to facilitate the private sector in the potential supply of services to authorities.
7. At the time of writing the Crime and Policing Bill, which will facilitate Police and Crime Commissioners or Elected Mayors assuming responsibility for the governance of Fire and Rescue Services, had reached its third reading in parliament. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 17.
8. This remaining parts of this chapter draw heavily on reports by the authors commissioned by the NAO. The first was commissioned and (part) funded by the NAO and any errors or omissions are the responsibility of the authors. The NAO does not necessarily endorse the findings of the work.
9. This statement from the Secretary of State is no longer available and was later corrected and 'updated' on the governments websites on 8th May 2015 (DCLG 2015).

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