



Scottish Information Commissioner's response to Scottish Government Consultation

Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland 2016

The Scottish Information Commissioner responded to questions 1 and 13 of the Scottish Government's consultation on the Fire and Rescue Framework <https://consult.scotland.gov.uk/fire-and-rescue/fire-and-rescue-framework> on 24 May 2016.

Question 1 response

The Scottish Information Commissioner promotes and enforces Freedom of Information legislation in Scotland (for more information about her role go to: <http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/home/AboutSIC/AboutCommissioner.aspx>).

The Commissioner's functions cover both the public's right to ask for and be given information held by Scottish public authorities, and good practice by authorities. Through her work she supports the openness, transparency and accountability of public bodies.

This response refers specifically to strategic aim 9 of the draft framework, Effective Governance and Performance.

The aim, as worded, refers to enabling "effective public reporting". Had you considered making more explicit reference to making openness, accountability and transparency integral to governance and performance management, which in turn will inform reporting arrangements and enable effective scrutiny of the organisation by a range of stakeholders?

See also the response to question 13.

Question 13 response

This response continues the theme highlighted in response to question 1.

The International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector (available at <http://www.cipfa.org/policy-and-guidance/standards/international-framework-good-governance-in-the-public-sector>) states:

"Governance comprises the arrangements put in place to ensure that the intended outcomes for stakeholders are defined and achieved."

The fundamental function of good governance in the public sector is to ensure that entities achieve their intended outcomes while acting in the public interest at all times.

Acting in the public interest requires:

- A. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.*
- B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.”*

The services that Fire and Rescue provide are both very much in the public interest, and by their nature of interest to, and under considerable scrutiny by, a range of stakeholders. We suggest adding to the text already included to highlight that openness and engagement are integral to governance and performance management of the organisation, and will support the organisation in demonstrating to stakeholders that services are delivered with integrity etc.

The benefits of this to Fire and Rescue are that it will give a strategic level commitment to having a commitment of openness that at operational level will encourage an open and discursive approach. It will also inform the management of risk in terms of how the organisation discharges its duties in relation to publication of information (not just under FOI but also other statute or codes), and in particular the organisation’s approach to balancing issues such as disclosure of information with other considerations such as health and safety and security

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