



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

Changing the name of Bedfordshire and Luton combined fire authority

Consultation

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Consultation question

Consultees are invited to respond to the following question:

Do you have any comments on the amendment of the *Bedford Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1996* to enable the Bedfordshire and Luton Combined Fire Authority to change their name to Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority?

Responses are required by **25 September 2012** and should be sent to:

fsed6@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Summary

1. This consultation seeks views from selected bodies (listed in Annex) on the proposal of Bedfordshire and Luton Combined Fire Authority to change its name to Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority.
2. The change of name requires an amendment to the *Bedfordshire Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1996*. The procedure for such an amendment is set out within section 4 of the *Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004*. (See Legal Implication for details) Non-agreement among directly affected sector partners would necessitate an inquiry.

Background

3. The Local Government Review of 1997 encouraged the consideration of combined fire authorities where county or borough councils were re-organised as a consequence of the creation of unitary authorities.
4. Following this, a combined fire authority covering Bedfordshire County Council and Luton Borough Council was formed by means of the *Bedfordshire Fire Service (Combination Scheme) Order 1996*, with members from both Bedfordshire County Council and Luton Borough Council. The Combination Order, which came fully into force on 1 April 1997, established a combined fire authority for the two areas, called the Bedfordshire and Luton Combined Fire Authority.
5. However, since that date, two new unitary councils (Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council) have replaced Bedfordshire County Council, which has been abolished. This means that the fire authority's name is no longer wholly representative of its constituent bodies.

Proposal for name change

6. Following discussions, members decided in favour of a change of name for the authority to Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority.
7. Consequently, the Department for Communities and Local Government received a letter from Bedfordshire and Luton Combined Fire Authority requesting that an amendment to the *Bedfordshire Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1996* be undertaken which will enable the authority's name to be changed.
8. The change of name has received the full endorsement and support of Central Bedfordshire Council, Bedford Borough Council, and Luton Borough Council.

Legal implications

9. The Bedfordshire Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1996 made a scheme which combined the areas of the council of the borough of Luton and Bedfordshire County Council into a combined fire area. The scheme established a fire authority for the combined area known as the Bedfordshire and Luton Combined Fire Authority.
10. Changing the name of the fire and rescue authority requires an amendment to the Combination Order itself. Section 4(4) to (7) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 allows the Secretary of State to amend a combination order following consultation with:
 - any fire and rescue authority likely to be affected
 - any other authority that would be a fire and rescue authority but for the combination
 - any local authority that has an area covered by the combined fire and rescue authority
 - any other person he considers appropriate
11. The Secretary of State is required to hold an inquiry before making a combination order, unless the proposal is uncontentious (i.e. all relevant authorities agree to the change).

Financial implications

12. Bedfordshire and Luton Combined Fire Authority receive revenue support grant in their name from the Department. In order for this fire and rescue authority to continue to receive this grant under its new name, it is important that the legislation changing the name be in place before the beginning of the financial year 2013-2014.
13. The fire authority have stated that the cost impacts of the name change could be kept to a minimum by replacing items as and when they were needed rather than at once and across the board, although there would necessarily be some more immediate costs of the name change.

Consultation

14. As required by the 2004 Act, this consultation seeks the views of the authorities' and bodies stated below to the following question:

Do you have any comments on the amendment of the *Bedford Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1996* to enable the Bedfordshire and Luton Combined Fire Authority to change their name to Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority?

Annex

Authorities consulted

- Neighbouring fire and rescue authorities which may be affected:
 - Buckinghamshire (Combined) Fire and Rescue Authority
 - Cambridgeshire (Combined) Fire and Rescue Authority
 - Hertfordshire County Council
 - Northamptonshire County Council

- Other authorities that would be an fire and rescue authority but for the combination:
 - Central Bedfordshire Council
 - Bedford Borough Council
 - Luton Borough Council

- Any Local Authority that has an area covered by the Combined fire and rescue authority:
 - Central Bedfordshire Council
 - Bedford Borough Council
 - Luton Borough Council

- Any other persons considered appropriate:
 - Local Government Association
 - Chief Fire Officers' Association

Consultation principles – guidance

[The Civil Service Reform Plan](#) commits the Government to improving policy making and implementation with a greater focus on robust evidence, transparency and engaging with key groups earlier in the process.

As a result the Government is improving the way it consults by adopting a more proportionate and targeted approach, so that the type and scale of engagement is proportional to the potential impacts of the proposal. The emphasis is on understanding the effects of a proposal and focusing on real engagement with key groups rather than following a set process.

The key Consultation Principles are:

- departments will follow a range of timescales rather than defaulting to a 12-week period, particularly where extensive engagement has occurred before
- departments will need to give more thought to how they engage with and consult with those who are affected
- consultation should be 'digital by default', but other forms should be used where these are needed to reach the groups affected by a policy
- the principles of the Compact between government and the voluntary and community sector will continue to be respected

The new Consultation Principles will be promoted within Whitehall now, and the public will begin to see the new guidance take effect in early autumn 2012.

The guidance below replaces the [Code of Practice on Consultation](#) issued in July 2008 on the BIS website.