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Status	<b>This Circular provides information on a consultation on Council Tax demand notice regulations including efficiency information.</b>		

# Consolidation of Council Tax Demand Notice Regulations including efficiency information: consultation

## Issued by:

**Katy Baldwin**

**Local Transformation, Improvement & Efficiency**

## Addressed to:

**The Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority  
The Chief Executive of the County Council  
The Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority  
The Clerk to the Combined Fire and Rescue Authority  
The Commissioner of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority  
The Chief Fire Officer**

## Please forward to:

**Chairs of Regional Management Boards  
Directors of Finance  
Treasurers**

## Summary

This Circular provides information on a consultation on Council Tax demand notice regulations including efficiency information.

## For further information, contact:

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## Consolidation of Council Tax Demand Notice Regulations including efficiency information: consultation

### 1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Fire and Rescue Circular brings to the attention of England's Fire and Rescue Services the publication of a consultation on the consolidation of council tax demand notice regulations, which would have the effect of making the inclusion of local authorities' efficiency information an ongoing requirement.

### 2.0 Background

2.1 Last September, the Department launched a public consultation on whether to require the inclusion of information about the efficiency of local authorities<sup>1</sup> on council tax bills and in the material that accompanies bills. The intention was to increase transparency on efficiency, to help people understand what is being done to improve value for money, and enable them to challenge their local authorities to do better if necessary.

2.2 In December 2008, the Department announced the Government's decision to amend the Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rating (Demand Notice) (England) Regulations 2003 (SI 2003/2613)<sup>2</sup> – the 2003 Regulations – so as to give effect to that requirement for the 2009-10 billing round, and gave an undertaking to review the outcome. We have now completed a survey of practitioners about their experience this year.

2.3 In preparing new Regulations (incorporating the lessons learned from this year's implementation) to make the requirement to include efficiency information on and with bills applicable for 2010 -11 and subsequent financial years, the Department considers that it would be sensible to consolidate the council tax aspects of the 2003 Regulations. This will create separate sets of Regulations for council tax and non-domestic rates billing.

### 3.0 Consultation

3.1 The consultation published today, at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/counciltaxdemandnoticeconsult> seeks views on the Government's proposed policy for 2010-11 and subsequent financial years in relation to the provision of efficiency information on and with council tax bills. Key policy questions for consultation are:

- Whether information showing forecast efficiencies as a percentage of an authority's baseline expenditure is helpful for the public; and,
- Whether to include police efficiency information on the same basis as that applied for councils and fire & rescue authorities

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<sup>1</sup> That consultation covered councils and fire & rescue authorities, but indicated the intention to include police authorities in the requirement later.

<sup>2</sup> Available at: [www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/uksi\\_20032613\\_en.pdf](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/uksi_20032613_en.pdf)

- 3.2 It is important to be clear that this consultation **does not** seek to reopen the principle of whether efficiency information should be required on and with council tax bills. The Government's view is that this principle was thoroughly considered last year. Instead the purpose of this consultation exercise is to ensure that local authorities have an opportunity to comment on specific aspects of the Government's proposed policy, that the new Regulations effectively consolidate the 2003 Regulations in so far as they concern council tax, and that the new Regulations place efficiency information on an appropriate footing for future years.
- 3.3 It should also be noted that, with the exception of certain provisions in relation to efficiency information, the draft Regulations are for the most part a consolidation of the 2003 Regulations without any change to the underlying policy.

### 4.0 Impact on Fire & Rescue Authorities

- 4.1 Adoption of the proposed new Regulations is intended to put on a sustainable footing the provisions for the inclusion of efficiency information in council tax bills as announced in December 2008.
- 4.2 In other words, information on FRA efficiency savings would be required to be published on and with council tax demand notices on a continuing basis in a similar way to that which applied for the 2009-10 council tax demand notices, but with the addition of the figure for actual cumulative efficiency gains achieved for the year two years prior to the bill, as previously announced.

### 5.0 Responding to the Consultation

- 5.1 In pursuing this consultation, we are adhering to the requirements of the *Code of Practice on Consultation*.<sup>3</sup> This consultation is open for a period of twelve weeks commencing 22 July 2009. Responses to this consultation must be received by **14 October 2009**.
- 5.2 If you choose to submit a response to this consultation, please make clear when the response is being made formally on behalf of an organisation or group of organisations.
- 5.3 Please submit your response, preferably by email to:  
[LTIE@communities.qsi.gov.uk](mailto:LTIE@communities.qsi.gov.uk)

or:

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file47158.pdf>

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