



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE**
Working together to improve community safety

Delivering the best fire service to you

Have your say on proposals for further collaboration up to a full merger between Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service and Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service



Foreword

We would like to thank you for your interest in this consultation. We're asking for your comments on a proposal for Cambridgeshire and Suffolk fire and rescue services to work together more closely in the future. This includes an option to create a fully merged fire and rescue service covering the two counties if it will generate significant financial savings and other organisational benefits.

Over the years, we have worked hard to deliver a fire and rescue service that you value, at a cost which council tax payers can afford to pay. We are delighted that the public continues to hold the fire and rescue service in such high regard, and we want to continue to provide an outstanding service to people who live in, work in and visit Cambridgeshire.

Like all public services, we are facing increasing pressures to manage the fire service with less money and further significant budget cuts are expected beyond 2015. Our priority is to protect people by safeguarding front line services as much as we can. By collaborating further, or merging with another fire and rescue service we could potentially make savings in management and support areas, without having to cut the front line.

This consultation document outlines a proposal for Cambridgeshire and Suffolk fire



Graham Stagg,
Chief Fire Officer



Councillor Fred Brown,
Chairman of the Fire Authority

and rescue services to work together more closely in the future, potentially through to a fully merged fire and rescue service, while retaining the excellent service that local people value.

We're asking you to have your say on this proposal in principle. Your views will be incorporated into the full business case which will be presented to members of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority and Suffolk County Council's Cabinet and Full Council in the New Year.

You can let us know your views by completing the questionnaire on page nine or by contacting us by using the contact information on the back page. You can also visit www.cambsfire.gov.uk for more information and to fill in the questionnaire online.

I hope you will take this opportunity to have your say on the fire and rescue service you want to see in the future.

“ Our priority is to protect people by safeguarding front line services as much as we can. ”



Background

In October 2012, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority and Suffolk County Council's Cabinet reviewed plans by Cambridgeshire and Suffolk fire and rescue services, which explained two proposals to work closer together.



The first proposal was for greater collaboration between the two fire services, which would involve:

- Sharing, where possible, functions and procedures
- Making, where possible, savings in support areas
- Maintaining individual fire authorities and senior management teams.

The second proposal involved a full merger between the two fire services.

Both authorities agreed to carry out more work to consider the opportunities and challenges associated with both options and to fully establish if any significant savings can be made. This work will culminate in the production of a full business case in the New Year.

At this stage, we are asking for your views on the principle of further collaboration, up to a full merger, between the two fire services, if the business case reveals this option would result in significant savings that could help protect front line services from future budget cuts.

The consultation will run over a 12 week period from 22 October 2012 to 14 January 2013.

No decision has been made yet to merge the two fire and rescue services, it will depend on a number of key factors which will be included in the business case. These are:

- Confirming future government funding arrangements for a merged fire and rescue service
- Assessing the impact that any changes will have on the quality and resilience of the service provided to the public
- Estimating efficiency savings and transition costs
- Reviewing public consultation



Why are Cambridgeshire and Suffolk fire and rescue services investigating further collaboration, up to a full merger?

In the last two years both fire services have already introduced many changes to manage the reduction in Government funding set out in the Comprehensive Spending review in 2010.

Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS) has predicted it needs to find a minimum of £4.2 million over the next four years following changes to its funding formula. At this level of saving, there would be no impact on front line service delivery.

However, it could need to find an extra £2 million on top of this figure (a total of about £6 million), or potentially even more, if the spending formula for allocating fire service funding is changed and falls unfavourably for Cambridgeshire in 2013/14 and 2014/15.

Cambridgeshire and Suffolk fire and rescue services continue to be two of the most cost effective fire services in the country. For many years, both services have been two of the most cost effective fire services in the country, and this continues to be the case.

Indications from central government are that further significant budget cuts are expected through to 2020. With the major savings both services have made already, there are few options remaining to make further savings without impacting on front line services. Therefore both services are working together to see if collaborating, or merging completely, would generate further savings that may offset the pressure to make cuts to the front line.

Both fire services have already worked together to open a Combined Fire Control in Huntingdon in 2011 to take 999 calls and mobilise fire engines and officers. There is a good history of partnership working between the two

authorities and building on this will benefit local communities and firefighters alike. The proposals outlined in this document aim to safeguard the front line as far as possible from the impact of funding reductions. The key aims for any changes would be to:

- Minimise future financial pressure on taxpayers
- Maintain front line service delivery and reduce costs associated with management, support arrangements and inefficient working practices
- Improve organisational resilience and performance
- Meet the needs of the public and our partners such as the police and ambulance services.

However, these aims will be met only if Government funding does not continue to decline in the same way it has in this current Comprehensive Spending Review period. If it does, the cuts may well impact on the front line.

What would the merger mean in practice?

A merger between the two fire services would mean the following:

- Sharing resources and functions across across both fire services fire service
- Managing the services through a single senior management team reporting to a single authority representative of all the constituent authorities – in other words, one fire and rescue service covering both counties.



In addition to a shared Combined Fire Control centre, the two counties share much in common, including their geography, resources, fire stations, people and budgets. A merged fire and rescue service would remain accountable to local people, as elected members from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and Suffolk would make up the single Fire Authority.

What will the final decision depend on?

The final decision on the future of both Cambridgeshire and Suffolk fire and rescue services will depend on a number of important issues being satisfactorily addressed across both services. The main areas are detailed below:

- Public and stakeholder consultation
- Financial implications
- Property arrangements
- Fleet arrangements
- Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Private Finance Initiative arrangements
- Information technology (IT) arrangements

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire and Rescue Service

- Responsible for delivering a fire and rescue service to 700,000 residents
- Attend over 8,000 incidents per year
- Made up of 28 operational fire stations, four of which are crewed full-time (24 hours a day, seven days a week), three of which are crewed during the day, either five days a week or seven days a week
- 214 wholtime firefighters and 309 on call firefighters, including 12 volunteers on call
- Work with local community groups to organise safety awareness events throughout the year



Area covered by Cambridgeshire and Suffolk

These maps show the area that would be covered by a combined Cambridgeshire and Suffolk fire and rescue service. It shows the location of fire stations.



Questions and Answers

Q Will I see any difference in the service I get from my local fire station or firefighters?

A One of the main reasons for considering a merger is to protect the front line service as much as possible; the greatest reduction will be in management, support staff arrangements and other general areas. Savings made in these areas would certainly offset the pressure to cut the front line.

Q Will local fire stations and firefighters see any difference in their working arrangements?

A There will inevitably be some minor changes to the way they work, but these are not expected to be significant and will not diminish the service they deliver to the public.

Q Would firefighters from another county be sent out to put out a fire in our area? Won't this increase attendance times?

A Firefighters already cross the border to attend incidents in areas of Cambridgeshire and Suffolk as we send the closest fire engine, irrespective of where they are. This would not change under any new proposals, nor would we expect to see any increase in attendance times.

Q Will this mean paying more council tax to fund the fire service?

A It is important that neither Cambridgeshire nor Suffolk residents are unfairly penalised. The impact on council tax brought about by any merger is not known at this stage, but residents may end up paying a little more council tax for their merged fire service. Equally, this may be the case even if the fire services are not merged.

Q How much do I currently pay in council tax for my local fire service?

A Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service is not part of the County Council and, as a stand alone Authority, it sets its own council tax level. Currently (2012/13), a Band D property owner in Cambridgeshire contributes £59.31 a year through council

tax which is around £1.14 a week for the fire and rescue service.

In Suffolk this is not clear as the council tax costs for the fire and rescue service are included in the Suffolk County Council precept (the amount the county council raises as a whole) as the fire service is run by the council.

Q How would the fire services of Cambridgeshire and Suffolk be managed and governed if the option for a full merger was agreed?

A The merged service would be managed by a single senior management team and governed by a single combined fire authority comprising elected members from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and Suffolk. The elected member ratio would be proportionate to the size of each constituent authority.

Q Would a merger mean fewer managers?

A Yes.

Q How long would it take to introduce a merger across the two services?

A If the business case for a merger is agreed, the business case would then be submitted to the Department of Communities & Local Government. Subject to the necessary parliamentary processes and government approval, a shadow combined fire authority would be established approximately six months after the business case is submitted to Government. The new combined fire authority would be in place in the April following Government approval. It would then take a further three to five years to fully merge the service and drive out all potential efficiencies.

Q Why are Cambridgeshire and Suffolk looking at merging with each other and not other fire services they neighbour?

A Cambridgeshire and Suffolk already share a Combined Fire Control and there are also many other areas of similarity which



supports a natural alignment of the two services. This does of course not prevent either Cambridgeshire or Suffolk from further collaborative opportunities with neighbouring services.

Q Why are you not considering collaborating with other emergency services – the police or ambulance service?

A The similarities between neighbouring fire services present greater opportunities than those with other emergency services. There is already some collaboration in both counties with both the police and ambulance services, such as sharing stations and facilities, and there is no reason why this would not continue under a merged Cambridgeshire and Suffolk fire and rescue service.

Q What would happen if a merger is not recommended?

A If a merger does not go ahead then both fire and rescue services will seek opportunities for greater collaboration to make financial savings and improve organisational effectiveness and resilience.

Q What would happen if the merger is not agreed or the proposed merger does not secure sufficient savings?

A If the merger does not go ahead, each fire service would need to manage future funding reductions independently. In this scenario, it is possible that front line services, which may otherwise remain unchanged if a merger took place, would be affected.

If the business case for a full merger does not show significant savings are likely, then a full merger will not be recommended anyway.

Q If you do not know the full financial impact at this point, why are you carrying out a public consultation now?

A We will not have the full details of any financial savings a merger may bring until the full business case is complete early next year. Understanding the costs of both services is complex and it takes time to identify where, if any, savings may be made. However, when we submit the full business case to the Government for approval - if it agreed by elected members in both counties - we must include the results of a public consultation.

Therefore, we need to consult with the public now to allow time for the results to be collated and included in the full business case in February.

We appreciate that it may be difficult to form an opinion without seeing any financial data, but we are asking for your opinion in theory – i.e. if the business case reveals significant savings can be made by merging the two fire and rescue services, would you support the move?



Have your say

Tell us what you think about the proposals outlined in this document by completing the questionnaire below, and sending it back using the FREEPOST address provided. Alternatively, you can complete the same survey online at www.surveymonkey.com/s/fireservicemerger

1. Where do you live?

Cambridgeshire Suffolk Other (please state) _____

Please state the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

2. All viable options for making savings, from collaboration through to a voluntary merger, should be explored in order to protect front line fire services from being cut.

strongly agree Tend to agree Neither agree nor disagree Tend to disagree strongly disagree

Comments:

3. I understand why Cambridgeshire and Suffolk fire and rescue service are looking to work closer together and are considering the option of a full merger.

strongly disagree Tend to disagree Neither agree nor disagree Tend to agree strongly agree

Comments:

4. In principle, I believe there is a strong case for merging Cambridgeshire and Suffolk fire and rescue services if this will produce significant savings and benefits that will minimise the impact on the front line from future budget cuts

strongly agree Tend to agree Neither agree nor disagree Tend to disagree strongly disagree

Comments:

5. Is there anything that concerns you about the proposed merger, or anything else you feel we should consider in our decision-making? (please state in the space below)

Comments:

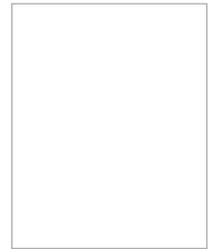
6. Would you like anyone to contact you to discuss this consultation? Yes No

7. If you answered 'yes' to the above, please enter your name and preferred contact details below

Please complete and return the separate equality monitoring questions form with your answers using the FREEPOST address provided.



Please complete and return your form online via www.cambsfire.gov.uk or by sending this form in an envelope to the FREEPOST address below. NB No stamp is needed.



Suffolk County Council

FREEPOST NAT18364

Suffolk Fire & Rescue Service,

Endeavour House,

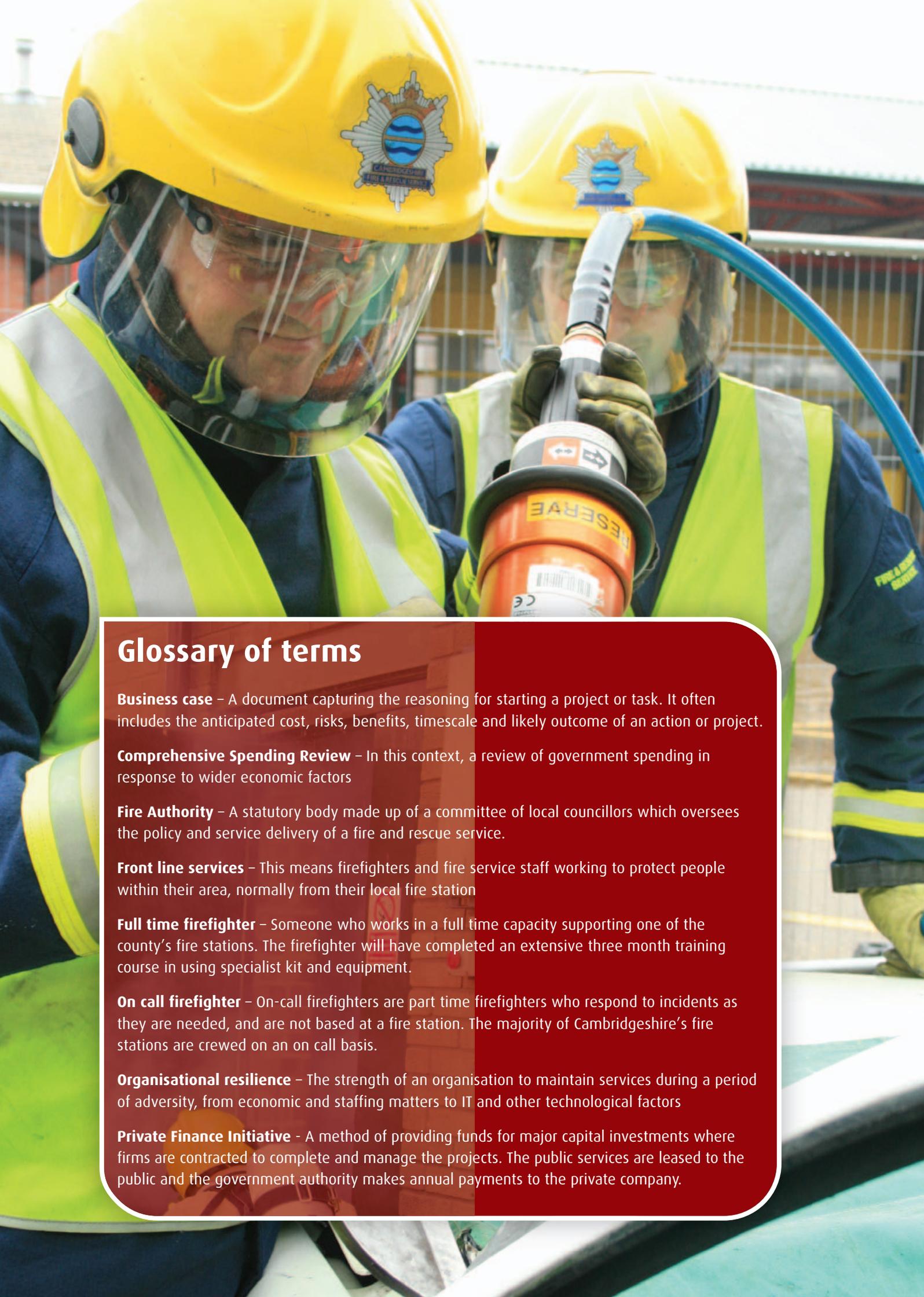
Ipswich

IP1 2BX

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Glossary of terms

Business case – A document capturing the reasoning for starting a project or task. It often includes the anticipated cost, risks, benefits, timescale and likely outcome of an action or project.

Comprehensive Spending Review – In this context, a review of government spending in response to wider economic factors

Fire Authority – A statutory body made up of a committee of local councillors which oversees the policy and service delivery of a fire and rescue service.

Front line services – This means firefighters and fire service staff working to protect people within their area, normally from their local fire station

Full time firefighter – Someone who works in a full time capacity supporting one of the county's fire stations. The firefighter will have completed an extensive three month training course in using specialist kit and equipment.

On call firefighter – On-call firefighters are part time firefighters who respond to incidents as they are needed, and are not based at a fire station. The majority of Cambridgeshire's fire stations are crewed on an on call basis.

Organisational resilience – The strength of an organisation to maintain services during a period of adversity, from economic and staffing matters to IT and other technological factors

Private Finance Initiative - A method of providing funds for major capital investments where firms are contracted to complete and manage the projects. The public services are leased to the public and the government authority makes annual payments to the private company.

Contact us

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If you need help to understand this information in another language please call **08456 066 067**

Se precisar de ajuda para ler estas informações em outra língua, por favor telefone para o número abaixo.

Portuguese

Jeżeli potrzebujesz pomocy w zrozumieniu tych informacji w swoim języku zadzwoń na podany poniżej numer.

Polish

এই লেখাটি যদি অন্য ভাষাতে বুঝতে চান তাহলে নিচের নম্বরে ফোন করুন

Bengali

بهەم زانیاری هێشتنی یه ب ت گهیهتی هه یارمەر پ ویستیت بهگهیهه بکه، وهی خوهرهه ژمارهه دی بهیهوه پههزمان کی تر تکهکیه

Kurdish

如果你需要其他語言來幫助你了解這些資訊，請撥以下電話。

Chinese

اگر شما نیاز دارید که این اطلاعات را به زبان دیگری دریافت کنید لطفاً به شماره زیر تلفن کنید.

Farsi

If you would like this information in another format, including audio or large print, please call **08456 066 067**.

