

WEST MERCIA FIRE AND RESCUE GOVERNANCE - CONSULTATION

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Joe Baker, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Regulatory Services
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton, Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services
Ward(s) Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	N/A
Key Decision / Non-Key Decision	Non key

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

This report outlines the current consultation process in respect of proposed changes to the governance arrangements for the Hereford and Worcester and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Services and invites Members to consider how the Council should respond to these proposals.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council is requested to RESOLVE to agree a response to the proposed changes to the governance arrangements for the Hereford and Worcester and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Services, to be submitted during the consultation process.

3. KEY ISSUES

Background

- 3.1 West Mercia's Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), John Campion, is currently in the process of consulting on proposed changes to the governance arrangements for both the Shropshire and the Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Services. These proposals, if approved, would result in the PCC taking over governance of both of these Fire and Rescue Services alongside his existing responsibilities in respect of West Mercia Police. The changes would also lead to the disbandment of the two local Fire and Rescue Authorities. However, Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service, Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service and West Mercia Police would remain independent organisations.
- 3.2 Prior to this consultation process an independent consultant, Beckford Consulting, was commissioned by the PCC to consider an initial business case for the governance arrangements for the Hereford and Worcester and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Services. A copy of the report produced by

Beckford Consulting, together with further information about the current consultation process, can be viewed at Appendix 1 to this report.

- 3.3 Beckford Consulting considered three potential options for the governance of the Hereford and Worcester and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Services moving forward:

Option 1: To sustain the current trajectory, whereby existing governance arrangements remain in place. Based on the evidence they gathered Beckford Consulting did not recommend that this option should be adopted.

Option 2: A single employer model, whereby the two Fire and Rescue Services would be merged with the West Mercia Police to create a single organisation that would be subject to its own governance arrangements. Again, based on the evidence they gathered Beckford Consulting did not recommend that this option should be pursued.

Option 3: Joint governance arrangements, whereby the PCC would become the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) for both of the Fire and Rescue Services and the West Mercia Police and the Fire and Rescue Authorities would cease to exist. Based on the evidence they gathered Beckford Consulting recommended that this option should be adopted.

- 3.4 Key features of the change to joint governance arrangements detailed in the consultation document include the following:
- The report suggests these changes would lead to greater collaboration between the Police and the two Fire and Rescue Services.
 - The report outlines anticipated efficiency savings that could be achieved from a single governance arrangement and through sharing resources and facilities.
 - No changes are proposed to frontline officers or services.
 - In future there would be a directly elected Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.

- 3.5 If the decision is taken to pursue these joint governance arrangements these new arrangements will come into effect from April 2018, subject to Parliamentary approval.

Financial Implications

- 3.6 There are no financial implications for the Council.

Legal Implications

- 3.7 There are no legal implications for the Council.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.8 The consultation in respect of the governance arrangements for the Fire and Rescue Services was launched in June 2017 and is due to close on 11th September 2017.
- 3.9 A copy of the questionnaire that should be completed when responding to the consultation can be accessed in the full consultation pack (please see Appendix 1). Members may wish to refer to this when considering how Council should respond to this consultation process.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.10 There are no specific customer, equalities or diversity implications for the Council arising from this report.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

There are no specific risks to the Council arising from this report.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – West Mercia Fire and Rescue Governance – Full Consultation Pack (June 2017)

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

‘Commissioner Consults on New Fire Governance Proposals’, information about the consultation process on the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia’s website accessible at <https://www.westmercia-pcc.gov.uk/commissioner-consults-on-new-fire-governance-proposals/>

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