

## **Report of the Interim Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive**

### **5. Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive Appointment – Options Analysis**

#### **Purpose of report**

1. To provide the Fire Authority with an options analysis for the appointment of a new Chief Officer / Chief Executive, with a view to recommending the best option that most effectively meets both the current and likely future challenges and needs facing the Fire Authority over the medium term.

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#### **Recommendations**

##### ***It is recommended that:***

- i) the Fire Authority considers the options analysis and associated professional recommendation to appoint an operational Chief Fire Officer; and***
- ii) there be no change to the remuneration package of the Chief Officer post at this time. However, it is recommended that a review is undertaken within 12 months of the new appointment - the outcome of which should be dependent on the individual's performance over that period.***

#### **Introduction and Background**

2. The English Fire & Rescue Service is at an important juncture in respect to its operating environment, with central government recently moving national Fire policy back to the Home Office after two decades in the local government arena – while, at the same time, legislating for closer collaboration between blue light services as well as providing legal routes for Police & Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to either get more actively involved in or take over completely the governance of Fire & Rescue Services (FRSs).
3. At a local level, HWFRS already has a strong and well-established collaborative working relationship with West Mercia Police (WMP) and has also positively engaged in collaborative working with both Shropshire FRS and Warwickshire FRS.
4. As a consequence of both the national and local contexts, the Fire Authority has a number of options to consider in terms of how it best moves forward with its vacant Chief Officer / Chief Executive position, following the recent

retirement of its Chief Fire Officer and the appointment of an interim Chief Fire Officer for six months until the end of September.

### **Current and Medium-Term Operating Context – Key Drivers:**

5. In order to best determine both the appropriateness and suitability of each potential option, it is important first for the Authority to consider the main driving factors within the current and most likely future operating environment of HWFRS. These are as follows:
  - **Duty to Collaborate** – this legal move by central government will formalise the requirement for closer working between FRSs and, most notably at this time, the Police. As previously mentioned, HWFRS has a strong track record in this area, having a well-established and jointly resourced programme of collaborative working with West Mercia Police (WMP) that has already delivered on a number of significant projects. HWFRS has also worked effectively with WMP in securing central government funding for a number of these joint initiatives. The new Chief Officer will need to proactively support and help to further develop this work, taking into account the key needs of the local communities across both counties.
  - **Established Collaboration Partnership between HWFRS & WMP** – this well-developed relationship positions HWFRS as a key partner that can positively influence the shape of wider collaboration - not only within the West Mercia Police area but also within the Warwickshire Police area (due to the two police forces' own Alliance programme). And, because of the new duty to collaborate between blue light services, HWFRS has the potential to be a strong influencing force on the future Police / Fire collaborative agenda across the wider Shropshire, Hereford & Worcester and Warwickshire areas. The new Chief Officer would need to continue to drive forward the current collaborative programme, whilst at the same time, build on the good relationships HWFRS already enjoys with WMP, Shropshire FRS and Warwickshire FRS – as well as potentially developing a closer working relationship with Warwickshire Police, through the two police services' Alliance programme.
  - **PCC Interest in Governing FRSs** – with a new PCC recently elected (and no indication yet whether he will seek to prioritise taking control of FRS's or not), it is imperative that HWFRS has a Chief Officer in place that has a detailed understanding of the Fire Sector nationally, the ability to quickly draw on the strategic Fire Sector network (e.g. Chief Fire Officers' Association / Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser) for support and advice as necessary, experience of working with the Police, as well as the ability to quickly recognise the operating context locally - so that they are able to effectively support the Fire Authority in any discussions, business case developments and/or negotiations regarding the future governance and managerial arrangements for HWFRS over the new PCC's term of office (2016-2020).

- **Recruitment Options for new West Mercia Police Chief Constable** – with the recent announcement of the retirement of the current Chief Constable and the expected delay of up to 12 months in recruitment of his successor (due to the recent PPC elections in May and the resulting priority / rationale of the new PCC to appoint the next Chief Constable), the new HWFRS Chief Officer would need to ensure the Fire Authority's interests are proactively fostered and maintained with both the new PCC and the interim Chief Constable, as well as taking into account any developments within the West Mercia / Warwickshire Police Alliance arena.
- **Public Sector Financial Austerity** – the Service needs to continue to effectively manage the identified medium-term pressures on its budgets whilst, at the same time, maintain a safe, efficient and effective range of operational and preventative services to local communities. Therefore, the Chief Officer will not only need to be able to direct the appropriate financial management strategy for the Service, but also its community risk management strategy, which will include providing professional advice the Fire Authority on both operational and corporate sustainability matters.
- **Staff Morale and Motivation** – one of HWFRS key strengths in the last five years has been its workforce's ability to maintain responsive and professional prevention, protection and emergency response services for the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire, whilst at the same time managing significant changes to the way it works, as well as how it is structured and resourced. This has resulted in a number of difficult decisions being made by the Fire Authority, which have been successfully implemented by HWFRS managers, led by SMB and the Chief Fire Officer. The new Chief Officer will need to continue this approach of constructive engagement with and challenge to the workforce – providing strong leadership, empathy and motivation during a period of extended uncertainty and change.

### **Corporate Considerations - Appointment Options:**

6. Taking into account the operating environment and key drivers highlighted above, the main appointment options for the new Chief Officer are set out below, with commentary on the respective advantages and disadvantages of each option:

#### **Option 1- Chief Fire Officer (with requisite operational command and strategic Fire Service management experience):**

##### **Advantages**

- Maintains the strategic Fire Sector experience and understanding of the current operating context (including wider UK Fire & Rescue Service / central government network experience).

- Allows HWFRS to continue to contribute towards national FRS work streams, allowing the organisation to remain well-informed of national initiatives and direction, as well as maintaining the development of the Service's strong reputation within the national FRS arena.
- Provides the security of leadership over the medium term compared to temporary or fixed term options.
- Offers the Fire Authority a professional adviser who can lead and negotiate on their behalf during a period of significant change both locally and nationally, from the background of having significant previous experience of collaborative working with other blue light services.
- Demonstrates to local communities and staff the commitment of the Fire Authority to the organisation in its current form whilst the longer term direction of the organisation is developed.
- Ensures the principal officer operational rota is maintained without having to increase the operational establishment – as well as maintaining the senior operational command resilience required to effectively manage protracted and large scale incidents, such as wide-area flooding.
- Provides potential appointees with a role that offers them the main achievement of their career goals.

#### Disadvantages

- Reluctance of suitably experienced principal officers with the requisite skills and knowledge to move away from their current FRS's – due to retirement profiles, personal circumstances and the impact of recent pension changes on their career aspirations.
- Attracting suitable candidates may require additional flexibility in relation to meeting their personal circumstances (e.g. home location within an approved area outside of the two county boundaries).
- Increasing the remuneration package to attract suitable candidates could expose the Fire Authority to claims of inappropriate management of public funds. Although this could be mitigated by undertaking a commitment to review the remuneration package within 12 months of an appointment and making this review dependent on the individual's performance over that period (i.e. in order to demonstrate the diligent and appropriate use of public funds).

#### **Option 2 - Chief Executive (without operational command or previous strategic Fire Service management experience)**

##### Advantages

- Offers the potential for a wider range of applicants across both the public and private sectors, bringing with them specific expertise in areas such as change management, mergers and private sector management approaches.

- Provides potential security of leadership over the medium term compared to temporary or fixed term options, although this may not be realised, if the successful candidate views the appointment as a short term opportunity within a wider ranging career.

#### Disadvantages

- Successful candidate could lack UK Fire Sector experience at a period of significant change.
- Local communities and staff could raise concerns over the future direction of the Service, dependent on the previous roles / experience of the appointee. This could send the wrong message to those key stakeholders at a time significant change and challenge.
- There would be a requirement to change the Authority's constitution (i.e. Part 1 – Summary & Explanation – The Authority's Staff: "The Chief Fire Officer is the principal professional adviser to the Authority as well as being in operational command of The Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service"). This change could also lead to the need to establish a separate senior command role in addition to the Chief Executive post, in order to effectively maintain the operational Principal Officer command rota.
- Potential for the successful candidate to see the appointment as a short term opportunity only within a wider ranging career.
- Successful candidate could potentially need to quickly develop UK Fire Service / central government network relationships and experience, during a time of significant change and challenge in the sector.

### **Option 3 - Joint Chief Officer or Joint Chief Executive:**

#### Advantages

- Potential to put in place one Head of Paid Service over at least two organisations, signalling the intended direction of both organisations to join up in the medium-term.
- Potential to gain support from central government due to the approach being in line with current government thinking.
- Savings in annual salary and associated costs (albeit these could be less than expected if operational command rotas need to be added to in order to maintain command group levels).

#### Disadvantages

- Sharing of such a key senior position would need to follow the strategic mandate and direction of the Fire Authority and at least one other partner to change the structure and identities of both their Services. For this to be a viable option, therefore, the strategic joint direction of both organisations would need to be well defined and signed up to by both parties (such as the clear intention for a formal alliance or merger in the foreseeable future). With no such local political agreement envisaged in the short term

between the Fire Authority and either another neighbouring Fire Authority and/or the local PCC, the reality of progressing with a joint post would be seen as a high risk option, although this risk may be mitigated by the use of a fixed term temporary option first (see below), in order to help manage the organisational and political transitions.

#### **Option 4 - Fixed Term Temporary Chief Fire Officer or Chief Executive:**

##### **Advantages**

- Leaves the Fire Authority with the option to lose / consolidate the Chief Officer or Chief Executive role within a specific time period, dependent on the future direction of the organisation regarding collaborative working, merger and / or changes in governance arrangements.
- Potential to save redundancy costs if consolidation route was taken.
- This option also has the potential to work with the Joint Chief Officer / Chief Executive option, at a later date, if managed appropriately.

##### **Disadvantages**

- Potential for appointee to view the role as a short term opportunity only and move on before any future direction is established and implemented.
- Potential difficulties in recruitment (due to the temporary nature of the post), which could have the knock-on effect of putting the Fire Authority in a weak position in terms of future discussions / negotiations with potential partners and/or the PCC.
- Timings and nature of any future organisational direction – being dependent on multiple factors and a number of other organisations' priorities – could mean the fixed-term approach would not line up with either the political and/or organisational timetable that could be practically delivered.
- Does not provide the security of leadership over the medium term compared to permanent appointment options.

#### **Conclusion**

7. Taking into account the complexity and uncertainty of the current operating environment, the key drivers and the advantages and disadvantages of the main options highlighted above, this report recommends to the Fire Authority to seek the permanent appointment of a Chief Fire Officer with the requisite operational command and strategic Fire Service management experience (Option 1).
8. This would provide the Fire Authority with the best mixture of experience, leadership and capability to effectively manage the Service over the medium term, whilst at the same time, providing it with a suitably experienced professional adviser support it during a period of significant change in the local and national operating contexts.

9. However, it is recognised that attracting suitable candidates has been difficult in the past, due to the factors highlighted above. In order to mitigate these, it is also recommended that the Fire Authority consider increasing the flexibility to accommodate potential candidates' personal circumstances (e.g. home location within an approved area outside of the two county boundaries) and/or undertake a commitment to review the remuneration package of the Chief Fire Officer within 12 months of their appointment, but make this review dependent on the individual's performance over that period, in order to demonstrate the diligent and appropriate use of public funds.

### Corporate Considerations

<b>Resource Implications</b> (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	Previously identified resources to undertake selection and recruitment process
<b>Strategic Policy Links</b> (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	The commitment to having the right people, with the right skills and training is part of 'Our Strategy'.
<b>Risk Management / Health &amp; Safety</b> (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	There is a risk to the future management of the Service if no appointment is made before the present Interim CFO's period of secondment expires.
<b>Consultation</b> (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	N/A
<b>Equalities</b> (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	The recruitment and selection process will be a fair process and will take equalities issues into account

### Supporting Information

None

### Contact Officer

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