



Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority

Full Authority

Wednesday, 22 June 2022, 10:30

Chairman: Mr C B Taylor

Vice-Chairman: Mr R J Phillips

Minutes

Members Present: Mr A Amos, Mr D Boatright, Mr B Brookes, Mr D Chambers, Mr B Clayton, Mr A Ditta, Mrs E Eyre BEM, Mr I D Hardiman, Mr Al Hardman, Mr M Hart, Mrs K Hey, Mrs E Marshall, Ms J Monk, Mr R J Morris, Mr R J Phillips, Ms L Robinson, Mr L Stark, Mr C B Taylor, Mrs D Toynbee, Mr R M Udall, Mr T Wells

360 Election of Chairman

RESOLVED that Mr C B Taylor be elected as Chairman of the Fire Authority for the ensuing year, to hold office until his successor becomes entitled to act.

361 Election of Vice Chairman

RESOLVED that Mr R J Phillips be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Fire Authority for the ensuing year, to hold office until his successor becomes entitled to act.

362 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr D Morehead, Cllr K Guthrie and Cllr N McVey.

363 Declarations of Interest (if any)

Cllr R Phillips declared that he was Vice Chair of the Firefighters Scheme Advisory Board (England and Wales), Chair of the Local Government Pension Scheme Advisory Board (England and Wales), and a member of the NJC for Fire Service (Grey Book and Green Book).

364 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman informed Members that he had attended the Fire Commission discussion on the White Paper and the Strategic Fire Alliance meeting in Shropshire.

[Cllr R Phillips entered the meeting at 10.39am].

Congratulations were passed to John Chance from Ewyas Harold who had retired after over 45 years of service.

Cllr J Hardwick was welcomed to the meeting who was attending as a member of the public prior to being appointed onto the Fire Authority.

365 Public Participation

There was no public participation.

366 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 15 February 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

367 Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies

A report was presented by the Head of Legal Services to consider the allocation of Committee seats to political groups in accordance with the requirements for political balance, the appointment of Members to those committees and appointments to outside bodies.

Since the publication of this report, Members were informed that due to a recent review of the political balance within Herefordshire Council, it was likely the Conservative Group would decrease by 1 Member and the Herefordshire Alliance would increase by 1 Member on the Authority and on the Policy and Resources Committee. Until formal notice was received, Members were asked to approve the appendices as set out in the report and any update would be presented at the next Authority meeting.

RESOLVED that:

i) the allocation of Committee seats to political groups as set out at Appendix 1 be agreed;

ii) the current chairmanship and membership of Committees, as set out in Appendix 2, remain unchanged for 2022/2023;

iii) Cllrs S Bowen, E Marshall and N McVey be reappointed Member

Champions of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion;

iv) Cllr B Clayton be reappointed as the Member Champion on the Health & Safety Committee;

v) Cllr B Brookes be appointed as Fire Cadets' Member Champion;

vi) the current practice for representation and voting on the Local Government Association as set out in Appendix 2 be continued; and

vii) the place and vote on the Local Government Association Fire Commission continues to be exercised by the Chairman of the Authority.

368 Provisional Financial Out-turn 2021-22

The Treasurer presented Members with a report to receive provisional financial results for 2021-22, approve final transfers to/from reserves, approve the reallocation of reserves, review Treasury Management activities for 2021-22 and confirm compliance with the Prudential Code indicators.

Members were informed that the Provisional Financial Results, the Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators normally come under the terms of reference of the Policy and Resources Committee, however because they required attention between meetings of that committee, they were considered by the Full Authority.

Members were informed that the financial year 2021-22 saw the continued impacts of Covid, economic impacts of exit from the European Union and latterly the impact of conflict in Ukraine. An interim financial position was reported to the Policy and Resources Committee in May and identified a significant positive financial impact of a large late grant payment, and the Committee made recommendations as to its use.

Following a brief outline by the Treasurer of the reserves held, Members were pleased to note the details and approved the reallocation as stated in the report.

Members noted the funding had exceeded the budget by £1.493m which was attributable to additional and unexpected grants being paid at the end of (or after the end of) the financial year.

Members noted that the Policy and Resources Committee had recommended the Business Rate Retail Relief Grant be reserved to meet the inflationary pressures on the major building programme to ensure the works at Hereford, Redditch, Broadway and North Herefordshire training

facility could be completed.

Finally the Treasurer confirmed that the Prudential Indicators for 2020-21 were within the limits set by the Authority and no matters required further action.

RESOLVED that the Authority:

- i) Notes the provisional financial results for 2021-22;***
- ii) Notes the transfers from Earmarked Reserves approved in accordance with the Reserves Strategy;***
 - a) £132,400 from the Organisational Excellence Reserve;***
 - b) £67,286 from the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Project (ESMCP) Reserve;***
 - c) £38,495 from the Broadway Fire Station Reserve;***
 - d) £5,000 from the On-Call Recruitment Reserve;***
 - e) £277,141 from the Property Maintenance Reserve;***
 - f) £7,910 from the Pensions Reserve;***
 - g) £144,673 from the Protection Grants Reserve;***
 - h) £48,035 from the Safety Initiatives Reserve; and***
 - i) £51,154 from the Taxation Income Guarantee (TIG) Grant Reserve.***
- iii) Approves transfers to Earmarked Reserves as recommended by the Policy and Resources Committee:***
 - a) £75,696 to the Safety Initiatives Reserve; and***
 - b) £1,168,801 to the Capital Projects Reserve.***
- iv) Approves additional transfers to Earmarked Reserves as set out below:***
 - a) £192,675 to the Protection Grants Reserve;***
 - b) £115,000 to the ICT Replacements Reserve;***
 - c) £51,850 to the Pensions Reserve; and***
 - d) £366,468 to the Capital Projects Reserve.***
- v) Approves the closure of the DCP Change Reserve and the***

transfer of the small remaining balance to the Safety Initiatives Reserve.

vi) Notes that the Treasurer will certify the 2022-22 Statement of Accounts, in accordance within the regulatory time-scale.

vii) Notes that the Audit of the accounts will be undertaken by Grant Thornton LLP; and

viii) Confirms that the Prudential Indicators for 2021-22 were within the limits set by the Authority and no matters require further action

369 Annual Service Review 2021-22

The Assistant Director of Prevention presented Members with the Annual Service Review 2020-21, which was a look back at the range of work undertaken over the last year, including headline activities and incident statistics, to adopt and approve for publication on the Service's website.

Upon the Vice-Chairman's request, the Head of Legal Services agreed to send the Review out to all Councils and Parish Councils for circulation across the two Counties.

RESOLVED that the draft Annual Service Review 2021-22 be approved for publication on the Service website.

370 Annual Service Plan 2022-23

The Chief Fire Officer presented Members with the Annual Service Plan 2022-23, which sets out the Service's key priorities for the coming year arranged under the main CRMP headings of Response, Protection, Prevention, Valuing Our Workforce and Value for Money, to adopt and approve for publication on the Service's website.

Upon the Vice-Chairman's request, the Head of Legal Services agreed to send the Review out to all Councils and Parish Councils for circulation across the two Counties.

RESOLVED that the Fire Authority approves the draft Annual Service Plan 2022-23 for publication on the Service website.

371 Fire Reform White Paper

The Head of Legal Services informed Members of the publication of the Home Office consultation on the white paper "Reforming Our Fire and Rescue Service".

Members were invited to discuss the proposals and the views expressed

would then be collated and included in a formal response on behalf of the Authority. The closing date for responses was 26 July 2022.

Members were also asked to contact the Chairman, Vice-Chairman or appropriate Group Leader with any specific issues they may wish to raise for consideration. In view of the timescales involved, it was proposed that it be delegated to officers to finalise the response in consultation with the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Group Leaders. Members could also submit individual responses to the white paper if they so wished.

Following an in depth discussion of the proposals, a formal response was formulated, a copy of which is attached.

[Cllr D Chambers left the meeting at 12.18pm and returned at 12.21pm].

[Cllr D Boatright left the meeting at 12.25pm and returned at 12.29pm].

RESOLVED that a formal response on behalf of the Authority to the white paper reflecting the views expressed by Members be delegated to the Head of Legal Services in consultation with the Chief Fire Officer, Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Group Leaders.

372 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Improvement Plan – Update May 2022

The Assistant Director of Prevention updated Members on the HMICFRS Improvement Plan following the inspection report dated 15 December 2021.

[Cllr R Morris and Cllr E Eyre left the meeting at 12.27pm and returned at 12.32pm].

Members noted the actions taken for all 22 specific areas for improvement identified by HMICFRS and that all evidence of change would be robust for evaluation and audit. Once scrutiny was complete, updated versions of the templates would be publicly available on the Service website each quarter.

RESOLVED that the Authority notes the actions agreed to address the HMICFRS Improvement Plan.

373 Property Update

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer Ade Elliott presented Members with an update on the current property programme.

Members noted that there are currently four new build schemes being

planned/developed, including; Broadway Fire Station, Redditch Fire Station, Hereford Fire Station, and a Strategic Training Facility in North Herefordshire. Site disposal of the former fire station sites at Windsor Street Bromsgrove, Bewdley, and Stourport have been completed and Kidderminster continues to be progressed.

Members were informed that recent reports to the Policy and Resources Committee had referenced the UK construction tender price index, and the associated inflationary pressures being seen across the building sector. Taking this into account the Treasurer was building in contingency funds in anticipation of the current capital build programme. Members would be updated as the projects develop, notably Broadway, Redditch and Hereford fire station builds.

RESOLVED that the property update and progress is noted.

374 Minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee

The Chairman of the Committee presented the minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee meeting held on 20 April 2022.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee meeting held on 20 April 2022 be received and noted.

375 Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee

No Minutes Taken

376 Retirement of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer

The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that Deputy Chief Fire Officer Keith Chance was retiring on 16 August 2022 after over 30 years' service.

Members congratulated Guy and Ade on their promotions and thanked Keith for his support and calmness when presenting reports. Members then wished Keith a wonderful retirement.

Pending a review of structures in early 2023, Assistant Chief Fire Officer Guy Palmer had been designated as acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Area Commander Ade Elliott had been temporarily promoted to Assistant Chief Fire Officer.

377 Response to Fire Reform Consultation

See Appendix "Response to Fire Reform Consultation" in the Document Library on the website.

The Meeting ended at: 12:51

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Chairman



Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority

Headquarters, Hindlip Park, Worcester WR3 8SP

Tel. (switchboard) 0845 122 4454

Fire Reform Consultation
Fire Strategy & Reform Unit
4th Floor Peel Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Please contact: Nigel Snape
Tel (direct line): 01905 368242
Email: Nsnape@hwfire.org.uk

By email:
firereformconsultation@homeoffice.gov.uk

26th July 2022

Dear Sirs

Fire Reform Consultation

The attached response to the fire reform consultation is submitted on behalf of Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority.

We are a combined fire authority responsible for the delivery of fire and rescue services over the two counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire. This is an area of 392,000 hectares with a population of almost 792,000. It includes both urban and rural areas, including areas of population sparsity.

We operate 25 fire stations, of which 17 are crewed exclusively using the on-call model.

We have around 250 wholetime firefighters and 380 on-call firefighters, supported by some 20 Fire Control staff and approximately 100 support staff. We also host one of 29 national Urban Search and Rescue units.

The fire reform consultation paper has been discussed at a meeting of the Fire Authority and the attached views have cross-party support.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C.B. Taylor'.

Cllr. C.B. Taylor
Chairman
Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority

Modern working practices

Q1: To what extent do you agree/disagree that fire and rescue services should have the flexibility to deploy resources to help address current and future threats faced by the public beyond core fire and rescue duties?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
✓				

The role of fire & rescue services in providing a flexible and agile response to different types of emergency is a clear objective set out in 'Fit for the Future' (June 2022), which this Authority fully supports. It is recognised however that this will have implications for the roles of employees. Where staff are expected to take on additional responsibilities this should be recognised in their terms and conditions of employment and in their remuneration packages. Such changes can be best delivered through collective, national, negotiation. The government will need to support these changes through the provision of appropriate additional funding.

Public Safety

Q2: To what extent do you agree/disagree that fire and rescue services should play an active role in supporting the wider health and public safety agenda?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	✓			

We believe that FRAs should have the flexibility to support the wider health and public safety agenda by undertaking such activities as are a reasonable extension of existing roles and capabilities, according to local needs and circumstances. FRAs have already committed to this approach as part of *Fit for the Future*. Local FRAs and CFOs are best placed to decide what is appropriate, working in conjunction with partners. We would not, therefore, support the introduction of a new statutory duty in this regard.

Please see previous comments with regard to changes to the roles of employees and the need for appropriate additional funding in order to deliver the proposed changes.

Business Continuity

Q3: To what extent do you agree/disagree that the business continuity requirements set out in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 provide sufficient oversight to keep the public safe in the event of strike action?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	✓			

Our existing business continuity arrangements have been shown to be robust, both through the recent pandemic, major events such as flooding and the previous strike action

Pay Negotiation

Q4: To what extent do you agree/disagree that the current pay negotiation arrangements are appropriate?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	✓			

Q5: Please provide the reasons for your response.

The Authority believes in the importance of collective national pay bargaining as the best means of ensuring good industrial relations (which should underpin any pay negotiation arrangements), an effective workforce and value for money for the public.

The existing NJC arrangements have achieved nationally agreed pay rises that have been broadly in line with government expectations on public sector pay in recent years. The white paper does not put forward any alternative proposals although one such alternative would presumably be a national pay review body. However, this would likely mean Ministers becoming directly involved in decisions about firefighter pay and terms & conditions of employment. We believe it is more appropriate that the government define the role of the FRS and provide the funding through which this can be delivered. This then needs to be reflected in terms & conditions of employment, which we believe are matters best dealt with by employers.

We believe the current working arrangements for the NJC can be further improved and to that extent we welcome the proposed review.

Nurturing talent

Q6: To what extent do you agree/disagree that consistent entry requirements should be explored for fire and rescue service roles?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
			✓	

Q7: Please provide the reasons for your response.

The consultation document fails to recognise the very real differences between large urban FRSs staffed by mainly whole time staff and the needs of rural services, such as Hereford & Worcester, which rely heavily upon on-call firefighters. We have around 250 wholtime firefighters and 380 on-call firefighters.

Attracting sufficient on-call firefighters within rural areas is already challenging and the introduction of national entry-requirements would likely further reduce the pool of potential candidates.

Ensuring an adequate level of operational competency for all firefighters so as to maintain the safety of themselves, their colleagues and the community is more important than common entry requirements.

Recruitment opportunities for whole time firefighter posts are often over-subscribed, meaning that Services are already able to select only the best candidates.

Q8: To what extent do you agree/disagree that other roles, in addition to station and area managers, would benefit from a direct entry and talent management scheme?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
		✓		

Leadership

Q9: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposed introduction of a 21st century leadership programme?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	✓			

Q10: Please provide reasons for your response.

The Fire & Rescue Service previously had a 'brigade managers' course and we welcome the reintroduction of a similar programme

Q11: To what extent do you agree/disagree that completion of the proposed 21st century leadership programme should be mandatory before becoming an assistant chief fire officer or above?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
✓				

Use of data

Q12: To what extent do you agree/disagree that each of the activities outlined above are high priorities for helping improve the use and quality of fire and rescue service data?

- A national data analytics capability
- Data-focused training.
- Consistent approaches to structuring data
- Clear expectations for data governance
- Securing data-sharing agreements

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	✓			

These activities will need to be adequately funded and it is important that the Government provide additional money for this purpose. The costs should not be taken from existing FRS funding.

Q13: What other activities, beyond those listed above, would help improve the use and quality of fire and rescue service data? Please give the reasons for your response.

In addition to a consistent approach to structuring data, there also needs to be consistency as to the data that is recorded and how it is measured. This would then enable more accurate comparisons between Fire & Rescue Services, including the ability to compare patterns of incidents with similar Service Area's around the country. If all FRS had access to standardised summary reports for all service areas, comparisons could easily be made.

Research

Q14: To what extent do you agree/disagree that each of the activities outlined above are high priorities for improving the use and quality of fire evidence and research?

- Collaborating
- Commissioning
- Conducting
- Collating

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
		✓		

Q15: What other activities, beyond those listed above, would help improve the use and quality of evidence and research on fire and other hazards? Please provide the reasons for your responses.

Ethics & Culture

Q16: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the creation of a statutory code of ethics for services in England?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
			✓	

We strongly agree with having a code of ethics for fire & rescue services but disagree with it needing to be on a statutory footing. Although the existing code on non-statutory, it's promulgation through the fire standards and the National Framework are sufficient to ensure its adoption.

Q17: To what extent do you agree/disagree that placing a code of ethics on a statutory basis would better embed ethical principles in services than the present core code of ethics?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
			✓	

Q18: To what extent do you agree/disagree that the duty to ensure services act in accordance with the proposed statutory code should be placed on operationally independent chief fire officers?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
		✓		

Q19: To what extent do you agree/disagree with making enforcement of the proposed statutory code an employment matter for chief fire officers to determine within their services?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	✓			

Ensuring that staff adhere to the code is a matter best dealt with via conditions of employment and disciplinary procedures where necessary

Fire & Rescue Service Oath

Q20: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the creation of a fire and rescue service oath for services in England?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
				✓

Q21: Please give the reasons for your response.

Fire & Rescue Service staff are not warranted or commissioned officers, unlike the Police or military and there can be no justification for requiring staff to take an oath. There can be even less justification for extending this to 'all' staff. There is for example, no requirement for Police civilian staff to swear an oath. The introduction of an oath is likely to prompt resistance and would be counterproductive in terms of industrial relations and may further hinder the recruitment of on-call firefighters in rural areas, which would impact upon service delivery.

As indicated above, matters relating to standards of behaviour, conduct and ethics important but are best dealt with through contracts of employment. If considered necessary then it would be preferable for the government to prescribe mandatory terms to be included in contracts of employment rather than introduce an oath.

Q22: To what extent do you agree/disagree that an Oath would embed the principles of the Code of Ethics amongst fire and rescue authority employees?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
				✓

See above

Q23: To what extent do you agree/disagree with an Oath being mandatory for all employees?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
				✓

See above

Q24: To what extent do you agree/disagree that breach of the fire and rescue service oath should be dealt with as an employment matter?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	✓			

If there were to be an oath then we strongly agree that breaches should be dealt with as an employment matter. The white paper already recognises this is the most appropriate route for enforcement, which is further reason why terms and conditions of employment are a better route for securing adherence to ethical standards than the introduction of an oath.

Professionalism priorities

Q25: To what extent do you agree/disagree that the five areas listed above are priorities for professionalising fire and rescue services?

- Leadership
- Data
- Research
- Ethics
- Clear Expectations

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
		✓		

Q26: What other activities, beyond the five listed above, could help to professionalise fire and rescue services?

Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority has extensive training programmes in place for its staff and has implemented a 'People Strategy', setting out how we will support and value our workforce. The strategy is guided by the values set out in our Ethical Framework and Code of Conduct. We believe these approaches are essential to improving leadership, embedding ethical standards and setting clear expectations of staff.

College of Fire & Rescue

Q27: To what extent do you agree/disagree with the creation of an independent College of Fire and Rescue to lead the professionalisation of fire and rescue services?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	✓			

Q28: Please provide your reasons for your response

Historically, national standards were set via the Fire Service College and we welcome the proposed re-introduction of such a function. It will be important that the Government adequately fund the College of Fire & Rescue through the provision of additional monies and not from existing FRS funding.

Governance Structures

Q29: To what extent do you agree/disagree that Government should transfer responsibility for fire and rescue services in England to a single elected individual?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
				✓

We strongly disagree with the premise that governance of Fire & Rescue Services is best undertaken by a single elected individual for two reasons:

- (i) Public accountability – The role of the Fire Authority is to ensure that the Fire & Rescue Service meets the needs of the local communities. Although Fire Authority members are not directly elected to that role, they are the elected representatives of those communities and their details are readily available on an Authority's website; they are far closer to the community and represent a much broader range of views than a single individual. Transferring responsibility for fire & rescue to a single individual creates a significant democratic deficit compared to multi-member committee based structures.
- (ii) Scrutiny & transparency – a Fire Authority meets in public, publishes agendas & reports and is accessible to the public. Decision making is open to scrutiny by the public, who can make representations and influence decisions, as well as by other members of the Authority from across the political spectrum. None of that is applicable to a PCC and there is currently no effective scrutiny of PCC decisions. In our view these issues are far more important to the public than whether or not they can name the members of the Fire Authority.

The Police and Fire & Rescue Services are distinctly different functions. The governance structures applicable to one are not necessarily appropriate to the other.

**Q30: What factors should be considered when transferring fire governance to a directly elected individual?
Please provide the reasons for your response.**

Whether or not there is public support for the proposals and whether it would improve the service provided.

Q31: Where Mayoral Combined Authorities already exist, to what extent do you agree/disagree that fire and rescue functions should be transferred directly to these MCAs for exercise by the Mayor?

We disagree with the proposal to transfer fire & rescue functions to Mayoral Combined Authorities and believe a multi-member committee based structure provides greater representation and public accountability.

Q32: To what extent do you agree/disagree that Government should transfer responsibility for fire and rescue services in England to police and crime commissioners?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
				✓

Transfer of responsibility for fire & rescue to a PCC would result in a democratic deficit compared to existing arrangements, reduce public accountability, scrutiny and transparency as already indicated.

Fire & Rescue Services enjoy a high level of public trust which enables them to successfully work with local communities and particularly those who are most vulnerable around prevention activities. There is a risk that this trust may be eroded if governance transfers to a PFCC and the FRS is perceived to be more closely associated with the Police.

Enhanced collaboration between Police and Fire & Rescue Services can, and in the case of our own Authority, is already being delivered without the need to transfer responsibility for fire and rescue services to the PCC. We already:

- share accommodation with the Police on a number of fire stations
- have built a joint Police/ Fire station in one location and are currently developing another
- have co-located our control room and HQ functions with the Police
- support the Police by:
 - assisting with missing persons searches
 - make entry to premises on behalf of the ambulance service
 - provide drone facilities to the Police

Q33: Apart from combined authority mayors and police and crime commissioners, is there anyone else who we could transfer fire governance that aligns with the principles set out above?

Yes	No
	✓

Q34: If yes, please explain other options and your reasons for proposing them.

Q35: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the legal basis for fire and rescue authorities could be strengthened and clarified?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	✓			

Q36: Please provide the reasons for your response.

If, contrary to our views, responsibility for Fire & Rescue Services were to be transferred to a single individual then it would be essential to legislate over the arrangements for transparency and scrutiny to ensure that the public and local councillors are able to scrutinise and influence decisions to no lesser degree than at present. However, current legislation applicable to PCC's is inadequate in this regard. We do not believe that including this within the Fire & Rescue National Framework for England would be sufficient.

Q37: To what extent do you agree/disagree that boundary changes should be made so that fire and rescue service areas and police force/combined authorities (where present) areas are coterminous?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
			✓	

Fire & Rescue Service areas should be determined according to the need to deliver effective and efficient services, not for the sake of making them coterminous with police areas.

Q38: To what extent do you agree/disagree with ring-fencing the operational fire budget within fire and rescue services run by county councils and unitary authorities?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	✓			

Q39: Please provide the reasons for your response.

It would be equally important to ensure that budgets were ring-fenced where responsibility for Fire & Rescue Services was transferred to a PCC or mayoral combined authority.

Balanced leadership model

Task	Responsible
Setting priorities	Executive leader
Budget setting	Executive leader
Setting precept	Executive leader
Setting response standards	Executive leader
Opening and closing fire stations	Executive leader*
Appointment and dismissal of chief fire officer	Executive leader
Appointment and dismissal of other fire service staff	Chief fire officer
Allocation of staff to meet strategic priorities	Chief fire officer
Configuration and organisation of resources	Chief fire officer
Deployment of resources to meet operational requirements	Chief fire officer
Balancing of competing operational needs	Chief fire officer
Expenditure up to certain (delegated) levels	Chief fire officer

*Opening and closing of fire stations could be a joint decision; operationally fire chiefs could be responsible for decisions on moving teams, whilst ultimate political and executive responsibility lies with the executive leader.

Q40. To what extent do you agree with this proposed approach (as outlined in the table above)?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	✓			

Q41. Do you have any other comments to further support your answer?

We broadly agree with the allocation of responsibilities suggested in the white paper. However, any proposals by the Chief Fire Officer for the opening/closure of fire stations or any permanent changes to crewing arrangements which would affect the level of fire cover in an area are matters of extreme importance to the public and should be subject to the approval of the Fire Authority/executive leader.

Q42. Are there any factors we should consider when implementing these proposals?

Q43: What factors should we consider when giving chief fire officers operational independence?

Please provide the reasons for your opinions.

Within our own Fire & Rescue Service the Chief Fire Officer already enjoys a high degree of operational independence and further changes in this regard are considered unnecessary. However, we understand that this may not be the case in all Services.

Q44: What factors should we consider should we make chief fire officers corporations sole?

We disagree with the proposal to make Chief Fire Officers corporations sole. Provided CFO's are given operational independence, making them corporations sole is unnecessary and would further complicate the transition to any new governance arrangements. This is another instance where there is no need for the governance structures applicable to Police to be applied to Fire & Rescue Services.

Q45: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the responsibility for strategic and operational planning should be better distinguished?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	✓			

We consider the integrated risk management plan (which we already refer to as the Community Risk Management Plan) to be the strategic plan for the Service and that this should continue to be approved by the Fire Authority as at present.

Our Authority already has a suite of operational strategies for response, prevention and protection developed by the Chief Fire Officer which set out how the provisions of the CRMP will be delivered.

Q46: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the strategic plan should be the responsibility of the fire and rescue authority?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	✓			

Q47: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the operational plan should be the responsibility of the chief fire officer?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	✓			

Q48: Please provide the reasons for your response.

Policy objectives should always be set by the political leadership of the Authority, having regard to the professional advice of the Chief Fire Officer. It is implicit in the proposal for operational independence that Chief Fire Officers should then determine the means by which those objectives will be delivered, subject to our previous comment (Question 41) regarding proposals to close fire stations or which would permanently affect the level of fire cover in an area.