

## **Report of the Chief Fire Officer**

### **7. Enabling Closer Working Between Emergency Services**

#### **Purpose of report**

1. To consider and approve a response to the recent Government consultation document on a proposed series of measures to drive greater collaboration between the police, fire and rescue and NHS ambulance services.
- 

#### **Recommendations**

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

- i) the response to the document “Enabling Closer Working Between the Emergency Services” (as attached at Appendix 1) be agreed; and***
- ii) any further amendments be approved by the Authority Chairman in consultation with Group Leaders.***

#### **Introduction and Background**

2. The Government published its consultation document “Enabling Closer Working Between the Emergency Services” on 11 September 2015. The consultation seeks views on proposals for greater collaboration between the police, fire and rescue and ambulance services and a legal duty for all three emergency services to collaborate.
3. The Authority’s political group leaders have drafted a response attached at Appendix 1 for consideration by the Authority. The consultation period closes on 23 October 2015.

#### **Enabling Closer Working Between the Emergency Services**

4. The measures being consulted upon are:
  - a) introducing a new duty on all three emergency services to actively consider collaboration opportunities with one another to improve efficiency and effectiveness;
  - b) enabling Police and Crime Commissioners to take on the duties and responsibilities of fire and rescue authorities, where a local case is made;
  - c) where a Police and Crime Commissioner takes on the responsibilities of a fire and rescue authority, enabling him or her to create a single employer for police and fire staff,

facilitating the sharing of back office functions and streamlining management;

- d) in areas where a Police and Crime Commissioner has not become responsible for fire and rescue services, enabling them to have representation on their local fire and rescue authority; and
- e) abolishing the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority and giving the Mayor of London direct responsibility for the fire and rescue service in London, as will be the case in Greater Manchester.

5. In summary, the draft response argues that although there are some benefits to closer working between the emergency services any collaboration should be voluntary and agreed by all parties concerned otherwise it would not be true and effective collaboration. The consultation focuses on potential collaboration between the police and fire and rescue services, however, it would be beneficial if the ambulance service was also included in the debate to encourage further dialogue between all three emergency services with regards to voluntary partnership working at the local level.
6. It is proposed that the consultation document states that any collaboration between the emergency services must ensure that the existing relationship with local authorities is retained. It is through the local authority members being placed on fire authorities that local democratic accountability is maintained. Fire and rescue services currently work in tandem on many issues with local authorities due to the strong links forged by fire authority members and we would not want to lose these positive working relationships.
7. The draft response also indicates that the fire and rescue service is currently very cost effective and reflects the concern that any imposed collaboration would increase the cost of the service to communities due to the current disparity in precepts. Before any consideration is given to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) taking responsibility for fire, a full analysis of the relative cost of fire authorities and PCCs should be instigated with the results being made publicly available.

## **Conclusion/Summary**

8. The Government recently published a consultation document seeking views on proposals for greater collaboration between the police, fire and rescue and ambulance services and proposes a legal duty for all three emergency services to collaborate.
9. Group Leaders have drafted a response, on behalf of the Authority to the consultation, which closes on 23 October 2015. The Authority is asked to consider and approve the attached draft response prior to its submission.

## Corporate Considerations

<b>Resource Implications</b> (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	The consultation seeks views on the introduction a new legal duty on all three emergency services to actively consider collaboration opportunities with one another. This includes the potential for PCCs to create a single employer for police and fire staff, facilitating the sharing of back office functions and streamlining management. The proposed response to the consultation highlights the concern that any imposed collaboration would increase the cost of the service to communities due to the current disparity in precepts.
<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).	This report does not recommend any changes to policy.
<b>Risk Management / Health &amp; Safety</b> (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	This report does not recommend any changes to policy.
<b>Consultation</b> (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	Principal Officers have been consulted on the draft consultation response.
<b>Equalities</b> (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	An EIA has not been completed as this report does not recommend any changes to Authority policy.

## Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – Draft response to the consultation “Enabling Closer Working between the Emergency Services”

### Contact Officer

Mark Yates, Chief Fire Officer  
(01905 368202)  
Email: myates@hwfire.org.uk