

SURREY POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

GOVERNANCE OF FIRE AND RESCUE IN SURREY

1st December 2016

INTRODUCTION

This paper provides an update on the PCC's view on the future governance of the Fire and Rescue service in Surrey.

BACKGROUND

The Police and Crime Bill 2016, once enacted, will introduce measures which require greater collaboration between emergency services and allow PCCs to put forward a business case to take on responsibility for Fire and Rescue in their area where this is felt to be the best option for the area. The Bill is currently going through the parliamentary process and is expected to receive Royal Assent in early 2017.

The Bill requires better collaboration between the emergency services. This does not necessarily mean change of governance in respect of fire, but could include better joined up working. In terms of governance, the Bill includes a range of options which can be broadly summarised as:

- No change to current governance arrangements but evidence of good collaborative working
- For PCCs to be represented on the relevant Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) with full voting rights (subject to the consent of the FRA)
- For PCCs to put forward a business case to take over the governance of Fire and Rescue authorities in their area, but broadly keeping the two organisations as separate entities i.e. two Chief Officers held to account by the PCC
- For PCCs to put forward a business case to become the single employer for fire and police to deliver greater improvements through integration of back office functions and maximise the benefits of workforce flexibility, i.e. one Chief Officer to employ both police and fire staff accountable to the PCC

The Association of Police and Crime Commissioners Chief Executives (APACE) has developed a guidance document for looking at the business case for change of governance. Five PCCs have formed an early adopter working group and are considering whether to develop a case for change in April 2017, although these

timescales are ambitious. The Sussex PCC is one of these and has set up a stakeholder group to consider whether there is a business case for change.

If a business case is developed for a policing area, this is then submitted to the Home Office. Clear rationale will be needed for the case for change including the economic, financial, commercial, legal, management and public safety elements. Where all parties in an area (PCC, police, FRA, unions) agree, then the Home Office will evaluate the one business case provided. Where there is not local agreement, the PCC will need to provide evidence of public consultation and any representations made by the local authorities.

The Home Secretary will wish to see a clear case against economy, efficiency and effectiveness. There will also need to be robust and extensive public consultation. If a business case is approved, the Home Secretary will lay an order creating the PCC as the FRA for that area.

Where a PCC does not wish to build a business case to take on governance of Fire and Rescue in their area, the Bill makes provision for the PCC to be involved in the FRA. The Bill provides for the PCC to request to be a member of the FRA. The FRA then has to consider the request and, if accepted, appoint the PCC as a fully voting member for any item considered that affects Fire and Rescue.

SURREY PCC VIEW

David Munro is very supportive of increased collaboration between the emergency services in Surrey (also linked to emergency service collaboration in Sussex) and recognises the significant progress already made. The Fire and Rescue service has taken on some functions to assist other emergency services, such as forced entry into buildings and carrying defibrillators. There are already some collaborated functions around fleet and fuel and plans for future working in areas such as control rooms and the PCC would like to see these plans progress.

In terms of governance, the PCC is meeting with all of the relevant partners in Surrey and listening to their views, including the County Council leader and Chief Executive and the Chief Fire Officer. The PCC's current view is that there are good current governance arrangements in place at Surrey County Council and collaboration is currently moving forwards. The PCC does not wish to hurry a decision as to whether to develop a business case for change or be an early adopter. There are also many other urgent priorities for the PCC, including the review of Neighbourhood Policing, estates and reducing reoffending. However, the PCC hasn't ruled out considering a business case for change of governance in the future.

The PCC is considering options for becoming a member of the Surrey FRA. There is no stand-alone fire authority in Surrey as the County Council discharges the functions of the FRA. This would therefore mean becoming a member of the Surrey County Council Cabinet, with voting rights, but only for items relating to Fire and Rescue issues. Surrey County Council are currently looking at the legislation with regard to the FRA membership.

In the meantime, the PCC and his office continue to attend relevant collaboration board meetings to oversee blue-light collaboration. OPCC and Fire and Rescue Policy Officers are meeting to share views, horizon scanning and develop good working relationships between the two offices.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Panel notes this report.

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