

SURREY POLICE AND CRIME PANEL**GOVERNANCE OF FIRE AND RESCUE IN SURREY****28 November 2018****INTRODUCTION**

This paper provides an update on the Police & Crime Commissioner's (PCC) project to consider the future governance of the Fire and Rescue service in Surrey. At present, Surrey County Council discharges the role of Fire & Rescue Authority for the county. The Policing and Crime Act 2017 allows this function to move to Police & Crime Commissioners where a local case is made.

BACKGROUND

In April 2017 legislation was passed that allowed Police and Crime Commissioners to take on the governance of Fire and Rescue services in their area, if a local business case could be made. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey (OPCC) commissioned KPMG to carry out an options analysis for Surrey which concluded in November 2017. The options analysis did not reveal a compelling case to pursue a change in governance and the PCC concluded therefore, that he would not take the next step to draw up a business case for change. Part of the reason for this was to allow collaboration between the three fire services (Surrey, East Sussex and West Sussex) to develop. The PCC committed to reviewing this decision after six months.

Upon review in May 2018, whilst the PCC could see that progress had been made he still felt that more evidence was needed to show that future governance of the Fire and Rescue Service was best place under Surrey County Council.

Since then, changes to senior leadership in Surrey County Council have bedded in, and there is a new Strategic Director for Fire & Rescue as well as a new Acting Chief Fire Officer. The PCC has met with both of these individuals and have been impressed with their commitment to ensuring that, in the face of a pressing need to deliver savings, Surrey retains an effective fire service for its residents and businesses. The three fire service collaboration continues to develop and, whilst the PCC thinks it could progress further and faster, the ambition to work together remains.

Where Fire & Rescue services are embedded into a county council, the costs of a change in governance could prove substantial. There needs to be a convincing case to justify these costs. The development of a business case in itself is costly and is not something the PCC is willing to pursue unless he feels that it would produce a compelling case for change that would meet with Home Office approval.

The OPCC have also been monitoring the business cases of other PCCs where there is current county council governance, including Hertfordshire, who have now withdrawn their business case in favour of better collaborative working.

The PCC remains convinced that fundamentally we can do more to align blue-light services in Surrey, but a change in governance should not be necessary to achieve this. The PCC has therefore concluded that it is in Surrey's best interests to continue to focus on collaborative work between police and fire and between the fire services in Surrey and Sussex. He will not be proceeding with a business case for change of governance.

The PCC remains committed to working with the fire service, Surrey County Council and Surrey Police to help ensure the respective statutory duties to collaborate under the Policing & Crime Act are discharged.

The PCC has written to key stakeholders and thanked colleagues in Surrey County Council, the Fire & Rescue Service and Surrey Police who helped inform the options appraisal.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Panel notes this report.

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