

Fire Governance Consultation

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

Last update 05 July 2017

Will frontline officers be lost as a result of this?

No. If anything, this proposed change of governance would actually help protect frontline officers. Our police and fire services need to find efficiencies at the moment. Working together more would help them find those efficiencies in support functions, rather than on the frontline.

Would this mean a reduced presence or visibility from our police or fire services in local communities?

No. In the future the proposal supports increase police and fire services sharing more buildings, allowing them to retain their community presence.

Would these changes mean a loss in local identity for our fire service?

No. Fire and Police services would still exist as individual organisations. Their names and branding would not be affected.

What impact does the change have on fire's work with health and social care?

The business case sets out that the proposed change in governance can speed up decision making with partners including work to align strategies and create a more joined up approach on the ground. The business case does not include any plans to change initiatives with health which are currently in place.

Nationally PCCs are already exploring how they can best link to Health and Wellbeing Boards, so community safety and health and wellbeing strategies can effectively support each other. Locally, the change of governance will lead to a more streamlined and strategic dialogue with health and social care colleagues.

Would I still pay separate council tax contributions for police and fire service? Will they still have separate budgets?

Yes, because the organisations are not merging and still have their own ring-fenced finances. You would still pay an amount towards policing and a separate amount towards your fire service. From a public perspective, nothing significant would change in terms of how services are paid for via council tax or financed more broadly speaking.

What are the benefits here in terms of finances or efficiencies?

A change in governance would enable a saving of around £1.7m in the cost of governance over a ten year period. In addition the programme of estates consolidation will save a further £4.3m over the ten years

Do our police and fire services need to save money? Would this change help with that or not?

Both the Police service and Fire service have financial pressures due to the on-going Government policy of seeking to reduce public expenditure. These proposals will contribute to resolving these pressures.

Does the PCC have the experience to run fire services?

Much like the Chief Constable runs the Police force, the Chief Fire Officer will be responsible for the operational running of fire. These proposals are about governance – providing a strong voice for communities, holding those chief officers to account, ensuring the public get an effective, efficient service and making sure services respond to community needs. This is a role the PCC already fulfils for policing and crime and would be expanding to cover the fire services as well in the best interests of public safety.

Is it less democratic to have a single person in charge of governance of our local fire services?

There are currently 17 local councilors who sit on the two fire authorities, who would be replaced by a single directly elected person if these proposals go ahead. Whilst these councillors are all elected, they are only elected to represent their wards. They are not elected to the fire authorities. Fire authority members are nominated by councils without consulting the public.

If these changes go ahead, in 2020 our communities would have the chance to directly elect a local Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. Every voter would have an equal say. This proposal will increase the democratic accountability of our fire and rescue services..

What are the alternatives to these proposals? Why aren't they possible?

There are three alternatives options:

1. **Maintain the status quo** of having a PCC and the Fire authority. This option would realise limited savings but these will not be to the extent realized through the preferred option.
2. **Representative model** - The PCC is represented on a Fire Authority (or its committees) in their police area with full voting rights, subject to the consent of the Fire Authority. This option would realise limited savings but these will not be to the extent realized through the preferred option.
3. **Create a 'single employer'**, The PCC would become the CPFA but, in addition, fire and rescue functions are delegated to a single chief officer for policing and fire. Within this model, the services remain distinct front line services, albeit supported by increasingly integrated support services. This option has the potential to release a similar level of savings as the governance option but is far more complex and problematic to implement.

Are the ambulance services involved in this at all?

No, the proposal does not affect ambulance services directly, although the simplified governance will make future conversations with them easier.

Communities have different relationships to their fire services than they do with their police. How would these changes impact on that?

This is acknowledged and these changes would not necessarily impact on that directly. The



police will still be the police, fire services will still be fire services. This change in governance would not directly affect those community relationships, although with the Commissioner's responsibilities around community engagement, responding to community concerns and providing a strong voice for the public, if anything this change would hopefully improve relationships for both services and develop safer communities through effective, efficient collaborative working.

Who would hold the Commissioner to account if he were to take over governance of the fire services?

The electorate would still hold the Commissioner to account as at present. Currently the Commissioner is scrutinised by the Police and Crime Panel. If these proposals go ahead, their role would also be expanded to become the Police, Fire and Crime Panel.

Will the PCC get paid any more for this?

The PCC's salary is fixed by Parliament. In time it could be that they review his pay, however this has not been discussed by any party at this point. This is not the driver for the proposed changes in governance, this is purely about the effectiveness and efficiency of our police and fire services.

Who has made these recommendations? Can we trust that they know what they are talking about?

The appointment of the independent external advisors, PA Consulting, was a joint appointment by the OPCC and the Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Authority, after an open tendering process. Through the tendering process PA Consulting had to demonstrate their experience and its relevance. They have also advised a number of other Police and Crime Commissioners on these changes.