

Title of Meeting: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 8 July 2016

Subject: Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority - Governance Review

Report by: Michael Lawther, Deputy Chief Executive

Wards affected: All

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. To provide an update to the Cabinet on the outcome of a governance review conducted by Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority and a consultation on its recommendations, and to recommend a response on behalf of the City Council.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That Cabinet note the outcome of the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority Governance Review, and resolve to issue the response contained within this report.

3. Background

- 3.1. At its December 2015 meeting, the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority (the Fire Authority) commissioned a cross party Member led Working Group (the Working Group) to review its governance arrangements and framework (the Review). The aim of the work was to ensure that the Fire Authority is in the best position to continue to lead the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service (the Fire Service) in delivering excellent quality services to the residents of Hampshire, whilst remaining resilient and responsible to the changes and challenges into the future.
- 3.2. The Review has now concluded and the proposals are detailed in this report (and its appendix).
- 3.3. The Working Group carried out the Review under the following two separate themes:
- 3.3.1. To consider the effectiveness of the Fire Authority's governance arrangements to ensure that they enable the best outcomes for our stakeholders.

- 3.3.2. To consider the efficiency of the Fire Authority to ensure good value for money to the public.
- 3.4. The opportunities that emerged from the working group's review followed three themes:
 - 3.4.1. To improve the effectiveness of the Fire Authority through the implementation of a number of internal measures;
 - 3.4.2. To extend engagement of the Fire Authority with *blue light partners*, in particular the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and South Central Ambulance; and
 - 3.4.3. to consider reducing the number of members of the Authority and change the governance structure within which those members operate to both achieve efficiencies and a more effective working model.
- 3.5. The Working Group prepared a report that was considered by the Fire Authority at its meeting in June 2016 and alongside agreement for the implementation of measures for the fire Authority, it was agreed:
 - 3.5.1. That, with immediate effect, the Police and Crime Commissioner be invited as a "guest" to future Fire Authority meetings with a right to speak (but not to vote);
 - 3.5.2. That dialogue be opened with South Central Ambulance Service to identify options for reciprocal input to each other's strategic decision making;
 - 3.5.3. To pursue a proposal to offer the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) a full voting seat on the Fire Authority with effect from the beginning of the 2017/18 municipal year; and
 - 3.5.4. To consult stakeholders on two proposed alternative governance models identified by the working group or on retaining the current size and structure of the Fire Authority, prior to a decision being taken by the Fire Authority at its September 2016 meeting.
- 3.6. The full background, legal basis, and alternatives, are set out in the letter issued to the City Council at Appendix 1 to this report.
- 3.7. The City Council has been asked to respond to the proposals, as part of a consultation exercise which concludes on 6 August 2016.

4. **Reasons for Recommendation and Suggested Response to Consultation**

- 4.1. The City Council welcomes Fire Authority's review of its governance arrangements.
- 4.2. A combined Fire Authority has been in existence for around 20 years and the existing arrangements have served the region well during that time. However

recent changes to the architecture of local government and to accountability arrangements for the police (including the creation of the office of the PCC), mean it is right that the Fire Authority look again at its decision making processes to see if they need amending.

- 4.3. Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority has a good record of responding to the challenges of austerity. Its budgetary position is strong and it has a clear and realistic plan that outlines how it will continue to provide core services to the end of the Spending Review period; it has shown a determination and maturity in pursuing Risk Review and it has an excellent record in working with both the police and Hampshire County Council.
- 4.4. The City Council supports adding the PCC to the Fire Authority, but it does not support the outright transfer of responsibility to him. This is in recognition of both the developing close working relationship with the police and the track record of the fire authority in providing an effective and efficient fire service.
- 4.5. Regarding the size of the authority, the City Council's preferred option is for an authority of ten councillor members. A smaller body should act more as a board, with more frequent meetings and greater member engagement. The hope is this will lead to more responsive decision making and will set a template for other authorities across England.
- 4.6. The City Council respects that it is for the Fire Authority itself to determine its own composition. Whatever the outcome, the City Council will change the number of members it nominates accordingly.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1. The legal background to the Fire Authority, its current establishment and participation and the proposed change is set out in the letter and report at Appendix 1.
- 5.2. The Cabinet has the power to resolve the form and content of a response to the consultation.

6. Director of Finance's comments

- 6.1. There are no financial implications directly arising from the recommendations contained within this report.

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Signed by:

Appendix 1

Letter and report to Cllr Jones, 26 June 2016.

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
Letter and report	Appendix 1

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/
rejected by on

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Signed by: