

## **WEST MERCIA POLICE AND CRIME PANEL 26 SEPTEMBER 2017**

### **JOINT GOVERNANCE OF POLICE AND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES IN HEREFORD AND WORCESTER AND SHROPSHIRE AND TELFORD AND WREKIN**

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#### **Recommendation**

- 1. That the Panel consider and comment on the report from the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) providing a summary of the initial findings from the West Mercia Fire and Rescue Governance Consultation.**

#### **Background**

2. The Policing and Crime Act 2017 introduces measures which encourage emergency services (Ambulance, Fire and Rescue and Police) to collaborate and also enables PCCs to take on responsibilities for the fire and rescue services in their area where proposals are in the interest of economy, efficiency and effectiveness, or public safety.
3. At its last meeting, the Panel was asked to consider the PCC's draft initial business case for the joint governance of Police and Fire and Rescue services in Hereford and Worcester and Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin.
4. Following the initial comments made by the Panel, the PCC was invited to return to Panel with final proposals prior to the indicated submission to the Secretary of State on 1 October 2017.
5. A Report has been prepared for the PCC by his Chief Executive to provide an initial analysis of the consultation results from the PCC's recent public consultation on proposals for the future governance of the two fire and rescue services within West Mercia.
6. The Panel is advised that this report does not contain the PCC's formal response to the Consultation, which will be published in due course. A copy of this report is attached at Appendix 1.

#### **Supporting Information**

Appendix 1 – West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioners Report: West Mercia Fire Governance Consultation – Initial Analysis

#### **Contact Points for the Report**

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## **Background Papers**

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Head of Legal & Democratic Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

The Policing and Crime Act 2017

Agenda and Minutes of the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel of 19 June 2017

[All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.](#)

## West Mercia Fire Governance Consultation – Initial Analysis

### Introduction

1. This report has been prepared to provide a summary of the initial findings from the fire governance consultation.

### Executive Summary

2. In total **1,307** responses were received. 1279 individuals, businesses or organisations completed the consultation questionnaire and a further 28 written submissions were made.
3. 792 out of 1279 (61.9%) of respondents who completed the consultation questionnaire were supportive of the PCC taking on the governance of the two Fire and Rescue Services within West Mercia.
4. 26 out of 28 (93%) of the written submissions were opposed to the proposal.
5. In total 794 out of the 1307 responses were supportive – **60.7%**

### Methodology

6. The Policing and Crime Act 2017 places a requirement on the PCC to consult with the following groups: each relevant authority; people in the area; employee representative groups from the fire service and employee representative groups from the police service.
7. The methods of engagement and communication were tailored to each of the stakeholder groups to increase participation and feedback and these are outlined in more detail later in this report.

### Public consultation

8. A public consultation exercise ran for 13 weeks, commencing on 12<sup>th</sup> June and ending on the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2017, and followed the Cabinet Office consultation principles guidance.
9. Details of the consultation were published on the PCC's website. This included a dedicated page signposted from the homepage containing details of the

proposals, summary Q&A, highlights from initial business case, link to a consultation questionnaire, a full downloadable version of the consultation pack and the option to request the pack in alternative formats where required.

10. During the course of the consultation the dedicated fire consultation page received 2902 hits of which 2037 were unique views. On average each user spent 2 minutes 54 seconds on the page.
11. The consultation questionnaire gathered data on:
  - whether people supported the single governance model
  - the reasons for their opinion (including a free text box for comment)
  - in what capacity people were responding (community member, business, council, police officer/staff, fire officer/staff)
  - respondent's age
  - respondent's local policing area.
12. The consultation questionnaire was designed to be simple and quick to complete in all formats – either hard copy, on computers or on mobile devices. A copy of the questionnaire is attached at appendix A.

## **Promotion and engagement**

13. The consultation was supported by an extensive programme of promotion and engagement, summarised below.

## **Media Coverage**

14. A media release was issued to coincide with the launch of the consultation and multiple further comments were issued to outlets from the PCC. Over the course of the consultation the issue received more than 50 different individual items of local coverage across the West Mercia area, often featuring multiple times in different outlets, using a range of voices and opinion including:
  - Radio - the consultation was featured on the following radio stations: BBC Shropshire, BBC Hereford and Worcester, Free Radio
  - TV - The PCC was interviewed for both BBC Midlands Today and BBC Sunday Politics
  - Newspapers / Magazines – The consultation featured in a full range of local papers including Worcester News, Shropshire Star, Hereford Times, Kidderminster Shuttle, Redditch Standard, Worcester Observer, Malvern Observer, Malvern Gazette, Droitwich Standard, Bromsgrove Advertiser, Evesham Observer
  - All outlets named above also carried the story on their websites and social media, along with the Shropshire Live site.

## **Digital platforms**

15. The following platforms were used to extend the reach of the consultation, particularly to individuals who were less likely to use traditional media:

- Paid Facebook and Instagram adverts were placed in June with a reach of 44,409, resulting in 400 post engagements
- Twitter posts linked in to local networking groups #HerefordHour, #ShrewsburyHour and #WorcestershireHour were used to increase local reach and engagement.
- Promotional and information messages were delivered in monthly PCC newsletters in June, July and August.

## **Face to Face**

16. The PCC and his staff carried out face to face consultation with members of the public at the following public events over the summer:

- Three Counties, Malvern Worcestershire
- Shobden Food and Flying Festival
- Newport Show
- Oswestry Show
- Pershore Plum Festival

17. Locations were visited across the West Mercia area to carry out face-to-face consultation with communities and businesses in town and city centres:

- Herefordshire: Hereford, Ledbury and Ross on Wye
- Shropshire: Bridgnorth, Ludlow, Market Drayton Oswestry, Shrewsbury and Whitchurch
- Telford: Newport and Wellington
- Worcestershire: Bromsgrove, Kidderminster, Worcester, Redditch and Pershore

## **Meetings**

18. The PCC, his Deputy or senior staff members attended the following public stakeholder meetings to discuss the fire governance proposals:

- 14 June – Shropshire Fire and Rescue Authority AGM
- 27 June – Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority
- 28 June – Worcestershire County Association of Local Councils (CALC)
- 17 July – Shropshire Association of Local Councils (SALC)
- 17 July – Telford and Wrekin Council's Customer, Community and Partnership Scrutiny meeting
- 18 July – Worcestershire County Council's Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board

- 8 Aug – Bromsgrove Area Local Joint Committee
- 21 Aug – Herefordshire Council's General Scrutiny Committee
- 24 Aug – Bewdley Town Council meeting
- 4 Sept – Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority
- 4 Sept – Shropshire County Council's Communities Overview Committee
- 5 Sept – Herefordshire and Ludlow College
- 6 Sept – Much Wenlock Local Joint Committee

19. The PCC also met local authority leaders on an individual basis to further discuss the proposals.

### **Internal police / fire promotion**

20. To raise the profile of the fire governance proposals with the officers and staff of the two affected fire services and West Mercia Police, internal messaging took place within each organisation:

- Hereford & Worcester Fire Service - internal message was sent to all staff, message in Chiefs' bulletin, FAQ section on intranet, reminders sent out via email
- Shropshire Fire Service – internal messages via newsletter and intranet to all staff
- West Mercia Police - via an internal Postmaster to all officers and staff

### **Letters**

21. The PCC wrote to a range of stakeholders including MPs, council leaders and fire authority members, and all staff associations and representative bodies. Each recipient was sent a copy of the full consultation pack containing the initial business case, a document outlining PCC commitments for fire governance, a Q&A paper and a copy of the consultation questionnaire document.

22. In addition, the Association of Local Councils was contacted asking them to promote the consultation to their networks of town and parish councils.

### **Responses**

23. In total **1279** individuals / businesses or organisations had completed the consultation questionnaire prior to the consultation closing. In addition a further **28** written submissions were received. Based on the ONS 2016 Midyear estimates (issued June 2017), this number of responses is above the level required to achieve a 95% confidence level with a 3% margin of error based on the total random size.

24. Findings from the consultation questionnaire are summarised in the 'Survey findings' section of this report. This analysis does not include any questionnaires received after the closing date.

25. In addition 3 written submissions were made by members of the public, these are attached as part of appendix B. The PCC has also received a petition signed by 96 individuals opposing the proposals from a Shropshire Councillor. It cannot be established whether signatories are duplicate respondents.

### **Stakeholder response**

26. In line with legislation the consultation sought views from the four top tier local government authorities within West Mercia. The following responses were received:

- Herefordshire Council – oppose the proposal (submission attached at appendix C).
- Shropshire Council – oppose the proposal (submission attached at appendix D).
- Telford and Wrekin Council\* – oppose the proposal (submission attached at appendix E).
- Worcestershire County Council\* - oppose the proposal (submission attached at appendix F).

(\* requested an extension of the consultation deadline to allow consideration at the relevant council meeting)

### **Responses from representative bodies**

#### **Fire representative bodies**

27. All fire unions were invited in writing to take part in the consultation and to meet with the PCC with the aim of giving them the opportunity to discuss the proposals in more detail with him. Subsequently the PCC met with branch representatives of both the Hereford and Worcester and the Shropshire Fire Brigade Union and the Fire Officers' Association. Written responses were received from:

- Hereford and Worcester Fire Brigade Union – oppose the proposal (submission attached at appendix G)
- Shropshire Fire Brigade Union – oppose the proposal (submission attached at appendix H).
- Association of Principal Fire Officers – oppose the proposal (submission attached at appendix I).
- Fire Officers' Association - support the proposal in principle (submission attached at appendix J).

#### **Police representative bodies**

28. Police unions and associations were invited in writing to take part in the consultation and to meet with the PCC with the aim of giving them the opportunity

to discuss the proposals in more detail with him. No meetings were requested and no consultation submissions were received.

## **MP's**

29. Philip Dunne MP has written to the PCC outlining a number of observations on the proposals (submission attached at appendix L).

## **Other stakeholders who participated**

30. A number of full written submissions were received from other local stakeholders:

- Four second tier councils responded – all oppose the proposal.
- 10 town and parish councils responded in writing, plus one association of local councils. All were opposed to the proposal.
- Both fire and rescue authorities responded – both oppose the proposal

A copy of 'other stakeholder' comments is attached as part of appendix B.



## Survey findings

31. The survey sets out the PCC's proposal to take on governance of local fire services in Herefordshire, Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and Worcestershire and in doing so seeks to find out whether this proposal is supported along with some details about the respondent.

### Support for the proposal

32. Of the 1279 individuals, businesses or organisations who completed the survey questionnaire the majority supported the proposal:

- 61.9% (792) were in support
- 38.1% (487) were against the proposal

33. Table 1 below shows the support for and against the proposal broken down by respondent type and shows that individual members of the public and businesses were the most supportive of the proposal, and employees and councillors were mostly against the proposal.

Answering as/on behalf of	Support	Against
An individual member of the community	64%	36%
A business	87%	13%
As an employee or volunteer with the police or fire service	37%	63%
As a councillor or on behalf of a council	33%	67%

**Table 1**

34. Respondents were then asked what the main reasons for their answer had been and were given a number of options to choose from as well as the opportunity to provide a free text answer if they wished<sup>1</sup>. The results are shown in figures 1 and 2 below.

35. For those in support of the proposal, 'financial considerations', was the primary reason for their decision across all types of respondent, except for business respondents who stated 'levels of collaboration', (62.8%) was equally as important as 'financial considerations' (62.8%).

36. For those against the proposal, replacing the existing fire and rescue authorities was the main reason for their opposition. However, the primary reason varied across respondent type. For councillors and businesses other was the main reason, for individuals it was replacing the existing Fire and Rescue Authorities and for employees both service resilience and replacing the existing Fire and Rescue Authorities were the main reasons for opposing the proposal.

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<sup>1</sup> Respondents could choose as many of the options as they wished

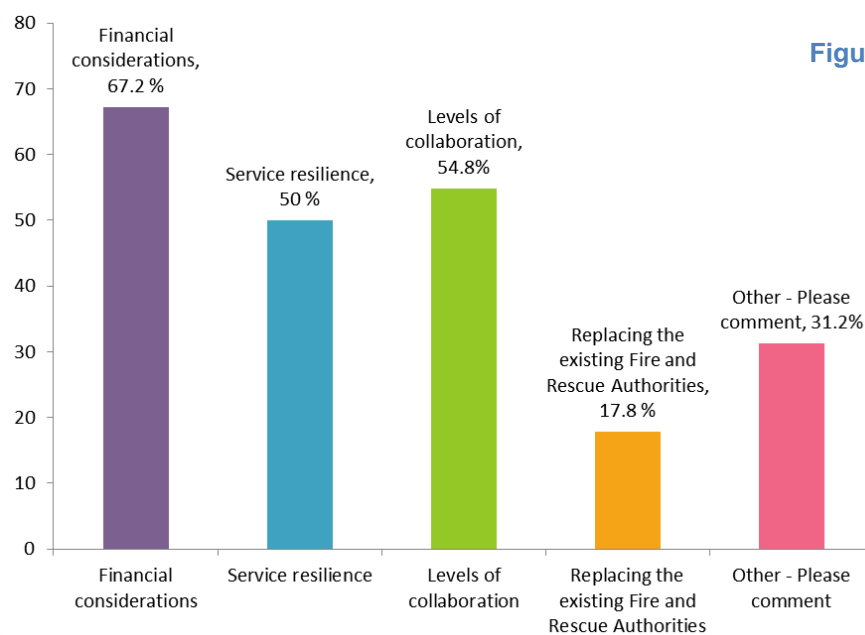


Figure 1 – support the proposal

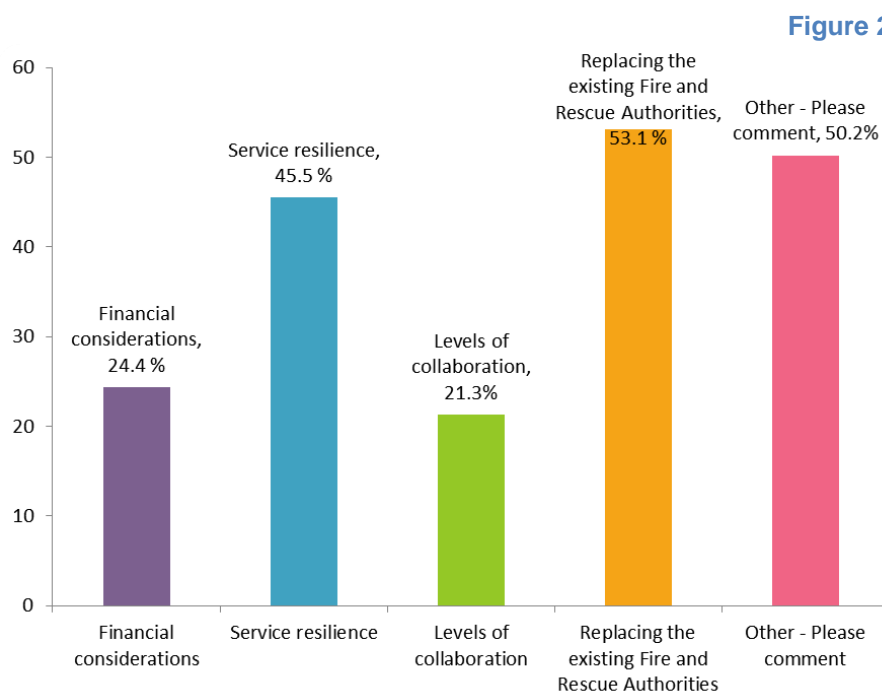


Figure 2 – against the proposal

**37.** In total, of the respondents who supported the proposal and ticked *other* as one of their main reasons 247 made a comment. 484 of the respondents against the proposal who ticked *other* also commented. An initial analysis shows that there are a number of themes arising from the comments made by those for and against the proposals. More analysis of these comments will be undertaken to enable the PCC to provide a response to these in his formal response to all stakeholders, which as stated earlier is not contained in this report.

38. The 5 most common themes for each of the supporting and opposing responses are shown below. Please note respondents may have commented on more than one theme and each has been counted.

### **Comments in support of the proposal**

- Want to see frontline officer numbers protected – 40 related comments
- Want to have the PCC governing the fire service in preference to a fire authority – 34 related comments
- Financial / cost saving benefits – 31 related comments
- Shared service / collaboration opportunities – 22 related comments
- Service improvement opportunities – 17 related comments

### **Comments against the proposal**

- Seen as too much work for one person or empire building – 70 related comments
- Opposed to the idea of a PCC / involvement of politics – 42 related comments
- It will reduce accountability and scrutiny – 31 related comments
- The police service and fire service operate differently / detrimental to fire to be associated with the police – 28 related comments
- Concerns about the possible amalgamation / merger of the two services – 16 related comments

A copy of all the comments made is attached at Appendix K.

### **About the respondents<sup>2</sup>**

39. Respondents were asked a small number of questions about themselves, namely what sort of respondent they were, their age and where they lived (based on local policing area boundaries).

### **Respondent type**

40. As can be seen from figure 3 the majority of respondents were individual members of the public. Of the survey respondents who were employees/volunteers of either the police or fire service, 12.5% work for Hereford and Worcester Fire Service, 52.9% work for Shropshire Fire Service and 35.6% work for West Mercia Police. The majority (57.8%) of respondents who stated they were a local councillor represent either a town or parish council

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<sup>2</sup> All data is based on the number of respondents answering the individual question

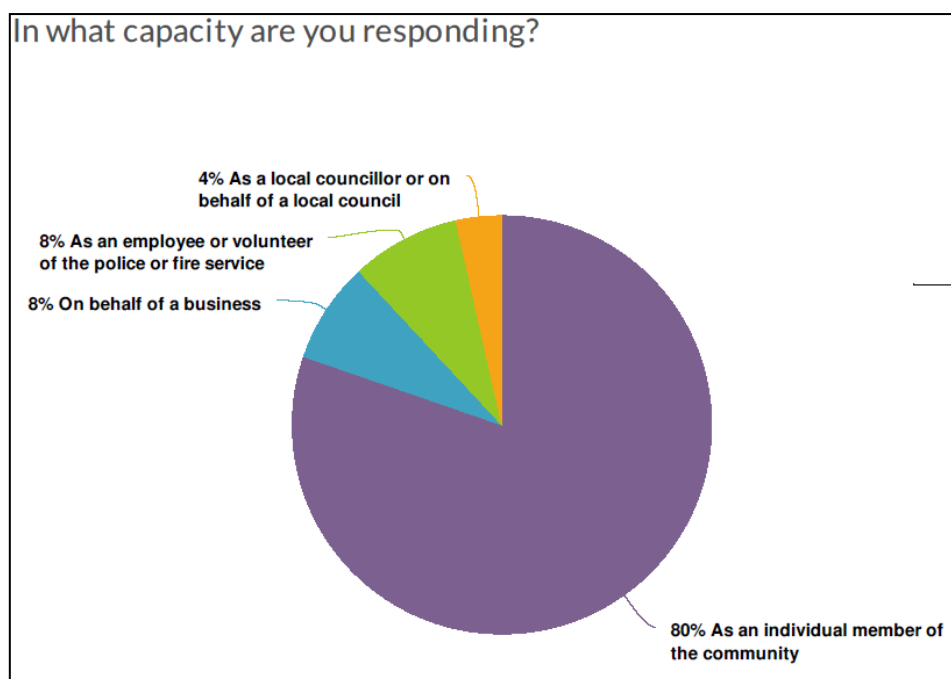


Figure 3

## Respondent age

41. The majority (42.4%) of respondents were aged 40 -64. The 65 and over age group were the next highest at 30.7% and 7.4% of respondents were aged 25 and under.

## Respondent location

42. Table 2 below provides a comparison of population size and response proportions. The area with the greatest number of respondents is Worcestershire which is the largest area of West Mercia based on population size. Telford and Wrekin is the smallest part of West Mercia based on population size and had the lowest number of responses, excluding those respondents who stated *other*. Of the 3% of respondents who stated *other* many were from bordering areas.

Area	Population*	Population as a % of the West Mercia total	% response to the consultation
Herefordshire	189,309	15%	15%
Shropshire	313,373	25%	34%
Telford & Wrekin	172,976	14%	6%
Worcestershire	583,053	46%	42%
'Other'	-	-	3%
West Mercia total	1,258,711	100%	100%

Table 2: \*Population figures are taken from the ONS 2016 Mid-year estimates (issued June 2017)

## **Conclusion**

43.61.9% of respondents who completed the consultation questionnaire were supportive of the PCC taking on the governance of the two Fire and Rescue Services within West Mercia. This is in contrast to the response from the statutory consultees and other stakeholders who all bar one were opposed to the proposals (plus one individual response which is unclear).

**Andrew Champness**  
**Chief Executive**

## **Appendices**

Appendix A – Copy of the survey questionnaire  
Appendix B – Copy of the other stakeholder submissions received  
Appendix C – Hereford Council's consultation submission  
Appendix D - Shropshire Council consultation submission  
Appendix E – Telford and Wrekin consultation submission  
Appendix F – Worcestershire County Council consultation submission  
Appendix G – Hereford and Worcester FBU consultation submission  
Appendix H – Shropshire FBU consultation submission  
Appendix I – Association of Principal Fire Officers' consultation submission  
Appendix J – Fire Officers' Association consultation submission  
Appendix K – Copies of all comments made in the free text section of the online questionnaire  
Appendix L – Philip Dunne MP letter