



Fire Officers' Association
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Police and Crime Commissioner
OPCC
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11th September 2017

Dear Mr Campion

Fire and Rescue Service Governance Business Case Consultation Response

As you are aware from our conversation the Fire Officers Association has no political affiliation and therefore our work is focussed on providing the best support we can for our members. It is with this in mind that we take a pragmatic approach to any possible change in governance arrangements for fire and rescue services.

At all times we will act in what we consider to be the best interests of our members.

Our main points are;

- The fire and rescue service identity should be retained.
- The organisations should remain separate with their own leadership.
- Budgets should remain separate at all times.
- The FOA would like to see continued investment in training for firefighting staff, we see this as being essential to maintain firefighter safety and maintaining the appropriate level of professional competence.
- Collaborative work is important but the FRS does not need to lose sight of the single service skills such as fire and rescue core skills and fire safety work and inspections. In addition it is also important that time and adequate resources are available for these single service functions to be carried out.

Members wanted to reinforce the importance of the service retaining and strengthening their prevention role so they do not just become a response service. The fire and rescue service nationally has a very strong brand image in this area of work that has led to many successes in the past. Members are keen to see this being continually exploited for the good of West Mercia residents.

The FOA would not advocate a policy of compulsory redundancies from the fire and rescue service support staff (or compulsory redundancies from any section of the workforce). The FOA would advocate an incremental approach merging "back office" arrangements and allow natural wastage to occur over time where possible.

Our middle manager members have in our opinion taken more than their fair share of reduction in numbers leading to significantly increased workloads. In some cases this has led to unsustainable levels of responsibility and work leading to mental health problems for our members. We would seek reassurance that further reductions would not be made and our members well being is considered at all times.

For many years we have been critical of some fire and rescue authorities not holding Chief Fire Officers to account resulting in some services being statutorily inspected with all the negative attention that brings to the fire and rescue service in general. The FOA would be interested in hearing in detail how the change in governance arrangements would improve accountability within the Fire and Rescue Service.

In addition the FOA would be interested to learn the detail of how you would ensure that both Fire and Rescue Services would be prepared and positioned to score well in its first HMICFRS inspection.

The FOA would be interested to hear in detail how you would deliver the bullet points listed on pages 4-6 of your business case?

Considering all the above the FOA would support in principle your preferred option as described in the consultation document.

As stated above this is an "in principle" decision and the FOA will be guided by the FOA national Executive Board and its members in the two Fire and Rescue Services as the move towards a change in governance progresses.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'AR', is located below the closing text.

Ade Robinson
Assistant Chief Executive
Fire Officers Association

Information about the Fire Officer's Association

The Fire Officers' Association was formed in 1994 in order to offer members of the service an alternative representative body which would seek to represent their views and further their aspirations in a non militant manner, free from political affiliation. A Certificate of Independence under the above-mentioned 1992 Act was granted in June 1995.

Management of the Association is vested in the Chief Executive and the Executive Board comprises serving personnel from around the United Kingdom. Membership is open to all roles (uniformed and support) but predominantly includes middle managers. It is this group of FRS staff that the Association represents in the national negotiating machinery through membership of the Middle Managers Negotiating Body (MMNB).

Since its formation the Fire Officers' Association has developed the service offered to members and we believe that the Association is in a position to offer members of the Service, particularly those in management roles, an organisation that provides representation in a responsible, constructive and modern manner.

Whilst the Association represents members in all sections and roles within the Fire and Rescue Service, our primary focus is on those members working in management roles who have day-to-day responsibility for the implementation of policy and development initiatives.