

Purpose: Approval

Date: 13 June 2018

Title: CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED CREATION OF A NEW COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY TO INCLUDE HAMPSHIRE, SOUTHAMPTON, PORTSMOUTH AND THE ISLE OF WIGHT AUTHORITIES

Report of Chief Fire Officer

SUMMARY

1. At the 21 March 2018 Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority (HFRA) meeting, Members received a report seeking approval to carry out a public consultation exercise on proposals to create a new Combined Fire Authority (CFA) consisting of the Authorities of Hampshire County Council, Southampton City Council, Portsmouth City Council and the Isle of Wight Council. Members approved the initial business case and requested further information, including details of the consultation, to be brought back to an HFRA meeting for decision.
2. The consultation information and the full business case is included at appendix A. This report seeks approval to consult on the document at appendix A.

BACKGROUND

1. On 21 February 2017, both the Isle of Wight Council (IWC) and the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority (HFRA) agreed to an investigation into the extension of the current CFA to include the Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service (IWFRS.) Members of the HFRA and IWC asked the Chief Fire Officer to investigate a business case for both HFRA and IWC for further consideration and decision.
2. The report presented to the HFRA on 21 February 2017 is provided as background papers and provides details of the current Strategic Partnership, Delivering Differently in Partnership (DDiP), between the IWC and the HFRA and explains the rationale for investigating options for future governance.
3. On 21 and 22 March 2018, both the Isle of Wight Council (IWC) and the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority (HFRA) received an initial business case. Officers sought approval to proceed with consultation and to construct a full business case. Councillors from the IWC and Members from the HFRA requested further information relating to the consultation and business case. It was agreed that the Chief Fire Officer would bring back a full business case, if there was a case to create a new CFA, which would provide overarching public benefit and present a report to both Authorities in June 2018 for further decision about whether to proceed with consultation about the proposal.

BUSINESS CASE AND CONSULTATION

1. The creation of a new CFA is approved by the Secretary of State under the powers granted in Section 2 of the Fire and Rescue Service’s Act 2004. The Secretary of State approves the creation of a new CFA if it is in the interests of Efficiency, Effectiveness, Economy or Public Safety. For the purpose of assessing the risks and benefits of creating a new CFA, Officers have carried out an operational and financial analysis. Efficiency, Effectiveness and Public Safety are explored in the operational analysis. Economy is explored in the financial analysis. The business case can be found at appendix A.
2. Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority is a Best Value Authority, under section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999, and is committed to securing continuous improvement in the way its functions are exercised, having due regard to economy, effectiveness and efficiency. HFRA is consulting with key stakeholders regarding the proposed creation of a new CFA to ensure it continues to meet the requirements of a Best Value Authority.
3. Key stakeholders have been identified. They will be asked their views on whether the creation of a new CFA is in the interests of Efficiency, Effectiveness, Economy or Public Safety.

SUPPORTING OUR SERVICE PLAN AND PRIORITIES

1. Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service’s (HFRS) aim is to be the best fire and rescue service in the Country. We are focused on ensuring we deliver the best possible services to our communities and make life safer for everyone. We are committed to developing our Service placing efficiency, effectiveness and public safety at the heart of all our decisions.
2. Seeking the views of key stakeholders regarding the creation of a new CFA supports our Safer and Stronger priorities and our vision to create a safer Hampshire.

CONSULTATION

1. If Members approve proceeding with a consultation exercise, the process will be run over 12 weeks. Consultation will be aimed at the public and key stakeholders including the current Constituent Authorities and the Police and Crime Commissioner. Consultation responses would then be analysed and considered by the HFRA together with any other relevant information, in November 2018 and a decision on whether to proceed with a proposal to the Secretary of State will be made by the HFRA. There would be two separate consultation exercises carried out, one by HFRA in Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton and one by the IWC on the Isle of Wight.
2. Consultation assurance – The Consultation Institute have been commissioned to carry out a retrospective review of the business case and have provided advice and guidance around best practice for consultation.
3. Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service (DWFRS) merged together in 2016. HFRS Officers have contacted DWFRS Officers to get an understanding of how they approached the combining of the two Services.

COLLABORATION

1. Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority and the Isle of Wight Council have already established a successful strategic partnership through the Delivering Differently in Partnership (DDiP) which was created in April 2015. The partnership has been operating for nearly three years and has seen benefits to both Authorities and the communities we serve. The investigation of creating a new CFA demonstrates that both HFRA and IWC are committed to ensuring the most efficient and effective governance models are in place that will benefit the residents of both the Isle of Wight and Hampshire.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

1. The team carrying out the investigations, which consists of officers from both Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, has been funded from existing budgets. Should there be agreement to proceed to public consultation a joint team would continue this work and be resourced from existing budgets.
2. Should there be a decision by both Authorities to create a new CFA, an implementation team will be required to deliver the project. Discussions with the Home Office will continue to determine whether any financial support for implementation is available.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

1. Legal advice has been sought throughout the process of forming the business case and the consultation documents. Both the Authorities legal advisors have been fully engaged through this process, both providing advice to the authorities and seeking advice where required.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

1. A stage one equality impact assessment has been carried out which assesses the impact of the eight protected characteristics as outlined in the Equality Act 2010. The assessment has identified a potential impact on any employees and Fire Authority Members with a disability, should there be a need to travel to the Isle of Wight for any reason.
2. If Members approve to proceed with carrying out a consultation exercise, a stage two equality impact assessment would be carried out to identify if any employees and Authority Members are affected and if so, consult with them and provide a plan for support.

OPTIONS

1. Option 1: Delegate authority to the Chief Fire Officer to run a consultation exercise on behalf of the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority with relevant stakeholders (including the public), in Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton about the proposal to create a new CFA consisting of the Authorities of Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council, Southampton City Council and the Isle of Wight Council.

If this option is chosen, a decision paper including the outcomes of the two public consultation exercises would be brought back to the IWC and the HFRA in November 2018 for decisions about whether to proceed with the proposal to create a new CFA.

1. Option 2: Maintain existing strategic partnership arrangements and do not explore further the proposal to create a new CFA.

If this option is chosen, it would indicate that a creation of a new CFA is not the preferred option. The two services would continue to operate under the existing DDiP arrangements and a review of the partnership would be carried out.

RISK ANALYSIS

1. Risk management practices have been applied throughout the investigation of the business case for the creation of a new CFA. A Political, Environmental, Social, Technological, Legal and Economical (PESTLE) analysis and a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis have been carried out as part of the risk management practices which have formed the business case.

CONCLUSION

1. Based on the information within this report, it is recommended that option one is approved by Members. Initial investigations have demonstrated that through the proposed creation of a new CFA there could be many benefits realised in relation to Public Safety, Efficiency and Effectiveness and Economy across a new Combined Fire Authority covering Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight.

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| RECOMMENDATION1. That authority is delegated to the Chief Fire Officer to carry out a consultation exercise about the proposal for the creation of a new CFA, based on the information at appendix A, with the outcome of the consultation to be presented to the HFRA during November 2018.
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APPENDICES ATTACHED

1. Appendix A – Consultation information and business case.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. [Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority Report, 22 March 2018: Initial business case into the proposed creation of a new Combined Fire Authority to include Hampshire, Southampton, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight Authorities](http://democracy.hants.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CommitteeId=179)
2. [Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority report, 21 February 2017; Potential to expand the existing Combined Fire Authority of Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton to include the Isle of Wight Fire Authority](http://democracy.hants.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=179&MId=509&Ver=4)

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