

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority

9 September 2015

Item: 10

Devolution in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight

Report by the Chief Officer

Contact: Geoff Howsego, Director of Professional Services, telephone: 023 8064 6842
Nicki Whitehouse, Directorate Support Manager, telephone: 023 8062 6828

1 Summary

- 1.1 There has been growing interest in how devolution as a concept could be developed around local government in England, particularly given developments of ideas and models in the North of England. Since the General Election there is political commitment to further devolution based on a Combined Authority model.
- 1.2 The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Government Association¹ (HIOWLGA) has been discussing how a model could be developed for some months. At its meeting in June, there was unanimous support for the exploration of a Wider Hampshire and Isle of Wight model as a basis for a Combined Authority and to make a proposal to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG).
- 1.3 In developing a devolution deal for the wider Hampshire and Isle of Wight area, members of HIOWLGA agreed that it should cover skills, business support, infrastructure and transport, housing and planning, health and social care, double devolution around county services and future funding models.
- 1.4 A model for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight would involve creating a new Combined Authority comprising Hampshire and the Isle of Wight County Councils, Portsmouth and Southampton City Councils, and the 11 District Councils within Hampshire. The two Local Enterprise Partnerships would also support the scheme.
- 1.5 At present the Fire Authority and the Police and Crime Commissioner are viewed as “key stakeholders” rather than signatories to any new combined authority. It is felt that the Fire Authority may wish to have a position statement on the Wider Hampshire and Isle of Wight Model. The Chairman and Chief Officer have started a discussion on the potential risks and benefits of such a model to the Fire Authority as a key stakeholder, and have developed a draft statement, which is attached in Appendix A.

¹ HIOWLGA meeting consists of Leaders and Chief Executives of the 4 unitary councils and 11 district councils in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight plus the Fire Authority and Police and Crime Commissioner

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 Members discuss and agree the position statement on the Wider Hampshire and Isle of Wight Combined Authority Model in Appendix A.

3 Introduction and background

- 3.1 The principle driver of devolution is to access and take local control of the responsibilities and authority which are currently vested in the control of government ministers or governmental bodies such as the Highways Agency, Environment Agency, the NHS, etc. The aim is to gain significant opportunities to improve the provision of public services by uniting local authorities and other bodies who provide them by bringing services closer to people. It should give greater opportunities for people to have more say in their services and how they are provided. The ultimate outcomes are to deliver efficiencies, economies, and better services for local people and a growth in the economy.
- 3.2 The Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill which is currently progressing through the House of Lords will help facilitate the devolution of powers from government to England's towns, cities, and counties.
- 3.3 A group of Leaders and Chief Executives are developing a model for devolution under the umbrella of a Combined Authority across the HIOWLGA area.
- 3.4 HIOWLGA has sent two letters to the DCLG on behalf of the Leaders of the 15 local authorities working with the two Local Enterprise Partnerships to confirm their intent to negotiate a devolution deal in the Autumn. At the time of writing this report, work was continuing to produce a refined set of proposals to be submitted to the DCLG by 4 September for consideration ahead of the 2015 Spending Review.
- 3.5 In the meantime, all the constituent local authorities have agreed to seek approval of their Councils to take forward negotiations with Government.
- 3.6 A number of workstreams are being developed. Those that relate to public sector transformation, health and social care, shared services and employment initiatives are things that the Fire Authority will want to be sighted on/take part in. For this reason it is important that the Fire Authority and the Service ensure they remain aware of any opportunities that a new Combined Authority may provide, particularly as a number of the functions being considered, such as any relating to health and social care, are integral to our own current and future plans.

4 Supporting our corporate priorities and aims

- 4.1 To ensure that we can take advantage of any opportunities that devolution provides we need to be sighted and involved in progress, although much of the detail will develop over time.

5 Risk analysis

- 5.1 Risks to the Fire Authority centre on not being part of the model, and therefore not being part of the discussions around how functions are devolved and who might deliver them. As the Service increasingly sees itself as a trusted delivery partner looking for roles outside of our core activity, we could miss important opportunities.

6 People Impact Assessment

- 6.1 The proposals in this report are considered compatible with the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights, the Human Rights Act 1998, and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

7 Resource implications

- 7.1 There are no significant resource requirements from the information in this paper at present. If and when any are identified, they will be assessed.

8 Consultation

- 8.1 Stakeholders will be engaged and consulted as any plans are developed. However we have been proactive in contacting a number of the workstream leads to ensure that as a key stakeholder we are included in the thinking.

9 Conclusion

- 9.1 An agreed position statement on devolution in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight will help focus and clarify the Authority's role as a key stakeholder during the development of any new Combined Authority.

10 Background papers

- 10.1 The following documents disclose the facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and has been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of the report:

Hampshire County Council Cabinet report – Devolution – Positioning the County Council – 22 June 2015 – note this report has an appendix which explains the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill. The report can be access at the following link:

[Supporting documents, reports, and minutes for meeting agenda item](#)

Note: The list excludes: (1) published works; and (2) documents that disclose exempt or confidential information defined in the Act.

Appendix A

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority Position Statement

Devolution in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight – The Wider Hampshire Model

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority support the proposal for the development of the Wider Hampshire and Isle of Wight Model. The Fire Authority along with our blue light colleagues is currently seen as a key stakeholder to the new combined Authority. At this stage the Fire Authority is comfortable with this position however it will work to clarify what this role really means as any new Combined Authority emerges.

The Fire Authority has a proven track record of collaboration and partnership working with many of the potential members of the new Combined Authority. It also has a remit and representation which spans Hampshire including the cities of Portsmouth and Southampton. In addition to this the Authority provides services to the Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service and therefore is well placed to fully engage with any new model of Governance.

However, the Fire Authority recognises that many of the planned functions which may be devolved, such as work that relates to the transforming public services and Health and Social Care agenda are central to the development of the Fire and Rescue Service. It will therefore direct the service to ensure the Fire Authority does not miss opportunities by being a key stakeholder rather than a full member.