

9 June 2016

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority Governance Review

Report by the Working Group

Chair of the Working Group – Councillor Fairhurst

1 Summary

- 1.1 At its December 2015 meeting, the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority (“the 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 Authority is in the best position to continue to lead the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service (“the Service”) in delivering excellent quality services to the residents of Hampshire, whilst remaining resilient and responsive to the change and challenges into the future.
- 1.2 The Review has now concluded and the proposals are detailed in this report, for Members’ consideration and approval.
- 1.3 The Working Group carried out the Review under the following two separate themes:
 - To consider the effectiveness of the Authority’s governance arrangements to ensure that they enable the best outcomes for our stakeholders.
 - To consider the efficiency of the Authority to ensure good value for money to the public.

The terms of reference of the Review are included in Appendix 3.

- 1.4 Appendix 1 relates primarily to the effectiveness outcomes and provides opportunities for improvement. These improvements are expected to develop over the next six to nine months and beyond in the form of a number of workstreams. Appendix 2 relates to the efficiency of the Authority of which it addresses size and structure of the Authority, and also makes recommendations relating to the future governance model of the Authority. Although the two elements are reported separately and have individual recommendations, it is important to recognise the link between the effectiveness of the Authority and its efficiency. Whatever size is decided upon for the Authority, it needs to be effective in its role with a structure and framework that supports this. The aim is to make the Authority more engaged and participative, providing Members with the tools to fulfil their role.

- 1.5 It is important to note, that regardless of any decision made in terms of the number of Members on the Fire Authority, that Members play as effective role as possible to lead and hold the Service to account.
- 1.6 Since the completion of the majority of the work within the review, the Local Government Association (“LGA”) has published new guidance: Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (2016 Edition), which will be used as a guide when implementing any agreed proposals.

2 Recommendations

That the Authority is recommended to:

- 2.1 Accept a strategy to offer the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) a seat on the Authority with effect from the beginning of the 2017/18 municipal year. A further report will be brought back to the Authority in September 2016. (Appendix 1 para.4.9)
- 2.2 With immediate effect, invite the PCC to future Full Authority meetings, in a non-voting capacity but with the ability to comment on items of business. Delegated authority be given to the Clerk of the Authority to amend Standing Orders as required to facilitate comment from the PCC. (Appendix 1 para.4.10)
- 2.3 Ask the Chief Fire Officer to open dialogue with South Central Ambulance Service to identify options for reciprocal input to each other’s strategic decision making and for a progress report to be brought back to the Authority in September 2016. (para.4.11)
- 2.4 Approve the content of the Governance Improvement plan detailed in Appendix 1 paragraph 11.
- 2.5 Agree to consult stakeholders on the two proposed governance models identified by the Working Group, prior to a final decision to proceed with a new governance model to be taken by the Authority at its September meeting. (Appendix 2 para.2.1)
- 2.6 Delegate authority to the Clerk of the Authority to put in place the necessary arrangements in agreement with the Chairman of the Authority to consult with relevant stakeholders on the two proposed governance models. (Appendix 2 para.2.2)

3 Introduction and background

- 3.1 The Authority has a strong track record in applying good governance to managing the Service in delivering positive outcomes to the public. The external and internal influences that affect the Service have been changing and continue to do so. Community risks have been shifting and the roles of the Service are adapting to address these. The Authority and Service have embraced partnerships and

collaboration to help make Hampshire safer and reduce costs to meet diminishing budgets.

- 3.2 Implementation of the proposals from the Review will help to ensure that governance and scrutiny practices continue to hold the Service to account, enable robust decision making and provide strong leadership. It will also ensure the Authority continues to deliver value for money and contributes to the financial savings plan.

4 The Review

- 4.1 The Working Group carried out the Review, represented by all political parties and the constituent councils of the cities of Portsmouth and Southampton and Hampshire County Council. All Members of the Authority were consulted to give their views on the current governance structure of the Authority to ensure that all potential opportunities to improve were explored.
- 4.2 The effectiveness element of the work was based on the themes provided in the CIPFA/SOLACE guidance 'Delivering good governance in Local Government' (2007), upon which the Annual Governance Statement is based. This guidance includes questions specific for Members to consider, some of which have been used in the Review.
- 4.3 The efficiency element looked at the Authority and its committee structures, including costs and outcomes to indicate value for money. Benchmarking was undertaken to compare the Authority with the structures and costs of other English Combined Fire Authorities.
- 4.4 The Review has taken account of the change in ministerial responsibility for fire and rescue policy from the Department of Communities and Local Government to the Home Office. New legislation is now progressing through Parliament in the form of the Police and Crime Bill. This Bill introduces a new duty on all three emergency services to actively consider collaboration opportunities to work together. The Review has considered how the Authority can continue to be proactive in collaborating with our blue light partner organisations whilst still partnering with others.

5 Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service Fire Peer Challenge Review

- 5.1 The Service had a Peer Review in November 2015. One element of this focussed on governance and decision-making and another on political leadership. The resulting report has recently been published and reported to the Authority's Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee.
- 5.2 In summary the Peer Review came to the following conclusions in terms of political leadership:

Strengths

- Authority Members are committed, engaged and supportive of the direction of travel recommended by the Service
- There is a good induction process for new Members
- The governance review of the effectiveness and efficiency of the FRA is timely

Areas for consideration

- Authority Members could take a greater role in leading the development of the Service
- Member development in the roles and responsibilities of the FRA
- Members could consider additional champion roles to support the service
- Consistency of Member engagement on stations

5.3 These findings were used to help inform this Review. One improvement theme in particular was agreed in respect to Visibility and leadership of the Authority which the Chairman is taking forward and needs to be embedded in the effectiveness work. The aim is to have a participative and engaged Authority which is equipped to lead the Service into the future.

6 Supporting our corporate Priorities and aims

6.1 Good governance, particularly in time of extensive change will ensure that there is an effective process in place to support decision making which is essential to the delivery of our Service Plan Priorities and to achieve our Vision.

7 Quality Assurance

7.1 Whilst in its draft format, the reports were sent to and read by the Local Government Association (LGA). The LGA provided useful feedback to the Working Group which they considered during their finalisation.

8 Risk analysis

8.1 Effective governance and decision making is an enabler to managing risks and optimising opportunities. Implementing the proposals in this report will ensure that the Authority continues to be in a position to deliver this.

9 People Impact Assessment

9.1 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 Equality Act 2010. However Impact Assessments will be carried out if relevant before implementing any specific proposals.

10 Resource implications

- 10.1 To implement the recommendations in this report Member time and input will be required. Officer time will be resourced from the existing capacity in the Directorate Support team. Costs arising from the required input from Hampshire County Council's Member Services and Hampshire Legal Service will be met from existing budgets.

11 Consultation

- 11.1 Consultation has been carried out with all Authority Members during the Review. This included an on line questionnaire to all Members. A summary of the outcomes can be found in Appendix 4.
- 11.2 Subject to agreement of the recommendations, consultation will be undertaken with relevant stakeholders and is detailed in Appendix 2.

12 Conclusion

- 12.1 The outcomes of the Review present the Authority with an opportunity to further strengthen its governance arrangements, reduce costs and help ensure that robust decision making and strong leadership continues whilst delivering value for money.

Background papers

- Delivering good governance in Local Government (2007) – CIPFA/SOLACE
- The Good Governance Standard for Public Services – The Independent Commission on Good Governance in Public Services
- The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (2012)
- Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service Plan 2015-2020
- Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service Fire Peer Challenge 24th-27th November 2015

Appendices

- 1 – Effectiveness
- 2 – Efficiency
- 3 - Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority (HFRA) Governance Review Terms of Reference
- 4 - HFRA Governance Review - Questionnaire - summary of findings
- 5 - Emergency Services duty to collaborate - Report to Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority Standards and Governance Committee 7 April 2016
- 6 - Mathematical and rounded entitlement of a number of different Authority sizes, derived from the current ratio of electorate size in each of the three Authorities.
- 7 – HFRA Committee structures table – current and indicative for the two models