

## **CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED CREATION OF A NEW COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY FOR HAMPSHIRE, ISLE OF WIGHT, PORTSMOUTH AND SOUTHAMPTON**

### **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority and the Isle of Wight Council are running a consultation on the proposed creation of a new combined Fire Authority for Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton which runs from 6 August to 26 October 2018. Responses are invited from members of the public and local authorities. District Councillors' views have recently been sought and are set out in this report.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The principal driver for the proposal is given as the increasing pressure on all Fire and Rescue Authorities to ensure they are operating in the most efficient and effective way due to reducing budgets. Any changes to the governance arrangements in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight would not affect the statutory duty of the services to respond to emergencies. There would be little effect on the day to day operations of both services. An information pack on the proposed creation of the new combined Fire Authority is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

- 2.2 The consultation document explains:

- How fire and rescue services are managed
- Legislative framework
- Facts and figures about the Fire and Rescue Service in each location
- Service risk reviews
- The focus of the new combined Fire Authority and Service
- The reasons for the review (simpler governance arrangements, greater operational and financial efficiency, effectiveness and public safety, greater pooling of skills and knowledge and greater contribution towards national scale incidents)
- Potential impacts (impact on Council Tax and staff)
- Potential financial impact
- What happens if the new Combined Fire Authority is not created
- Other options (the option exists for Police and Crime Commissioners to make use of new powers within the Police and Crime Act 2017, to apply to the Government to take over governing responsibility to Fire Services in the area.

### **3. RESPONDING TO THE CONSULTATION**

- 3.1 There are several ways of responding to the consultation:

Visit [www.hantsfire.gov.uk/consultation](http://www.hantsfire.gov.uk/consultation)

Alternatively email [hfrsconsultation@hantsfire.gov.uk](mailto:hfrsconsultation@hantsfire.gov.uk)

or phone 02380 626 815 for a copy of the response form and information pack.

#### **4. MEMBERS VIEWS**

- 4.1 All members were invited to comment on the consultation and their views are summarised below:

Members recognised that many public bodies are reorganising to realise efficiencies. The proposals are supported as long as resources on the ground are sufficient, including local specialist services (eg animal rescues in the Forest).

#### **5. ENVIRONMENTAL, CRIME & DISORDER AND EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 None as a consequence of this report.

#### **6. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS**

- 6.1 **Leader and Corporate Affairs:**

Fire and rescue services are a most important part of public safety. I feel the consultation document is well informed, fair and reflects a good assessment of the whole situation recognising the pressure on public finances, and fully support the proposals for a combined fire authority for Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton, (and note the support expressed at the recent HLOWLA meeting attended by the Chief Executive and myself)

- 6.2 **Community Affairs:**

If it is agreed that a Combined Fire Authority were to be approved it would provide a single point of governance and if resources were pooled, the various arrangements required to support the transition of budgets and liabilities would need to be carefully managed.

The transition arrangements must seek to be fair to all parties and the Combined Fire Authority must ensure sufficient support services are available in all areas that it is responsible for. I welcome the innovation and cost effectiveness that this would bring. I am also heartened that the new Combined Fire Authority intend to upgrade, support and better maintain the Isle of Wight fire stations.

The focus of this new Authority should be to run all services for the collective benefit of all communities. Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton.

I will follow the progress of this consultation with great interest.

## **7. RECOMMENDATION**

- 7.1 That the following response be provided to the consultation on the proposed creation of a new combined Fire Authority for Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton.

That the District Council recognises the pressure on all public bodies to deliver services in the most efficient way, in the face of financial and other challenges. Having examined the proposals and the expected outcomes, the District Council supports them, whilst emphasising the need for a smooth transition, and for the local service to be protected so there is no detrimental effect on public safety.

### **Further information:**

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### **Background Papers:**

None