

County Council – 22 July 2016

Agenda Item 5(a) – Notice of Motion by Mr Evans

West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service

Introduction

The Policing and Crime Bill is currently proceeding through Parliament. It includes provision for mechanisms to transfer responsibility for Fire and Rescue functions (FRAs) to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs).

Current Arrangements for the County’s Fire and Rescue Service (FRS)

In West Sussex, the FRS is overseen entirely by the County Council. The service is integrated within the Executive Directorate of Communities and Public Protection (CPP). The FRS is one of 14 managed within a local authority setting. FRS falls under the Cabinet Portfolio for Residents’ Services, with scrutiny via the Environmental and Community Services Select Committee.

The Executive Directorate for CPP comprises three Directorates:

- Operations, which covers the Fire and Rescue Service function, including fire stations, Incident Command, Transport Services and Fleet, Business Fire Safety, the Sussex Control Centre, and Operational ICT.
- Communities, which includes Community Operations, Intervention and Prevention, Community Safety, and Wellbeing and Partnerships.
- Public Protection, which includes Trading Standards, Health and Safety, and Resilience and Emergencies.

CPP is led by an Executive Director, who is the County’s Chief Fire Officer.

The majority of Fire and Rescue Service work is directed by legislation, as follows:

Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004	Fire fighting; fire safety; rescuing people from road traffic incidents; other emergency activities
Civil Contingencies Act 2004	Designated category 1 responders.
Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005	Enforcing fire safety laws in public and commercial buildings.
Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) 2007	Mandatory functions in connection with key types of emergencies such as chemical, radiological and biological incidents, and, for example, collapsed buildings and non-road traffic wreckages.

The concept behind the CPP Directorate is to benefit from significant cross-subsidisation of resources across public protection activities and to promote work within the community on resilience, safety and local prevention activity. This approach sees the FRS placed at the centre of a directorate working closely with community professionals, Resilience and Emergency Staff and Trading Standards.

The West Sussex Model also aims to build strong community links, and opportunities for community resilience, through a range of community development programmes aimed at improving health and wellbeing, reducing social isolation and improving social cohesion. Specific elements supporting the County Council’s three key priorities are:

Giving Children the Best Start in Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of education from primary school age upwards, teaching children about fire prevention and road safety. • The Firewise programme, which can help young people understand the consequences of experimenting with fires. • The FireBreak programme, aimed at 12 to 14-year-olds, promotes a culture of safety and community awareness.
Championing the Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with organisations to increase understanding of fire safety regulations and support compliance. • Work with the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership Programme, to maintain safe and efficient transport systems.
Independent for Longer in Later Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of over 5,000 high risk home safety visits every year. • A safeguarding training programme, which helps frontline staff refer hundreds of people for additional support every year. • Helping prevent social isolation.

There are several intended benefits to this model. These include:

Prevention: The focus is on preventative rather than reactive work. This has seen a decline in incidents, meaning the county and its residents are safer. In addition, it has provided opportunities to target resources where most needed.

Community resilience: Critical is the concept of supporting people and communities to help themselves through joint work between the FRS, other Directorates within the County Council and partners.

Collaboration and partnership working

The FRS works extensively in partnerships, including:

The Sussex Resilience Forum (SRF): This is a Local Resilience Forum that supports Category 1 responders under the Civil Contingencies Act in their statutory duties. This includes Emergency Services, Health, local authorities and government.

Sussex Safer Roads Partnerships (SSRP): SSRP is made up of Sussex Police, East and West Sussex County Councils, East and West Sussex FRSs, Brighton and Hove City Council, and Highways England to address road safety.

The Emergency Services Collaboration Project (ESCP): This involves joint work with East Sussex and Surrey FRSs as well as Sussex Police, Surrey Police and South East Coast Ambulance. Wider collaboration with FRS partners extends across the South East region and beyond in terms of policy development, training and procurement.

Joint Control: West FRS has joined with East Sussex FRS, to establish a joint control and mobilisation function, the Sussex Control Centre.

Benefits of internal joint work

In addition to the intended benefits of joint working, and collaboration, noted above, the following outcomes have been achieved, or are targeted:

- Corporate strategic co-ordination and sharing of expertise, by integration of Fire and Rescue Service leadership into the County Council's Corporate Leadership Team.
- Single shared back office functions under the Capita contract and the in-house corporate resources.
- A joint fleet function, providing efficiency in terms of procurement, maintenance and management.
- Rationalisation of the County Council estate, looking at opportunities for joint sites, best placed for both Fire and Rescue and other County Council services.

Provision for Transfer of FRA Responsibilities to the PCC

The Bill enables potential transfer of Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) duties to the PCC through mechanisms which:

- Enable PCCs to take over governance of their local FRA(s) where a local case is made - the 'governance' model. This would establish a new organisation (the 'PCC FRA'), which would be the new employer for FRS personnel (unless the 'Single Employer' is sought).
- Enable a PCC to take on the responsibilities of a FRA and to create a single employer for police and fire staff - the 'single employer' model.

In either case the Police and FRSs would remain operationally distinct. Opportunities for efficiency and economy would be sought in areas such as back office functions, management, rationalisation of assets, and procurement.

Where neither of the above models is adopted, the Bill provides for the PCC to be represented on FRAs, with the agreement of the FRA - the 'representation' model. The Home Secretary makes the decision whether to issue an order making the PCC the FRA for an area. The Home Secretary can only make an order creating a PCC-style FRA if satisfied that the PCC's proposal would be in the interests of either (a) economy, efficiency and effectiveness or (b) public safety.

Where a PCC takes on more than one FRA within their area, the PCC's police area must be the same as the areas of those FRAs together. The PCC will be required to consult each of the upper tier local authorities in their area on their proposal (or a combined authority where it is exercising the fire and rescue functions), before they submit it to the Secretary of State. PCCs are also required to seek the views of people in their police area.

Where a PCC is interested in taking on governance of the FRS, they will work with FRAs in their area to prepare their local case. The Bill requires relevant FRA(s) to co-operate with the PCC. If the plan is agreed, the Home Secretary will be enabled to make schemes transferring staff, property, rights and

liabilities to the new PCC-type FRA. New PCC-style FRAs will be funded through the local government finance settlement in the same way as an existing FRA and will receive revenue support grant and funding through business rate retention. The new PCC-type FRA would be a major precepting authority. Police and fire precepts will be paid to the PCC separately and will form two separate budgets.

The Bill also provides for collaboration in areas where a PCC does not take on responsibility for fire and rescue; these provisions enable a PCC to be represented on an FRA with voting rights, where the FRA agrees. These rights are confined to fire and rescue business.

Timescales and Process

The Bill is expected to receive Royal Assent by November 2016. In the interim, the PCC has advised that her office will commence development of a business case in August 2016, with public consultation planned for December 2016 to January 2017, and conclusion of the case scheduled for February 2017.

A 'Strategic Reference Group' has been established, involving parties from the County Council, East Sussex FRA and FRS, Sussex Police and the office of the PCC. This met for the first time on 8 July 2016.

Lee Neale

Executive Director Communities and Public Protection