



**DORSET & WILTSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE
AUTHORITY**

Item 17/45

MEETING	Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority
DATE OF MEETING	8 September 2017
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Planned changes to the membership and governance of the Fire and Rescue Authority
STATUS OF REPORT	For open publication
PURPOSE OF REPORT	For decision
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	At its meeting on 9 March 2017 the Authority received a joint report from the Chairman of the Governance Working Group and the Monitoring Officer on possible changes to the membership of the Authority. Having considered the report, the Authority approved in principle and, as the basis for consultation with the five constituent Councils, an Authority membership of 18. The views of the constituent Councils were then to be reported to this meeting. This report draws together the responses received to the consultation and recommends that the Authority make a formal request to the Home Secretary for a variation of the Combination Order to reduce the Authority's membership from 30 to 18.
RISK ASSESSMENT	In the previous report reference was made to commentary in the Adrian Thomas Review, changes introduced through the Policing and Crime Act 2017 and announcements by the Minister for Policing and the Fire Service as factors driving the need for change. The report commented that following the introduction of a new inspection regime there may be criticism of our governance arrangements and the potential for imposed change if the Authority continues with a membership of 30. This risk has increased significantly. The Authority now stands out as the only one with a membership as high as 30. Greater Manchester, the other Authority

	<p>which previously had a membership of 30, has moved to a Mayoral model in which the Mayor exercises the functions of the Fire and Rescue Authority supported by a Fire Committee of 15 members.</p>
COMMUNITY IMPACT	<p>None for the purposes of this report.</p>
BUDGET IMPLICATIONS	<p>A reduction in the number of elected members forming DWFRA would result in a direct saving on member's allowances of some £38,400 based on current allowances. This saving is not material in terms of the Authority's overall budget and the greater significance is the focus on a sound modern governance model which will make the fire and rescue service more accountable, efficient and effective in line with emerging national standards.</p>
RECOMMENDATIONS	<p>It is recommended that Members:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make a formal request to the Home Secretary for a variation to the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority (Combination Scheme) Order 2015 to reduce the membership of the Authority from 30 to 18, with each constituent Council appointing members to the Authority in proportion to its share of the total electorate of the five constituent Councils. 2. Consequential upon variation of the Authority's membership, that a further report is considered to agree the future governance arrangements.
BACKGROUND PAPERS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority (Combination Scheme) Order 2015 (Section 3.6 of DWFRA Members' handbook) 2. Policing and Crime Act 2017 https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/policing-and-crime-bill 3. Text of a speech to reform by Brandon Lewis MP, then Minister of State for Policing and Fire setting out his vision for the fire sector, 7 February 2017. https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/fire-ministers-speech-to-reform

	<p>4. Conditions of service for fire and rescue staff in England. Report by Adrian Thomas, November 2016 www.gov.uk https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/conditions-of-service-for-fire-and-rescue-staff-independent-review</p> <p>5. Report to Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority (DWFRA) entitled Possible change in the membership of the Fire and Rescue Authority, dated 9 March 2017</p> <p>6. Minutes of the DWFRA, 9 March 2017</p>
APPENDICES	None
REPORT ORIGINATORS AND CONTACT	<p>Spencer Flower, Chairman of the DWFRA s.g.flower@dorsetcc.gov.uk, Telephone 01202 821231</p> <p>Jonathan Mair, Clerk and Monitoring Officer j.e.mair@dorsetcc.gov.uk Telephone 01305 224181</p>

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The background to the Authority's in principle agreement to a proposed reduction in its membership to 18 as a basis for consultation with constituent Councils is set out in the report and the minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2017. The report was originally prepared as a not for publication paper but was considered in the open part of the agenda and has been re-published as a public paper.
- 1.2 The paper considered by the Authority on the 9 March 2017 began by describing the current allocation of places on the Authority amongst the five constituent Councils before setting out a series of options of future membership.
- 1.3 The factors driving change in the fire and rescue sector remain as strong as ever with the Adrian Thomas Review, the Policing and Crime Act 2017 and announcements by the then Minister of State for Policing and Fire all contributing to a need for fire and rescue authorities to ensure that their governance arrangements are at the heart of ensuring good practice is applied in the most efficient and effective way possible.
- 1.4 These same factors are driving consideration of change in other fire and rescue authorities. The 9 March 2017 paper contained for comparison purposes a table illustrating the different sizes of combined fire and rescue authorities in England. However, the position is not a static one and by the time of the meeting on 9 March 2017 the table was already out of date following a decision by Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority to reduce its membership from 25 to 10 plus the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- 1.5 Now that Greater Manchester has moved to a mayoral model with the Mayor as Fire and Rescue Authority supported by a Committee of 15, DWFRFA with a membership of 30 has the largest fire and rescue authority membership in England.
- 1.6 Members have already expressed in principle support for an Authority of 18 members as this model achieved three key considerations:
 - i. That there should be an equal allocation between the area served by the former Dorset Fire Authority and the area of the former Wiltshire and Swindon Authority.
 - ii. That constituent Local Authorities should have a minimum allocation of two places.
 - iii. That an Authority size of 18 would demonstrate a clear commitment to meeting the emerging national trend towards a significant reduction in membership, leading to a more effective and efficient governance model.

2. Consultation

- 2.1 Leaders of the constituent Councils were consulted on the 10 March 2017 when they were provided with a copy of the report to the 9 March 2017 meeting.
- 2.2 The Leaders of Bournemouth Borough Council, Dorset County Council, the Borough of Poole and Swindon Borough Council support an Authority of 18. In supporting this, the Leader of Dorset County Council has commented that her Council respects the right of DWFRA to make its own decisions on this matter but that her Council does support an Authority of 18.
- 2.3 At its meeting on 11 July 2017 Wiltshire Council accepted the principle of a reduction in the size of the Authority and the principle of equality of membership but expressed a preference for no fewer than 24 members.
- 2.4 The views of the constituent Councils and the advice of your officers are not binding upon the Authority but they are factors to be taken into account. All of the constituent Councils support the principle of a smaller Authority with the vast majority supporting a reduction to 18.

3. Streamlining the future governance arrangements

- 3.1 Following the results of the recent consultation with constituent authorities, Members of this Authority are asked to support a reduction of the membership from 30 to 18. Should this be approved by this Authority, then consideration will need to be given to changes to the Authority's current governance framework in the interests of effectiveness and efficiency.
- 3.2 Appendix 3 of the report to the Authority on the 9 March 2017, illustrated the Authority's current governance framework in which the:
 - Policy and Resources Committee provides assurance to the Authority by looking to the future
 - Local Performance and Scrutiny Committees (LPSCs) and the Finance Governance and Audit Committee provide assurance to the Authority by scrutinising current performance
- 3.3 *Policy and resources committee:* An Authority of 18 would be able to provide the sort of focus currently provided by the Policy and Resources Committee and which is not always practicable in a meeting of 30 individuals. Apart from the reduction in the number of elected members forming the Authority there would also be a resulting direct saving on members' allowances of some £38,400 based on current allowances, and other cashable and non-cashable savings from a more efficient and effective governance framework.

- 3.4 *Local performance and scrutiny committees:* By moving to an Authority of 18 members it is suggested that the LPSCs should be reformed but retained as they are felt to be working well and support the principle of local accountability. Under our current arrangements the membership of each LPSC comprises all of the Authority members for the constituent council area(s) covered by that LPSC.
- 3.5 With a reduced Authority membership, it is important that the LPSCs are maintained at a size able to ensure that they are quorate. To this end a possible option is that the constituent members of Swindon and Wiltshire be combined to form a single LPSC. In light of the local government review in the southern part of the Authority, the members from Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole could form a single LPSC which may help to future proof the governance arrangements. By reconstituting these committees, local focus and accountability would be maintained. This possible revised approach would then mirror the streamlined managerial arrangements soon to be put in place by the CFO.
- 3.6 In support of this change to the LPSCs, an option may be that the Chairman and Vice Chairman be chosen from different constituent authorities and that the terms of reference be amended to ensure that a member from each constituent council be present for the committee to be quorate.

4. Summary and key points

- 4.1 The decision to apply to the Secretary of State for a variation in the Combination Order to reduce the size of the governance model rests with this Authority.
- 4.2 As a next step it is recommended that an application be made to the Home Secretary seeking a variation of the Combination Order so that each constituent Council will be represented in proportion to its share of the combined area electorate, based upon an Authority of 18.
- 4.3 If supported by the Home Secretary, then a variation to the Combination Order would be prepared and would take effect following completion of parliamentary processes. The intention would be for any change in membership to take effect at the annual meeting of the Authority in June 2018 with a review of governance arrangement after one year of operation.
- 4.4 As part of the preparation for this change in governance, it is recommended that a report is prepared to agree the revised terms of reference for the Authority and the LPSCs.

September 2017