



**DORSET & WILTSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE
AUTHORITY**

Item 19/29

MEETING	Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority
DATE OF MEETING	6 June 2019
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Local Government Association Peer Review
STATUS OF REPORT	Open publication
PURPOSE OF REPORT	For approval
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>At its meeting on the 8 September 2017, the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) agreed that a formal request be made 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.</p> <p>As a response to this, a single Combination Order was progressed by the Home Office and laid before Parliament on the 4 December 2017.</p> <p>Membership of the Authority was varied with effect from the 6 June 2018 by the Fire and Rescue Authority (Membership) Order 2017 (Statutory Instrument 1165), where Authority membership was reduced to 18.</p> <p>At their 6 June 2018 Authority meeting Members agreed for a review of the revised governance arrangements to take place after 12 months of operation.</p> <p>In support of this, and with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) developing their approach to a thematic governance inspection, it is recommended that the Local Government Association undertake a free of charge independent peer review of the Authority's governance during the 24 and 25 June 2019.</p>

RISK ASSESSMENT	Failure to have appropriate and robust governance arrangements may affect the efficiency, effectiveness and transparency of the Authority.
COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT	None for the purposes of this report.
BUDGET IMPLICATIONS	<p>The reduction from 30 to 18 elected Members resulted in a direct saving on Members' allowances of approximately £38k. These savings are not material in terms of the Authority's overall budget and the greater significance is the focus needed on streamlining the wider governance arrangements.</p> <p>There is no cost to the Authority in relation to this peer review.</p>
RECOMMENDATIONS	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the Local Government Association Peer Review 2. Support the review, as required
BACKGROUND PAPERS	The Local Government Association Annual Report 2017-2018 'Peer Challenge Programme'
APPENDICES	None
REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT	<p>Name: Jill McCrae, Head of Strategic Planning & Corporate Assurance</p> <p>Email: jill.mccrae@dwfire.org.uk</p> <p>Tel: 07711 458888</p>

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Following the Authority decision, at its September 2017 meeting, to reduce the Authority Membership from 30 to 18, a single Combination Order was laid before Parliament on 4 December 2017.
- 1.2 The Membership of the Authority was varied with effect from 6 June 2018 by the Fire and Rescue Authority (Membership) Order 2017 (Statutory Instrument 1165), where membership was reduced to 18 Authority Members.
- 1.3 At their meeting on the 6 June 2018 Members approved the revised governance arrangements to support the reduction in membership.
- 1.4 Upon approving the revised arrangements, the Authority agreed to review the revised governance arrangements after 12 months.

2. Local Government Association

- 2.1 The Local Government Association (LGA) launched their peer challenge for sector-led improvement in 2011 and have delivered more than 950 peer challenges within Local Authorities.
- 2.2 In both 2013 and 2016 the LGA commissioned independent evaluations which endorsed the value of peer challenge.
- 2.3 The LGA peer challenge is not an inspection but a tool for improvement aimed at enhancing not judging, and the process is proportionate and flexible, with the review being bespoke to the needs and requirements of the organisation.
- 2.4 Following their successful programme, the Service has approached and engaged with the LGA to review the opportunities available for an independent review of governance at no cost to the Authority.

3. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

- 3.1 As Members may recall, as part of their inspection process Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) have announced their intention to extend their current programme to include corporate governance.
- 3.2 In their recent communications to fire and rescue services they have announced their intention to consult on their proposed corporate governance inspection arrangements.
- 3.3 Officers will continue to engage with HMICFRS to ensure full understanding and provide Members with updates on a regular basis.

4. Proposed Peer Review

4.1 Following the Authority's decision in June 2018, to review its revised governance arrangements succeeding 12 months, it is proposed that the Authority commission the LGA to undertake an independent governance peer review; covering the following key areas:

- Review the effectiveness and efficiency of the current governance arrangements and structures associated with the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority
- Review the current assurance framework and supporting procedure that underpins the annual Statement of Assurance required under the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, 2018
- Review the quality of Member and Officer relations and clarity of respective roles
- Review the scope of opportunity of Member development arrangements
- Make recommendations for strengthening the current governance arrangements

4.2 The peer review would involve a small team of local government officers and Councillors spending time with Officers and Members as peers to provide challenge and share learning.

4.3 The LGA have suggested a two-day review which, upon Member approval, will take place over the 24 and 25 June 2019.

4.4 The two-day programme will include:

- Interviews with the Authority Chair, Finance & Governance Chair and four Local Performance & Scrutiny Chairs
- An all Members electronic survey
- An interview with the Clerk & Monitoring Officer
- Interviews with the Chief Fire Officer and Deputy Chief Fire Officer
- A focus group session with the Democratic Services Team
- A focus group session made up of members of the Strategic Leadership Team, Area Managers and Heads of Department.

- 4.5 A peer review debrief will take place with the Authority Chair, Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Head of Strategic Planning & Corporate Assurance at the end of their programme and Members will receive a full report at the Authority meeting in September 2019.

5. Summary and Key Points

- 5.1 At their meeting on the 6 June 2018 the Authority agreed the requirement of a review of their governance arrangements, after 12 months of the revised procedures being in place.
- 5.2 Subject to Authority approval the LGA have agreed to complete a peer review on the 24 and 25 June 2019 to fulfil this requirement, at no cost to the Authority.

June 2019