

**WILTSHIRE & SWINDON FIRE AUTHORITY**

<b>REPORT REFERENCE NO.</b>	22
<b>MEETING</b>	Wiltshire & Swindon Combined Fire Authority
<b>MEETING DATE</b>	12 June 2014
<b>SUBJECT OF REPORT</b>	Update on the Development of a Business Case for Combination
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	It is recommended that Members consider and note the progress in relation to the due diligence work associated to the development of the business case.
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	This report provides an update of the on-going work in relation to the development of a business case and subsequent consultation in respect of a potential new Combined Fire Authority that may undertake the current statutory duties of the Wiltshire & Swindon and Dorset Fire Authorities.
<b>APPENDICES</b>	A: Draft Vision Statement

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 At its meeting on 12th December 2013, the Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authority considered a report in relation to future strategic options and approved further work and due diligence in relation to a potential combination with the Dorset Fire Authority. A similar report was considered by the Dorset Fire Authority on 5th December 2013 where they also agreed the same way forward.
- 1.2 Since the meetings in December and through the process of due diligence, what is becoming evident is that in selecting a preferred option in respect of a potential combination there is a perception and thereafter a risk that this could be interpreted that either individually, or through combination collectively, the Authority will not engage in the other options that include working with Local Authorities, Police and Ambulance. In essence there is need to ensure that any preferred option is not perceived as 'binary' inasmuch that it does not allow the best of all options to be pursued.

1.3 The process of due diligence has identified that, once in steady state, the new Authority could benefit from annual reoccurring savings in the region of £4m. This is double the original estimate and with a wider option may also provide further scope for efficiencies and improved effectiveness from collaboration with local authorities and blue light partners. There is little doubt that a larger and more viable fire and rescue service will be in a better position to engage in strategic working with local authorities and wider partners. It is for this reason and for purposes of clarity and assurance that the preferred option is now to combine with Dorset Fire Authority and work more closely with Local Authorities the Police and other public services.

1.4 The programme of work has been divided into five Workstreams. The following sections provide an outline of progress in each Workstream area.

## **2. Workstream 1 - Political arrangements**

### **2.1 Combination Oversight Board**

2.1.1 There have been three meetings of the board since it was established in January 2014 and these meetings have been very positive and fruitful. It was agreed at the first meeting on 24 January that the Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority Chairman would be Chair of the group for the first six months. The group have agreed the terms of reference, programme and work plan. Chiefs and Chairs will be meeting with the Fire Minister on 16 June 2014 to share their vision for the combination. On 19 June 2014, members of the Combination Oversight Board will be meeting with the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, Peter Holland to discuss the business case.

### **2.2 Vision**

2.2.1 An emerging vision has been developed based on "*Safe, Strong and Sustainable*". This has been used to communicate the combination programme to MPs and partners. A copy of the draft vision statement is attached at Appendix A.

### **2.3 Capital Bid**

2.3.1 A bid has been signed off by both Chairs and submitted to DCLG. The bid focuses on costs associated to the combination proposal, including a new safety centre, harmonised ICT infrastructure, a multi-agency strategic hub and programme management costs. This work has been supported by colleagues from Swindon Borough Council.

2.3.2 The amount of funding being applied for is around £6m. This will be assessed by DCLG against the following criteria:

- ♦ Encouraging greater collaboration with other emergency services.
- ♦ Improving local accountability.

- ♦ Increasing on-call arrangements/promoting asset transformation/ other efficiencies.
- ♦ Increasing on-call arrangements (Wiltshire & Dorset already crew over 80% of front-line appliances using on call staff).
- ♦ Promoting asset transformation/other efficiencies.
- ♦ Prioritising prevention and protection.

2.3.3 Notification of whether the bid has been fully supported is expected in late September or early October.

## **2.4 DCLG**

2.4.1 Two meetings have taken place with DCLG representatives to share progress, seek advice and clarify future requirements. These have been positive meetings and future meetings are being scheduled to support business case development.

## **3. Workstream 2 - Programme management**

### **3.1 Programme Governance**

3.1.1 A Strategic Framework document has been agreed which outlines the roles and responsibilities, processes and timelines associated with the programme. A cycle of meetings has been established which compliments the corporate cycle of both Services. A programme risk register has been established which is regularly reviewed at the Joint Leadership Team and Combination Oversight Board meetings.

### **3.2 Programme Management Tool**

3.2.1 A cloud based programme management tool has been purchased on a short-term rent to allow close monitoring of progress. This will be reviewed as part of the strategic ICT review should the business case decision be positive.

### **3.3 Programme Validation**

3.3.1 South West Audit Partnership have reviewed the overall programme arrangements and gave the following feedback :

*“We are very confident that the process outlined should provide senior managers and the Combination Oversight Board with comprehensive assurance as the proposed combination progresses”.*

3.3.2 Further assurances will be secured on the business case and we are working closely with both internal and external auditors to achieve this.

## **4. Workstream 3 - Combined Functions**

### **4.1 Functional Reviews**

- 4.1.1 Reviews have been undertaken of the largest spend functions within both Services. Officers from both Services have established baseline positions, jointly developed new functions, structures and overall costs. This information has been used to inform the business case for consultation. Officers have carried out functional and strategic reviews in key areas to identify potential savings and opportunities that could be achieved through combining functions. This has identified that, once in steady state, the new Authority could benefit from annual reoccurring savings in the region of £4m, with no impacts on response services and with increases in prevention and protection activities.

### **4.2 Joint Command and Control Centre Project**

- 4.2.1 Project Board and Project Team meetings have been scheduled with representatives from both organisations. A TUPE adviser has been appointed to look at the differences in terms and conditions and planning for the HR related project activities. Fire Control staff from both Services are involved in various areas of project development, including activities that can be harmonised ahead of the move. The project is dependent on the Networked Fire Control Services Partnership (NFCSP) timeline and close working links have been established to ensure that impacts of any changes are understood. Learning lessons are also being considered from recent joint control centres including the North West (Manchester, Cheshire, Lancashire and Cumbria), West Midlands and Staffordshire and the West and East Sussex's FRS.

## **5. Workstream 4 - Converged Frameworks and Change Programmes**

### **5.1 Strategic Assessment**

- 5.1.1 A 2020 strategic assessment was jointly carried out, which informed the vision and the agreed functions for the new organisation. A Strategic Options Appraisal is being finalised as a support document for the business case.

### **5.2 Service Delivery Design**

- 5.2.1 A common framework for service delivery has been developed which has informed the functional redesigns. This has also identified savings which can be included in the business case.
- 5.2.2 The service delivery framework and functional redesigns have also been developed to ensure that current response arrangements are maintained. They also ensure that resources are prioritised to ensure momentum is maintained in the delivery of prevention, protection and education activities, and that these can be aligned to the priorities of partners in local authorities and other blue light services

### **5.3 HR Issues**

- 5.3.1 Work is underway to identify and understand the complex issues that are associated with the potential combination. The costs are being calculated to be included in the business case that will be considered by both Authorities in September.

## **6. Workstream 5 - Business Case**

### **6.1 General**

- 6.1.1 The Services have worked together to ensure that there is a common understanding of the current position for Authorities in areas such as audit and governance, statutory and legal compliance, strategic and medium term financial planning, current and future accommodation requirements and assets and liabilities. These are also being looked at to agree how this could look in a new combined fire authority.

### **6.2 Business Case Development**

- 6.2.1 A draft business case has been developed to inform the public and staff consultation process. The document outlines the current challenges each authority faces, the vision for a new combined Authority and Service, the future benefits for communities and partners and how the combination would be achieved. A further period of development, validation and due diligence has been scheduled prior to it being submitted to both Fire Authorities in September 2014.

### **6.3 Public and Staff Consultation**

- 6.3.1 The Combination Oversight Board approved an externally validated consultation process that will seek the views and opinions of our staff, partners and communities through:
- ♦ A leaflet and questionnaire which will be put in public libraries and buildings and made available on-line. It will also be sent to 10,000 local people in Dorset and Wiltshire and key groups, including town and parish councils.
  - ♦ 16 independently run community focus groups spread across both counties.
  - ♦ Two business forums and two voluntary group forums.
  - ♦ Letters to all our stakeholders, MPs and partners, with supporting information, inviting them to participate in the consultation.
  - ♦ A draft business case for consultation has been produced that will be supported by a suite of more technical documents. These will be available through our website or upon request.

- ♦ Opportunities for officers and Chairs of both Authorities to attend, when requested, meetings of local authorities and Area Boards during the period mid-June to mid-August.

6.3.2 The consultation will open on 16 June and close on 24 August 2014 and will be promoted through websites, social media and the press and there will be a helpline and email address to support any queries.

## **7. Financial Implications**

7.1 These are outlined within the Report

## **8. Significant Risks**

8.1 Failure to undertake necessary due diligence and development of a robust and accurate business case will adversely impact subsequent decisions and actions associated to the future of the Dorset Fire Authority.

## **9. Equality Impact Assessment**

9.1 A Full Community Impact Assessment will be developed in association with the final business case that will be considered by the Authority on 25th September.

## **10. Summary**

10.1 Since both Authorities agreed in December 2013 to develop a business case for a potential combination, there has been considerable progress in relation to the analysis of savings and also the benefits of a larger Authority working closer with local authorities, Police and Ambulance. Over the coming months, and in tandem with the consultation, transition and investment costs will be identified and included in the final business case that will be considered in September 2014. This business case will also contain further assurances associated to fulfilment of statutory duties, legal compliance and financial planning for a potential new Combined Fire Authority.

## **11. Recommendations**

11.1 This is a report for Members to NOTE the progress in relation to the due diligence work associated to the development of the business case.

Simon Routh-Jones  
Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive

---

**Unpublished documents used in the preparation of this report:**

None