



Mr D Gunter
Chief Fire Officer
Dorset Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters
Peverell Avenue West
Poundbury
Dorchester
Dorset
DT1 3SU

6th October 2014

Dear Sir

On behalf of the Fire Officers' Association membership within Dorset, we would like to respond to the Strengthening Our Fire and Rescue Service Consultation.

We recognise that our Fire Authority is one of the most cost-effective in the country and has been very successful in making savings in the face of reduced funding from central government. It is clear that the longer term financial forecast is still bleak and Government has intimated future cuts to grant will be required. Therefore, we recognise that this could significantly threaten front-line services if nothing else is done to make the necessary savings. Our membership is largely made up of middle and strategic managers from across the Service and as such has a full understanding of the financial challenges that lie ahead for the Fire Authority.

In response to the consultation, it is the view of our membership that option 3; Dorset Fire Authority to merge with Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authority to create a single combined fire authority while also collaborating with Bournemouth Borough Council, Dorset County Council, the Borough of Poole, Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council; is the preferred of the three options.

We agree with the vision of a safe, strong and sustainable Fire and Rescue Service, making our communities safe in the future, whilst protecting and strengthening front-line resources. We recognise the detailed planning undertaken has put us in a good position for moving forward.

Our members have been involved in elements of the planning phase. We will continue to develop and deliver the next stage plans as we move forward over the next two years, building a new organisation and consolidating into a new Fire and Rescue Service. This work has caused our membership to express concern with regard to the pressure and workloads that this is having on our staff.

Furthermore, concern has been raised with regard to the workloads that delivering a new Fire and Rescue Service will have whilst we continue to deliver all that we currently expect.

Moving forward, we note that the Draft Business Case states there is considerable opportunities for savings within the flexible duty officers. This is a specific issue for our

membership due to their concerns regarding uncertainty around a joint flexible duty rota and the contractual changes that this may require. We are aware that there will be a significant requirement to amalgamate terms and conditions which appear to be very different between the two Fire and Rescue Services. This could create cultural differences between staff groups.

As a newly formed branch of the Fire Officers' Association, we feel that it is vital that our membership help direct the future of our Fire and Rescue Service. Our membership wants to constructively be a part of designing our Fire and Rescue Service for the future. We are looking forward to full involvement in the changes that this will inevitably bring and seek to be a recognised voice in the shaping of our Fire and Rescue Service.

Yours faithfully