

SELECT COMMITTEE

6th September 2017

Present – The Chairman (Councillor Staveley) and Councillors Brown, Graham, Mason, Moorby, Pighills, Shuttleworth, Solloway, Sutcliffe, Thompson and Whitaker. Also in attendance Councillor Foster.

Officer – Committee Officer

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mercer and Shuttleworth.

Start: 6.30pm

Finish: 9.04pm

Minutes for Report

OS.393

FUTURE GOVERNANCE OF THE NORTH YORKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Further to Minute OS.392/17-18, the the Chairman welcomed Julia Mulligan, Police and Crime Commissioner for North Yorkshire, who had been invited to the meeting to present and discuss her business case for the future governance of the Fire and Rescue Service which, if accepted by the Home Secretary, would result in the Commissioner taking on legal and overarching responsibility for the Fire and Rescue Service. Under the options listed within the Policing and Crime Act 2017 this was referred to as the "Governance Model". The Fire and Rescue Authority would then cease to exist as the governing body. The Commissioner was accompanied by her Chief Finance Officer, Michael Porter.

In addressing and responding to Members comments / questions, the Commissioner stated that

- 54% of all calls to North Yorkshire Police revolved around public safety and welfare, with in effect the Police picking up the gaps in service provision. The question posed by this was how should vulnerable people within the community be dealt with? Greater collaboration between the Fire and Police Services working with other agencies presented an opportunity to address this question.

- The opportunity for greater collaboration had been recognised by both the Fire and Police Services in 2013 but in the intervening period only limited progress had been achieved and the argument now before members was how best to get to the position set down within the statement of intent signed by the two forces back in 2013.

- The Fire Authority was looking to a slow and measured approach, her view was that good progress had not been made in the last 5 years and that now was the time to take the opportunity presented by the Act. The governance model would speed up collaboration, produce savings and avoid cuts to the frontline.

- The Fire Brigade Union had now expressed its support for the opportunity represented by the business case.

- Within a national overview document referencing collaboration between the emergency services across the country there were models of what could be done differently to the benefit of communities through innovation. North Yorkshire did not feature within the document.

- Although finances were important her proposal sought to focus on how services could work better together to the benefit of the community. An initiative known as the York Pathway Programme,

which focused on the overlap between services, was an example of how partners could work together, address public safety and welfare, and reduce demand on the emergency services.

- Bringing the Chief Officers together under one governance structure would benefit joint working and improve the speed of decision making in taking forward collaboration. There were those in both the Fire and Police Services who wouldn't want change, but a single governance structure could overcome that resistance.

- There was a lot of scope for sharing back office functions and utilising savings to support the frontline, improving prevention and enhancing community safety. It was acknowledged that there were good examples in North Yorkshire of working together but those examples did not represent a joined up strategy to reduce demand across the County and provide a better service.

- Figures within the business case had been provided by the Fire Service, both the Fire and Police Services had worked on the business case, including the financial information.

- In estimating potential savings to be generated were the governance model to be adopted, a cautious approach had been taken, for example a 5% saving on back office functions. Savings in the business case were conservative and deliverable.

- It would be possible to give more councillors more of a voice on proposals affecting their areas than under the current arrangements. If the County Council wished to put extra resource into the Police and Crime Panel there would be scope to direct some of the direct £900,000 governance savings for that use.

- The fire service had real resilience problems and in the face of cuts there was a need to make savings sooner, not further down the line. As Commissioner she had put the rural community at the heart of what she'd done with no drift in favour of urban areas.

- In addition to the online survey, 1500 random face to face interviews using a survey company had been conducted around North Yorkshire, as it currently stood public feedback showed a preference for the proposed business case. 60% of those interviewed in the face to face survey favoured the governance model. A 1500 sample survey on a face to face survey was the industry standard. A survey was a requirement of HM Treasury's assessment criteria.

- There was a fundamental issue with the Fire Authority's collaboration committee in that the parties had to return to their respective organisations to seek endorsement. The governance model was as single board structure which reduced the opportunity for delays.

- The shared station at Bedale was a good example of working together, but that had taken place in 2003 and there had been relatively little since then.

- It would be relatively easy to accommodate Fire Authority HQ employees at the new Police HQ, there would be a greater challenge around IT infrastructure than space for officers. The business case was a case for governance not for how the services would move into a shared HQ, the case sought to demonstrate how the rate and pace of proposed change could be increased.

- Only one additional post funded from within the £64,000 referenced in the business case would be needed to support the Commissioner's enhanced role. No additional deputies could be appointed.

- Significant savings could be found by not incurring the costs associated with borrowing currently proposed by the Fire Authority.

- She would not look to withdraw services from a locality and referred Members to her record since elected in generating savings to protect the frontline.

- Within the Act there was no provision for Commissioners to also take on the governance of ambulance services, but the Act did state a requirement for the ambulance service to collaborate. She had conducted constructive discussions with Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS) and would explore opportunities for working together; the governance proposal would facilitate working with YAS.

- As police and crime commissioner she could take strategic resourcing but not deployment and operational decisions, it was less clear as to how it would work with the Fire Service. This was currently the subject of a discussion with the Home Office. Her priority was vulnerability and she believed both Chief Officers were comfortable with that aim.

- She had sat as a member of the Fire Authority's collaboration committee for six months and based on that experience to date she could not see how giving that model another six to twelve months would make a material difference.

- There were no proposals for an uplift in commissioners' salaries, the pay review body was next due to review the position in 2019.

- On closure of the consultation period she would reflect on feedback received and amend the business case as she considered appropriate, there would be an opportunity to see how she had responded to comments received.

In drawing the discussion to a close the Chairman thanked Mrs Mulligan for her attendance and adjourned the meeting for a short comfort break. On reconvening and considering their recommendation to be presented to Policy Committee in respect of the Commissioner's business case there was a consensus amongst Members on the need for change and greater collaboration, but concerns were expressed with regard to scrutiny of the proposed governance model arrangement and the strength of some of the detail within the business case. The need by some means going forward to have greater engagement and collaboration with the Yorkshire Ambulance Service was also identified as an issue to be addressed irrespective of which model ultimately resulted from the current exercise. Concern was also expressed by a number of Members regarding possible democratic deficiencies associated with the governance model.

On being out to the vote it was

Resolved – (1) That the Council should express a preference for the representation model under which the Police and Crime Commissioner would be represented on the Fire Authority and its committees.

(2) That in forming the Committee's recommendation to Policy Committee, the Committee Officer, in consultation with the Chairman, incorporates the following points:-

a. In reaching the above position the Committee is clear that progress made on collaboration should be reviewed within a reasonable timescale, with options for change in the governance arrangements considered at that point should satisfactory progress not be made.

b. A desire for collaboration between the three blue light services and active investigation of the opportunities for collaboration with the ambulance service under the preferred option.

c. Reference to grey areas within the business case.

OS.394

SHARED OWNERSHIP WORKING GROUP

Resolved – That the Shared Ownership Working Group is authorised to submit its report direct to Policy Committee.

Chairman.