

Chairman's Announcements

Subject:	Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service – Consultation
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Summary of announcement:

A wide ranging consultation to consider options for the future of Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service started on Monday 21 July.

Between now and 20 October, local people will be able to have their say on options including closer working with local authorities and the police through to a possible merger with Dorset Fire Authority.

A parallel consultation is being held in Dorset over the same period. In both counties local residents will be able to access further information and complete on-line questionnaires. In addition, a random selection of 12,000 households across Wiltshire and Dorset will receive the questionnaire directly. Information will also be placed in public buildings, including libraries, and consultation forums will be held with the public, businesses and voluntary organisations.

Simon Routh-Jones, Chief Fire Officer of Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service, said: "We are keen to know what local people think about our options to strengthen our fire and rescue service. We have a number of potential ways forward, including a potential merger with Dorset Fire Authority. We are consulting widely on this important issue and we would encourage any views as no decisions have yet been made.

Cllr Christopher Devine, Chairman of Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authority, said: "We face difficult financial times ahead that result from cuts to our central Government grant. We need to find significant savings from our limited budget whilst protecting frontline services. It is vital that local people take this opportunity to find out more about the proposals and have their say, and we would encourage as many people as possible to get involved now that the consultation has started."

The consultation portal is accessible via www.wiltshire.gov.uk/strengtheningourfrs