

Response to the Consultation on Proposals for a Combined Fire and Rescue Service

Cabinet

Date: 4th February 2015

Author:	Leader of the Council, and Director of Law and Democratic Services
Wards:	All
Locality Affected:	All
Parishes Affected:	All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet's consent to a proposed response from Swindon Borough Council to the consultation being undertaken by the Department for Communities and Local Government on the locally led proposals to create a Combined Fire and Rescue Authority covering the current Dorset Combined Fire Authority area and the Wiltshire and Swindon Combined Fire Authority area.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended:

- 2.1 That the Director of Law and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the political group leaders on the Council, finalise and submit the Council's response to the Department for Communities and Local Government in support of the locally-led proposal to create a combined Fire and Rescue Authority covering Bournemouth, Dorset, Poole, Swindon, and Wiltshire.

3. Detail

- 3.1 The Cabinet on 10th September 2014 considered the contents of the Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority Consultation Document on the future of that service. It authorised the Director of Law and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the political group leaders on the Council to develop, finalise and submit the Council's response to the Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority by 20th October 2014 (Cabinet Minute 27, 2014/15 refers).

- 3.2 The Council's response is set out below:

"Swindon Borough Council is supportive of Scenario 3 (Merge with Dorset Fire Authority and increased collaboration with local partners) whilst recognising that there are a number of issues to be resolved before any final view could be taken, in particular around:

- The funding gap identified in the Consultation Paper;*
- The equalisation of precepts and the impact on Swindon residents; and*
- The governance arrangements of the proposed merged authority and*

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what assurance can be given that the views of the relevant constituent authority are given full weight when considering matters relating to that authority's area."

- 3.3 As a result of the outcome of the consultation exercises carried out by the Fire Authorities, Dorset Fire Authority and Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority have jointly submitted a draft scheme and business case to the Secretary of State requesting that he makes an order under sections 2 and 4 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 to:
- 3.3.1 Revoke the Dorset Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1996, and
 - 3.3.2 Revoke the Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1996, in order that
 - 3.3.3 A single fire and rescue authority be created for the combined area of the Dorset Fire Authority and the Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority on 1st April 2016.
- 3.4 The Department for Communities and Local Government is now undertaking a formal consultation exercise in respect of the proposal and the consultation document is attached as Appendix 1. The deadline for responses to the Consultation is the 28th January but, unfortunately, in common with a number of other authorities involved, this Council did not receive the Consultation Paper from the DCLG and did not know of its existence until informed of it by the Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority on the 21st January 2015.
- 3.5 The draft scheme and business case submitted to the Secretary of State by the Dorset Fire Authority and the Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority largely responds to the issues raised in this Council's initial consultation response, as set out in paragraph 3.2 above.
- 3.6 The business case has addressed the issue of the funding gap. The Consultation Paper identifies two potential ways forward in relation to the precept equalisation issue. So far as the governance aspect is concerned, discussions are ongoing and it has already been agreed by the DCLG that there will be equal representation on the new Combined Fire Authority from each of the current Combined Fire Authority areas – ie 15 from the Wiltshire and Swindon CFA area and 15 from the Current Dorset CFA area. Both current Combined Fire Authorities consider this will give the appropriate weight to the views of the constituent authorities
- 3.7 Accordingly, it is proposed that the Council formally respond to the Department for Communities and Local Government consultation indicating that Swindon Borough Council is supportive of the proposals to establish a combined Fire Authority for Dorset, Wiltshire, and Swindon, which it believes is in the interests of economy, efficiency and effectiveness and public safety of the residents of the

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Stephen Taylor, (01793) 463012, staylor@swindon.gov.uk.

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areas concerned. This response takes into account the support in principle already expressed by the Council for the proposed Combined Authority and the contents of the Department for Communities and Local Government's Consultation Document (Appendix 1).

3.8 It is suggested that, as previously, the Director of Law and Democratic Services, be authorised in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the political group leaders on the Council, to finalise and submit the Council's response.

3.9 The Council is represented on the Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority by Councillors Andrew Bennett, Nick Martin, Garry Perkins and Joe Tray.

4. Alternative Options

4.1 The Council could determine not to respond to the consultation.

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

5.1 The Financial implications for the Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority and for local tax payers were set out in the original consultation document from the Fire Authority and in the scheme and business case submitted to the Secretary of State. The issue of Council Tax equalisation is also highlighted in the consultation document at Appendix 1. The implications for the Council's finances will be dependent on the decision of the Secretary of State on the future of the Dorset and the Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authorities.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

5.2 Legal and Human Rights implications were taken into account in preparing this report. It is considered that the report's recommendations are compatible with Convention Rights

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

5.3 This report has no other specific implications.

Diversity Impact Assessment

5.4 A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) has not been completed at this stage as this report sets out a consultation exercise being undertaken by the Secretary of State on proposals by the Dorset and the Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authorities.

Risk Management

5.5 There are no specific identified risks.

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6. Consultees

- 6.1 The Board Director, Resources (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports. The Leader of the Council, and Cllrs Grant and Pajak as political group leaders have also been consulted.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None.

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 - Department for Communities and Local Government Consultation Document on Locally led Proposals to Create a Combined Fire and Rescue Authority for Dorset and Wiltshire.

9. Key Decision/Decision in Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan

- 9.1 This is not a Key Decision and is included in the Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan for February 2015.

Dorset Fire Authority



Councillor Rebecca Knox, Weavers House, 5 East Street, Beaminster DT8 3DS

Mr T Williams
Chief Executive
Bournemouth Borough Council
Town Hall
BOURNEMOUTH
BH2 6DY

Your ref:
My ref: RK/PES
Ask For: Mrs Knox
Date: 22 January 2015

Dear Tony

Consultation on Dorset-Wiltshire Fire Combination

As you may already be aware, your local authority is a formal consultee in the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) consultation on the locally-led proposals to create a combined fire and rescue authority for Dorset and Wiltshire. I am writing to inform you that the consultation closes very soon. Responses must be submitted to DCLG by 28 January 2015.

Whilst you may already have this matter in hand, relatively few responses to the consultation have been received by DCLG to date from local authorities. The proposals are very important for the future delivery of fire and rescue services across Dorset and Wiltshire and, if you have not already done so, I would encourage you to provide a formal response to DCLG to make your views known. The consultation document is available on the DCLG website as indicated here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/388423/141217_Consultation_on_combining_authorities_REVISED_2.pdf

Many thanks for your time.

Yours sincerely

REBECCA KNOX
Chairman of Dorset Fire Authority



Building a Better Bournemouth

**COUNCILLOR JOHN BEESLEY FIH
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

Town Hall, Bourne Avenue, Bournemouth, BH2 6DY
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Mobile: 07860 391219

26 January 2015

Debbie Gibson-Leigh
National Fire Policy Team
Department for Communities and Local Government
2nd floor NW Quarter, Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Dear Ms. Gibson-Leigh,

I am writing to you in response to your recent consultation, 'Consultation on locally-led proposals to create a combined fire and rescue authority for Dorset and Wiltshire'.

Having responded in September to the Dorset Fire Authority and Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority consultation, the Council is in support of a merger of the two authorities into a single Combined Fire Authority.

Bournemouth Borough Council agrees that:

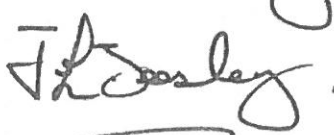
- The proposed revocation of the Dorset Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1996, is in the interests of economy, efficiency and effectiveness and public safety
- The proposed revocation of the Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1996, is in the interests of economy, efficiency and effectiveness and public safety
- The proposed merger of Dorset and Wiltshire and Swindon fire authorities is in the interests of economy, efficiency and effectiveness and public safety.

As an organisation, we recognise that this scenario could yield greater potential budgetary savings, increased resilience and greater opportunities to provide new and improved ways of working, three requisites for an efficient organisation which Bournemouth Borough Council has an exemplary track record in achieving.

This scenario also offers greater opportunities for engagement with a wider and more diverse community and stakeholder group, which is certainly in the interests of public safety.

Whilst we support this proposal, the only assurance that we would seek would be a firm commitment by this new authority to have specific and regular discussions on the provision of service in Bournemouth.

I look forward to hearing about the next stage of this process and welcome your response regarding our closer working together.

Yours sincerely,


**Cllr John Beesley FIH
Leader of the Council**

cc: *Rebecca Knox,
Chairman Dorset Fire Authority,
Weavers House, 5 East Street
Beaminster DT8 3DS*

APP B 8/14

Dorset County Council



Unclassified

Rebecca Knox
Chairman
Dorset Fire Authority
Peverell Avenue West
Poundbury
Dorchester
DT1 3SU

Chief Executive's Office
County Hall
Colliton Park
DT1 1XJ

Telephone: 01305 224247
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We welcome calls via text Relay

Email:
DX: DX 8716 Dorchester
Website: www.dorsetforyou.com

Date: 22 October 2014

Ask for: Sam Fox-Adams

My ref:

Dear Rebecca

CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE OF THE DORSET FIRE AUTHORITY

I would like to thank you for giving Dorset County Council the opportunity to comment on the three proposals put forward to reduce the on-going costs of the service.

I am pleased to inform you that Dorset County Council's Cabinet met this morning and the County Council is in support of your preferred option, option 3. I enclose a copy of the report that went to Cabinet for your reference.

If you have any queries, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely

Sam Fox-Adams
Head Of Policy, Partnerships And Communications

Enc.

Agenda Item:

Cabinet

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Dorset County Council



Date of Meeting	22 October 2014
<p><u>Cabinet Member</u> Robert Gould – Cabinet Member for Corporate Resources</p> <p><u>Local Member(s)</u> All</p> <p><u>Lead Director</u> Jonathan Mair – Acting Director for Corporate Resources</p>	
Subject of Report	The proposed merger between Dorset Fire Authority and Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authority
Executive Summary	<p>Dorset Fire Authority has engaged in a public consultation exercise to increase awareness of the budgetary constraints that it faces and has proposed three options for reducing costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scenario 1: DFA to stay independent but increase collaboration with Bournemouth Borough Council, Dorset County Council&he Borough of Poole; • Scenario 2: DFA to stay independent but increase collaboration with Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authority and Bournemouth Borough Council, Dorset County Council&the Borough of Poole; • Scenario 3: DFA to merge with Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authority to create a single combined authority and increase collaboration with Bournemouth Borough Council, Dorset County Council & the Borough of Poole, Wiltshire Council & Swindon BC. <p>This report outlines the three proposals and any implications they may have for the County Council.</p>

	<p>Scenario 3 would enable a combined annual saving of over £4m to avoid significant cuts to front line services and increase prevention services within the community.</p>
Impact Assessment:	<p>Equalities Impact Assessment:</p> <p>The Fire Authority's Business Case, which underpins the consultation, includes impact assessments covering environmental, people and community for each scenario.</p> <p>Use of Evidence:</p> <p>This report is based upon consultation documents published by Dorset Fire Authority and the Service Level Agreement between the Council the Fire Authority as referred to in the 'background papers'.</p> <p>Budget:</p> <p>The three scenarios will have budgetary implications for the Council. Currently, contracts of around £225k are in place for the provision of support services by the Council to Dorset Fire Authority. Scenario 3 would see the loss of some of these contracts, with the services being undertaken by the new combined fire authority or other bodies. There may also be other opportunities to bid for and run additional services to support the larger combined fire authority. This is also likely to be the case for Scenario 2 but to a lesser extent.</p> <p>Risk Assessment:</p> <p>Having considered the risks associated with this decision using the County Council's approved risk management methodology, the level of risk has been identified as: Current Risk: Low Residual Risk: Low</p> <p>Other Implications:</p> <p>None.</p>
Recommendation	<p>That the Cabinet consider and agree to support the Dorset Fire Authority's scenario 3 to merge with Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authority to create a single combined authority and increase collaboration with Bournemouth BC, DCC, BOP, Wiltshire Council & Swindon BC.</p>
Reason for Recommendation	<p>To support the Dorset Fire Authority in continuing to provide a rapid response to emergency call-outs across Dorset whilst</p>

	simultaneously meeting budgetary constraints and to expand its community safety initiatives for the benefit of Dorset’s communities.
Appendices	None.
Background Papers	Dorset Fire and Rescue Service, ‘Strengthening our fire and rescue service, public consultation’ and ‘A new combined fire authority for Dorset and Wiltshire – draft business case for consultation,’ July 2014.
Officer Contact	Name: Sam Fox-Adams Head of Policy, Partnerships and Communications Tel: 710-4247 Email: s.fox-adams@dorsetcc.gov.uk

1. Background

- 1.1 Dorset Fire Authority (DFA) has made significant cuts in its budget. Since 2005 the Fire Authority has saved over £4m per year and avoided cuts to front line services. However, by 2017/2018 it needs to find further savings of between £2.3m - £3.2m in annual operating costs up to the end of March 2018 to be able to maintain current service levels. This is in the context of a £30m annual budget. The DFA has offered three proposals which would allow it to operate within a reduced budget. The proposals are based around increased collaboration with Local Authorities and/or Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authority.
- 1.2 Without large scale change, there will be substantial cuts to emergency response arrangements. Fire stations and appliances may need to be significantly downgraded or lost and the DFA will need to considerably reduce the work it does to educate and keep vulnerable people safe.

2. The Fire Authority Proposals

- 2.1 The options proposed by the DFA describe three levels of collaboration/integration:
 - Scenario 1: DFA to stay independent but increase collaboration with BournemouthBC, DCC & the Borough of Poole;
 - Scenario 2: DFA to stay independent but increase collaboration with Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authority and BournemouthBC, DCC & BOP;
 - Scenario 3: DFA to merge with Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authority to create a single combined authority and increase collaboration with Bournemouth BC, DCC, BOP, Wiltshire Council & Swindon BC.
- 2.2 Scenario 1: Governance unchanged. Only £0.8m annual savings are identified by collaborating with councils although ‘further savings remain to be explored and identified’. Therefore front-line services will need to reduce resulting in longer response times.

- 2.3 Scenario 2: Governance unchanged. Collaboration with Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authority would be limited to sharing non-operational teams, corporate costs and 'maximising non-operational fire specialisms'. In this scenario the annual savings are estimated at £0.9m. As in option 1 there would need to be a reduction in front-line services.
- 2.4 Scenario 3: Governance would change as the combined authority would have one committee and one Chief Fire Officer. Support functions would be combined. This is currently Dorset Fire Authority's preferred option. There are precedents elsewhere in the country for merged fire authorities.
- 2.5 By reducing joint spending on management, corporate costs and cutting out the duplication in fire-specific functions the two fire authorities can find over twice the savings than from any other single option available. Estimated annual savings are £4m per year with further savings anticipated.
- 2.6 After exploring a range of options, DFA believe that by combining the fire authorities and working closer with local authorities, the police and other public services the DFA will be a safe, strong and sustainable organisation for partners to work with.
- 2.7 A draft business case has been developed and published to support the consultation process. This has shown that the two fire authorities can best meet their aims by combining into a single body. Under this option emergency response times can be unaffected, significant cuts to front-line services can be avoided and prevention services within the community can be increased.
- 2.8 It is proposed that if scenario 3 is adopted at both Fire Authority meetings in November 2014 then a new shadow authority, covering both Dorset and Wiltshire, would operate from April 2015. In order to achieve the single combined Fire Authority a Combination Order needs to be tabled and approved by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. The new Fire Authority would formally come into existence on 1 April 2016.
- 2.9 As one of the constituent authorities of the existing Dorset Fire Authority the County Council is an important consultee on the preferred option of a combination with Wiltshire. It would be an important signal if it could be reported to the Secretary of State that the County Council supports this change.

3. The implications for DCC

- 3.1 If the preferred scenario (scenario 3) is implemented, there are a number of changes to the working relationship between DFA and DCC that may happen as a result.
- 3.2 Some contracts would cease, for example:-
- DCC currently provides a financial management system to DFA. This support would end in 2016 with the adoption of Wiltshire's financial system. Provision of the existing DCC system (Griffin) would however need to be discontinued within a similar timescale anyway as it is no longer supported,

- DCC currently provides an independent treasurer and statutory accounting functions which would cease under the new arrangements,
 - Accounts payable function.
- 3.3 Some contracts would be at risk but could potentially be provided for the new combined authority, for example:-
- Payroll services, although the service would need to be migrated from the current IT system (MERLIN),
 - Insurance and claims handling
 - Clerk / Democratic Services
 - Fire Pension Administration
 - Treasury Management / Banking
 - Contract management (procurement)
- 3.4 It is therefore likely that around £100k of existing contracts would be ceased and around £125k of contracts would be at risk as a result of the formation of the combined fire authority.
- 3.5 The documents make several references to 'working more closely with local councils'. They include some references to how DFA plans to work more closely with the County Council, mainly around community safety:
- Work with local authorities on broadening community safety (preventative) measures to include health and crime and to give the public a single point of contact. Could reduce the need for each public service provider to interact.
 - Work with local authorities to further develop flood response plans (increased flooding is predicted).
 - Work with local authority health and wellbeing boards to ensure that fire prevention is included under health improvement.

Debbie Ward
Chief Executive
October 2014

ChowP

From: ChowP
Sent: 04 February 2015 15:51
To: ChowP
Subject: Borough of Poole DCLG Consultation Response

POOLE

Dear DCLG,

This is to confirm that Members of the Borough of Poole received a presentation a full presentation on the proposals from the Chief Fire Officer, Darran Gunter, and the lead Member from Dorset County Council.

Members of the Council were satisfied with the process that had been carried out by the two Fire Authorities, including the generation and assessment of options, and the preferred option that was being recommended.

The answer to the three questions in the DCLG consultation document is yes. The reason for this is that the proposals protect the frontline service and give the best chance of putting the service on a sustainable basis.

The Council does not wish to put any impediment in the way of the Fire Authorities and their plans

Yours sincerely,
Andrew Flockhart
Interim Chief Executive
Borough of Poole
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e. a.flockhart@poole.gov.uk
<http://boroughofpoole.com>