



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

Fire and Rescue Authority Chairs
and Portfolio holders

Copied to: Chief Fire Officers and
Chief Executives

The Rt Hon Mark Francois MP
Minister of State for Communities and Resilience

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11 September 2105

Dear colleague,

PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON EMERGENCY SERVICES COLLABORATION

The Government made clear in its manifesto that we will “enable fire and police services to work more closely together and develop the role of our elected and accountable Police and Crime Commissioners”.

Since the Election my department, in partnership with the Home Office and Department for Health, have been working on proposals which seek to drive a greater level of joint working between the emergency services, not only between police and fire services but also with the ambulance service, delivering more effective and efficient services for communities.

I am pleased to inform you that a joint consultation paper has today been published which seeks views on proposals to drive greater collaboration between the emergency services and to enable closer working between police and fire and rescue services.

A copy of the consultation can be found at
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/enabling-closer-working-between-the-emergency-services>

We know that where the emergency services collaborate they can deliver efficiencies and service improvements. However, despite some good local examples, the overall picture on emergency services collaboration is patchy and we must do more to improve the position, including giving local leaders greater opportunities to deliver change locally.

The Government believes that enabling Police and Crime Commissioners to drive collaboration locally will be key in providing more effective leadership. Police and Crime

Commissioners already have clear local accountability and a strong incentive to pursue ambitious reform to improve services and deliver value for money in the interests of local people. The public should be able to vote for one individual, being clear about their responsibilities and able to hold them to account for their delivery.

We propose to enable local decision-makers to have the powers available to them to transfer responsibility for fire and rescue services to Police and Crime Commissioners where a local case is made. This should allow a Police and Crime Commissioner to take responsibility for fire and oversee the governance of both organisations.

The Police and Crime Commissioner will receive separate funding from central government for police and fire, and will set separate precepts. This will ensure that local taxpayers are clear about their level of contribution. The Police and Crime Commissioner will consider how to deliver best value for money through these budgets, which may include investing in shared back office functions.

The consultation also sets out the intention to enable Police and Crime Commissioners, where they wish to do so, to put in place a single employer for both fire and police personnel, making it simpler for them to rationalise back office functions and senior tiers of management. The important distinction between operational firefighting and policing will remain, and we will keep the existing legislation which prevents a police constable from being employed as a firefighter.

We also propose the introduction of a duty to collaborate on the three emergency services so that they would be required to consider collaboration with each other where it would drive efficiency or effectiveness. The duty will be formed so that decisions on collaboration are driven by the needs of emergency services at a local level. This will ensure that all three emergency services are part of the drive for greater collaboration to provide the best possible service and overall value to the taxpayer.

These changes provide an opportunity for radical changes to the way fire and rescue services are governed, empowering local decision makers to consider new models where they better serve the needs of local people. It goes without saying that your views are important and I look forward to receiving them.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mark Francois'.

THE RT HON MARK FRANCOIS MP