



Home Office

Home Secretary

2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF
www.gov.uk/home-office

Police and Crime Commissioner
Police Hq, Hindlip Hall,
Worcester WR3 8SP

26th March 2018

Dear John,

RE: Proposal to transfer fire governance to the Police and Crime Commissioner

Thank you for your proposal to take on governance of Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS). I am aware of the hard work that has gone into developing your business case and the steps you have taken to consult widely with local people and stakeholders. I note that the majority of the public supported your proposal.

As your proposal did not have the support of the relevant upper tier local authorities (Herefordshire Council, Shropshire Council, Telford and Wrekin Council and Worcestershire County Council), on 20 November 2017, the Policing and Fire Minister (with delegated authority) commissioned the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) to undertake an independent assessment of the proposal as required by the Policing and Crime Act 2017.

Having carefully reviewed your proposal, your consultation materials, the views and representations made by statutory consultees and your responses to them together with the independent assessment, I am pleased to inform you I have decided to approve your proposal. I consider that it demonstrates that a transfer of governance would be in the interests of economy, efficiency and effectiveness and does not have an adverse effect upon public safety.

I particularly welcome your vision for stronger collaboration between the police and fire and rescue services in West Mercia to secure more sustainable and resilient services for local people. I welcome too your commitment to establish a fire alliance between HWFRS and SFRS to enable more effective collaboration with West Mercia Police and other partners, whilst retaining the separate identities of the three services. I look forward to seeing how this develops.

As a Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, you will have clear local accountability and a strong mandate to pursue ambitious reform. The independent assessment recognised the positive impact the Governance model could have on the pace and breadth of collaboration and I consider that

you are well placed to drive collaboration so that local communities feel the benefits sooner. I know that you will closely oversee the transfer of governance and future collaborative opportunities to ensure successful implementation.

I note that some of the comments raised by stakeholders in response to your consultation relate to the financial basis of your proposal. In that respect, I have carefully considered both the independent assessment and my Department's own analysis, and believe that there are clear opportunities for savings to be made. I agree with your assessment that the greatest benefits from collaboration are most likely to be secured under single leadership and recognise that, following the transfer of governance, you will of course develop detailed business cases for each collaborative venture.

I am aware that the impact of a governance transfer on the operational resilience of the fire and rescue services was also questioned by stakeholders. The independent assessors looked at three specific operational issues that were raised, and concluded that these issues were not likely to have an adverse effect on public safety. Your proposal rightly acknowledges each issue as a risk for you to manage and I understand you will have plans in place to mitigate these. I consider that your proposal will not have an adverse effect on public safety, and that joint governance could better support the operational sustainability of both services. As you have highlighted, it is right that you work closely with the respective Chief Fire Officers to deliver on behalf of the public.

My decision will be announced today (26 March) via a Written Ministerial Statement laid in the House of Commons. A copy of the Independent Assessment will be published at this point; however, an embargoed copy of the report is attached, which should not be shared more widely. You should expect to hear from my officials shortly in respect of developing the necessary statutory instrument to give effect to your proposal which we anticipate will take effect in June or July, subject to discussions with you.

I encourage you to work openly and collaboratively with the two affected Fire and Rescue Services and with other local stakeholders to ensure a smooth transition.

I would like to thank you and your local stakeholders for your constructive engagement and I look forward to seeing the benefits of further collaboration between policing and fire in West Mercia.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amber Rudd', written in a cursive style.

Rt Hon Amber Rudd MP

Copy List

Leader of Shropshire Council, Councillor Peter Nutting

Leader of Herefordshire Council, Councillor AW Johnson

Leader of Telford and Wrekin Council, Councillor Shaun Davies

Leader of Worcestershire County Council, Councillor Simon Geraghty

Chief Fire Officer for Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service,
Nathan Travis

Chief Fire Officer for Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service, Rod Hammerton

All local MPs

Chair of the Hereford and Worcester FRA, Councillor Roger J Phillips

Chair of the Shropshire and Wrekin FRA, Councillor Eric Carter