
Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire

Supporting document 05.
Correspondence received by the
OPCC from public
(includes responses where
applicable)

GFRS governance review

Background

During the consultation period, residents were invited to share their views about the proposed change to GFRS governance by e-mailing the PCC's Office directly.

The following are redacted copies of correspondence received via e-mail.

In total nine e-mails were received (including two from one individual).

In all cases, comments were to express disagreement with the proposed change in governance.

The following response was sent to residents expressing views about the GFRS governance proposal unless comments made required feedback.

Dear XXX

Thank you for taking the time to let us know your thoughts about the PCC's fire governance proposal. We will ensure that this is included as a consultation response.

Kind regards
Ruth

Ruth Greenwood
Policy Officer
Office of the Police Crime Commissioner
Gloucestershire Constabulary

Number 1 Waterwells | Waterwells Drive | Quedgeley | GL2 2AN
Group – 01452 754348 | Force Control Room – 101
www.gloucestershire-pcc.gov.uk | www.gloucestershire.police.uk
[Twitter page](#) | [Facebook page](#)

Correspondence received via e-mail

Date: 07/11/18

From: REDACTED
Sent: 07 November 2018 15:27
To: Police & Crime Commissioner
Subject: Re: PCC Takeover of Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service.

The PCC should never be permitted to succeed in this latest power grab attempt. Every Fire and Rescue Service across the country is unique in the demands and stresses placed upon it and is best served by keeping interference with it's work to a bare minimum with the support of it's local authority.

PCC's were foisted on the Police at great extra cost to the local community by a Government looking to provide a scapegoat and divest itself of blame when the Police Service numbers and effectiveness inevitably fell due to reductions in funding with the consequent damaging effects on local communities.

All talk of cost savings and increased efficiency prior to the appointment of PCC's have proved to be a smokescreen and another exercise in smoke and mirrors attempting to justify what was a bad idea in the first place.

This quote from comments made by Mr. Surl ""Furthermore, the changes that a new and more

transparent governance arrangement will bring will result in greater financial sustainability, transparency and cost effectiveness for Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service, none of which is possible under the current governance arrangements", are similar to the pathetic nonsense peddled in the initial push to appoint these Commissioners.

This latest bid by Mr. Surl to make his position more secure by removing the long established oversight by our County Councillors, should be treated with the contempt it deserves.

Sincerely,
REDACTED

NB Further correspondence received on 29/11/18

Date: 07/11/18

From: REDACTED
Sent: 07 November 2018 15:53
To: Police & Crime Commissioner
Subject: Responsibility for the Fire Service

Good afternoon,

I am in total disagreement that the PCC should also be responsible for the Fire Service, which should remain in the County Council's control. I go as far as stating that the appointment of PCC's is a big mistake and certainly should not be given any further powers. The PCC is hardly a democratically elected official, as the election for this position was hardly supported by the public who did not even know who the candidates were. The Chief Constable should have complete control and report to an elected committee and not to one person.

Kind Regards,

REDACTED

Date: 07/11/18

From: REDACTED
Sent: 07 November 2018 21:44
To: Police & Crime Commissioner
Subject: Police takeover of Gloucestershire Fire and rescue service

I totally object to this plan, the commissioner can't get a grip of his own force and police numbers on duty have dwindled to dangerous numbers, don't let this individual anywhere near the Fire service it will be ripped apart in months of him taking over.

REDACTED

Date: 07/11/18

From: pcc@gloucestershire.police.uk [<mailto:pcc@gloucestershire.police.uk>]
Sent: 07 November 2018 22:16
To: Police & Crime Commissioner
Subject: New comment on page: Contact us

First Name: REDACTED
Last Name: REDACTED
Email Address: REDACTED
Comment: The GFRS should be run by Gloucestershire County Council.
Organisation:
Approval to use comment: Yes

Date: 14/11/18

From: REDACTED
Sent: 14 November 2018 17:43
To: Police & Crime Commissioner
Subject: Fire and Police management

I feel quite strongly that the PCC should first of all sort out policing in rural areas before trying to take over the fire service – which runs quite effectively under present management arrangement. One only has to look at clear up rates, responses to incidents and reports and police presence in rural areas to realise he has yet to get the job he has got now right.

Date: 29/11/18

From: pcc@gloucestershire.police.uk [<mailto:pcc@gloucestershire.police.uk>]
Sent: 29 November 2018 15:34
To: Police & Crime Commissioner
Subject: New comment on page: Contact us

First Name: REDACTED
Last Name: REDACTED
Email Address: REDACTED
Comment: Sent again in case my previous email of opposition to this move 'slips through the cracks' and is overlooked when counting of the 'anti' take-over numbers begins. I hope the vote results will be properly published and not hidden away as these things are wont to do.
Organisation: None, just a council tax payer who is old enough to recognise an Empire Builder out to consolidate his position and happy to waste ratepayer money doing it, when he sees one.
Approval to use comment: Yes

NB – previous correspondence received on 07/11/18

Date: 07/12/18

From: REDACTED
Sent: 07 December 2018 09:46
To: Police & Crime Commissioner
Subject: Should the PCC be governing the fire and rescue service?

Just one question; will this cost more money?
If yes then stop it.

REDACTED

From: Greenwood, Ruth
Sent: 07 December 2018 11:00
To: REDACTED
Subject: RE: Should the PCC be governing the fire and rescue service? C0243-18

Dear REDACTED

Thanks for your e-mail. There will be some costs in the transfer from the County Council but our analysis shows savings would be achieved over time through greater collaboration with, for example estate colocation.

When it comes to finance though, under the proposed Governance Model, Gloucestershire residents will have clear information about how much it costs to run the Fire and Rescue Service. There will be a separate bank account and budget for fire meaning longer term plans can be developed. This means more collaboration (and potential savings) can be realised with, for example, joint procurement of IT systems.

Under the current arrangements, The Fire and Rescue Service is essentially a department of the County Council. Funds for Fire are merged with other funding and can be used to support other council services. There is no defined budget meaning the actual costs of running the service (beyond operation costs and including support services costs such as HR, IT, legal costs etc.) are not clear. Under the proposed model the budget will be defined (including funding derived from council tax) and fire money will only be used for fire.

I have attached a summary of the business case for your information as well as some FAQs / comments that may of interest. Please do not hesitate to get back in touch if you have any further queries.

Kind regards
Ruth

Ruth Greenwood
Policy Officer
Office of the Police Crime Commissioner
Gloucestershire Constabulary

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From: REDACTED
Sent: 07 December 2018 11:19
To: Greenwood, Ruth
Subject: Re: Should the PCC be governing the fire and rescue service?

Dear Ruth,

Thank you for your reply.

On an annual basis:-

How much does it cost now to oversee the Fire and Rescue Service?

How much will it cost under your plans?

REDACTED

From: Greenwood, Ruth
Sent: 07 December 2018 11:41
To: REDACTED
Subject: RE: Should the PCC be governing the fire and rescue service? C0243-18

Dear REDACTED

As with my previous response - understanding the actual costs of the Fire and Rescue Service, including the governance, is difficult as the service is currently embedded in the County Council structure.

In the GFRS Integrated Risk Management Plan (<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/1519652/integrated-risk-management-plan-2018-21.pdf>), you can see on page 26 there is a list of the committees that oversee GFRS:

On a day-to-day basis, we continually monitor the organisation's overall performance with reports made to the Strategic Leadership Team led by the Chief Fire Officer every month.

In addition, quarterly reports covering key performance indicators are provided to Gloucestershire County Council's Cabinet, Chief Officer Management Team, the Financial Risk and Performance Committee and the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee. This provides the Fire Authority with the necessary confidence that the Service is fulfilling stakeholder expectations and statutory duties.

These committees will continue to exist without the Fire and Rescue Service so Elected Members will continue to get their expenses and staff supporting the meetings will continue to be paid.

Our analysis indicates that the Commissioner's Office would have to expand to accommodate the additional work in overseeing the Fire and Rescue Service indications are that this would cost c.£70k per year.

The budgets for the OPCC are reported publically to the Police and Crime Panel on an annual basis along with the Constabulary budget (<https://www.gloucestershire-pcc.gov.uk/media/3832/budget-paper-201819-police-and-crime-panel-050218.pdf>). This means that the full costs of running the Police and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner are transparent and can be scrutinised. Under the proposed model, this would be the same for Fire.

Just in conclusion though, as I said in my previous e-mail, through greater collaboration, efficiencies can be realised which will offset the cost of transfer. In the foreword to the full business case (<https://www.gloucestershire-pcc.gov.uk/media/4192/gloucestershire-opcc-fire-governance-outline-business-case-nov-2018.pdf>), the Commissioner says (page 2):

I cannot claim a change in governance will be at no financial cost. Our research estimates the one-off cost of change will be circa £680k (combined cost to GCC and OPCC) with a recurring additional cost to my office of circa £70k which only represents approximately 0.51% of the combined annual budgets for the Police, Fire and OPCC. However, with this small investment, so much more can be achieved for the benefit of residents in Gloucestershire.

These transitional costs would, however, be offset by estate collaboration alone. Our analysis shows that colocation of services in just three stations could realise capital receipts of £2.3m and running cost savings of £186k. Over a ten year period (and excluding one off refurbishment costs of £750k), colocation of services could realise savings in the region of £3.4m. But for me, a debate about future GFRS governance should not be limited to cost benefit analysis. I am passionate about protecting our emergency services and supporting a safer county for the residents I am elected to represent. A change in governance would mean a ring-fenced budget, where fire and rescue money is used for the fire and rescue service. This, in turn, means that GFRS can financially plan for the future as an emergency service and not as a part of a wider County Council with its own complex and rising

demands. These are the real tangible benefits that the county would realise following a change of governance.

I hope this helps
Ruth

From: REDACTED
Sent: 07 December 2018 11:56
To: Greenwood, Ruth
Subject: Re: Should the PCC be governing the fire and rescue service?

Dear Ruth,

Thank you.

The astounding increase in costs make it a non runner. There is no way I as a rate payer will be funding this in fact I shall do everything possible to stop it and get the PCC disbanded as well.

It is just empire building

REDACTED.

From: Greenwood, Ruth
Sent: 07 December 2018 12:06
To: REDACTED
Subject: RE: Should the PCC be governing the fire and rescue service? C0243-18

Thank you for sharing your views REDACTED and I will include them in the consultation response to the Home Office.

If you are unhappy with the role of Police and Crime Commissioner then it would be worth you contacting the Home Secretary directly as this would require a change in legislation.

Just regarding the comment regarding empire building - since the Commissioner first looked at the case for fire governance change in 2017, there have been suggestions from critics that this agenda is simply a case of empire building. The Home Office placed a responsibility on PCCs to look at fire governance via the [Policing and Crime Act 2017](#) and provided funding to do this. The Act followed manifesto commitments made by the Conservative Party at the last General Election and this followed a commitment to reform Fire and Rescue Services in the same way as the Police by the then Home Secretary in a 2016 speech which can be found [here](#). Several other areas across England have explored the case for change (see page six of the [outline business case for Gloucestershire](#)).

Kind regards
Ruth

Date: 19/12/18

From: REDACTED
Sent: 19 December 2018 13:08
To: Police & Crime Commissioner
Subject: 're governing the fire service

Dear sirs no I don't agree with the Police and Crime Commissioner having any control with fire department. My personal view is that the Role of PCC is a waste of tax payers money and that Mr Surl has done nothing to improve Gloucestershire Police, why should he have any involvement with the Fire Service. That works fine as it is, he would only wreck it.

Yours Faithfully
REDACTED

Date: 20/12/18

From: pcc@gloucestershire.police.uk [<mailto:pcc@gloucestershire.police.uk>]

Sent: 20 December 2018 17:14

To: Police & Crime Commissioner

Subject: New comment on page: Contact us

First Name: REDACTED

Last Name: REDACTED

Email Address: REDACTED

Comment: We do not agree with the PCC taking over the Fire Service! The old saying is each to their own, I would not call in an electrician to deal with a gas fire! The Fire Service builds up their knowledge as a whole team through years of experience! Policing is an entirely different matter! Again, one would not expect a Fireman to do a very good job investigating a Crime! I also understand it will cost a lot more money than the way it is established at present! I can only assume you must already have the finances, otherwise, you would not make such a proposal! But why is it not being spent on extra staff on the ground to support the Constabulary? It only takes something like 2007 flooding, whereby Policing and Fire Services were both needed over the County, and if we had had to have been evacuated would we have had enough Police, at that time to protect Properties and ensure evacuation could have been carried out efficiently. I am sure more Troops would have had to have been brought in than we had then!

Organisation:

Approval to use comment: Yes

From: Greenwood, Ruth

Sent: 21 December 2018 09:06

To: REDACTED

Subject: FW: New comment on page: Contact us

Dear REDACTED

Thank you for taking the time to let us know your thoughts about the PCC's fire governance proposal. We will ensure that this is included as a consultation response.

Although I respectfully appreciate you have strong feelings about the matter and your position is unlikely to change, please know that the proposal to change governance of the fire will not result in a merger of services. This is not allowed in law and is certainly not contained in our business case.

The model we propose is about governance of the service including financial and procedural oversight. Unlike now where Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS) is a department within Gloucestershire County Council, our proposal would result in GFRS being a stand-alone service with its own bank account and ring-fenced budget. It would not have to compete for funding against wider council demands and residents would know that all money intended for fire would be used to fund the Fire and Rescue Service. None of this is possible under the current arrangement.

Terms and conditions for GFRS would remain the same – Fire Fighters will not become law enforcers and the police will not start putting out fires. This would be illegal.

The funding to look at this proposal has come from existing resources in the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and has not resulted in any reduction in funding to Gloucestershire Constabulary. The OPCC and the Constabulary are separate legal entities.

I have attached a summary of the business case and some frequently asked questions that may be of interest to you.

Kind regards
Ruth

Ruth Greenwood
Policy Officer
Office of the Police Crime Commissioner
Gloucestershire Constabulary

Date: 13/01/19

From: pcc@gloucestershire.police.uk
Sent: 13 January 2019 19:16
To: Police & Crime Commissioner
Subject: New comment on page: Contact us

First Name: REDACTED

Last Name: REDACTED

Email Address: REDACTED

Comment: I was too late to complete the survey regarding a proposed change of governance of the fire service. However, I wish to express my strongly held view that when, in 2012, PCCs were first elected, I was deeply shocked to find that they were permitted in any way to affiliate themselves to political parties. Martin Surl is independent - which is how things should be. I would be happy if he were to become PCand Fire C, but I am against any creeping control of or influence over county business by national political parties.

Organisation:

Approval to use comment: Yes