Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire

Supporting document 06.
Results of the online survey
(carried out by the OPCC)

GFRS governance review

Background

The following information was provided on the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner's website regarding the future governance of the fire and rescue service.

The Police and Crime Commissioner is proposing to take on governance of local fire services in Gloucestershire. Our analysis shows that this would result in:

- Savings that could be reinvested in front line services
- Closer collaboration between police and fire services
- A financially sustainable, standalone fire service, separate from the council and police
- Improved public safety
- No changes to front-line officers or services
- A system of a directly elected Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
- Improved governance, scrutiny and financial transparency of the county's Fire and Rescue Service

In order to achieve this, we assessed which option would be best for Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service. The options are:

- **No change / status quo**: This would mean Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service remain part of the County Council and collaboration is progressed on a voluntary basis.
- **Representation**: This is where the PCC would become a formal part of the existing governance for fire and rescue in GCC, with full voting rights.
- **Governance**: Here the PCC takes on responsibility for Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service in much the same way he currently does for Gloucestershire Constabulary. The role would become the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. Police and fire would retain their own chief officers and staff and be operationally independent of each another.
- **Single employer**: This is where the PCC would take on responsibility for fire alongside the police and also appoint a single chief officer for both services. Front-line services would remain distinct but support services would be increasingly integrated.

Against a statutory test of critical factors (economy and efficiency, effectiveness, public safety) and an additional assessment of deliverability, our analysis shows that the **Governance Model** would achieve the best outcomes for Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service and for Gloucestershire residents.
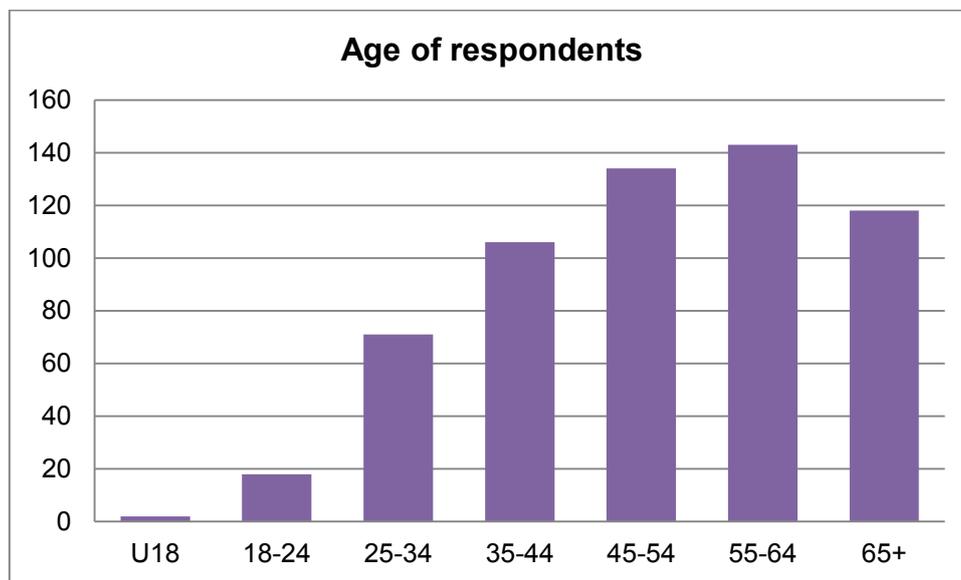

From this assessment, we have updated the business case from 2017 to include information from the last year that further strengthens the proposal for the Governance Model.

Read the business case here.

Following the provision of this information, people were then able to submit their views via a Survey Monkey survey. The survey questions were designed by staff working within the Police and Crime Commissioners Office and were based on questions used by other PCCs from around the country; it remained open during November and December 2018.

In total, 626 people completed the survey. 344 were male, 213 female and 64 stated that they would prefer not to say.
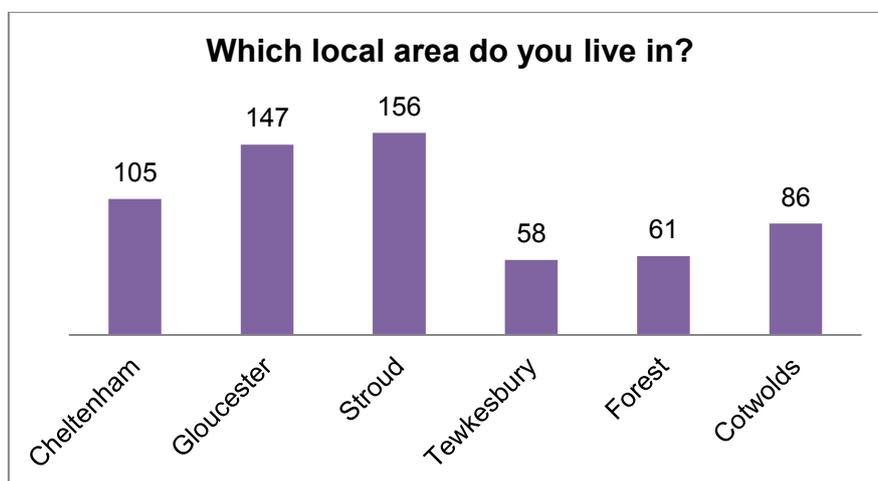
The ages of respondents are displayed in the graph below and those over the age of 35 are more likely to have taken part in the survey, than members of the population in the younger categories. 26 said 'Prefer not to say' and 8 left the question blank.

Age of respondents

Respondents described their ethnicity as follows:

- White British – 80.1%
- White Other – 3.7%
- Asian / Asian British – 1.6%
- Mixed / Multiple Ethnic Groups – 1.3%
- Other – 1.0%
- Black / African / Caribbean / Black British – 0.8%
- Prefer not to say – 10.2%

All areas of the County were represented, with numbers from the more urban areas receiving a higher number of completed surveys than the more rural areas.
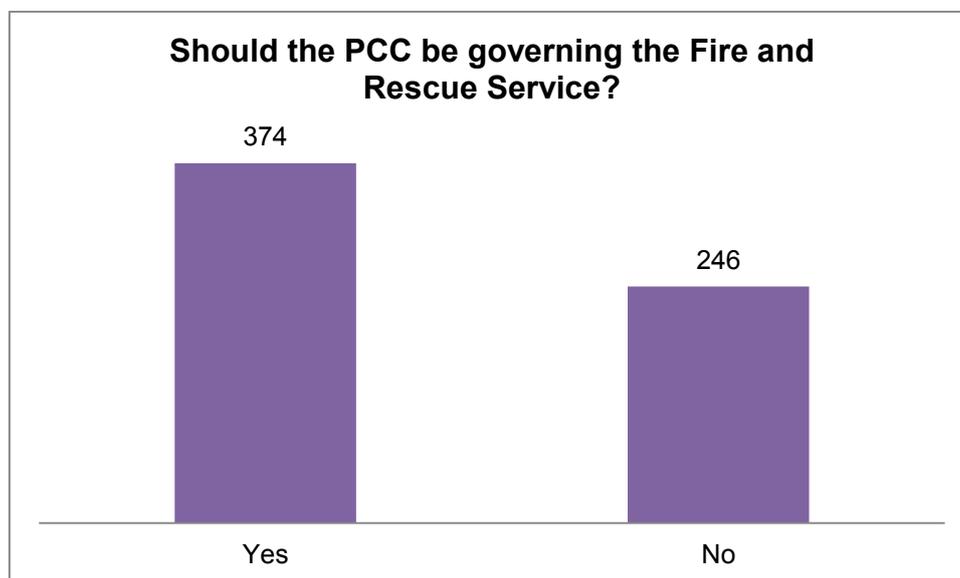
Which local area do you live in?
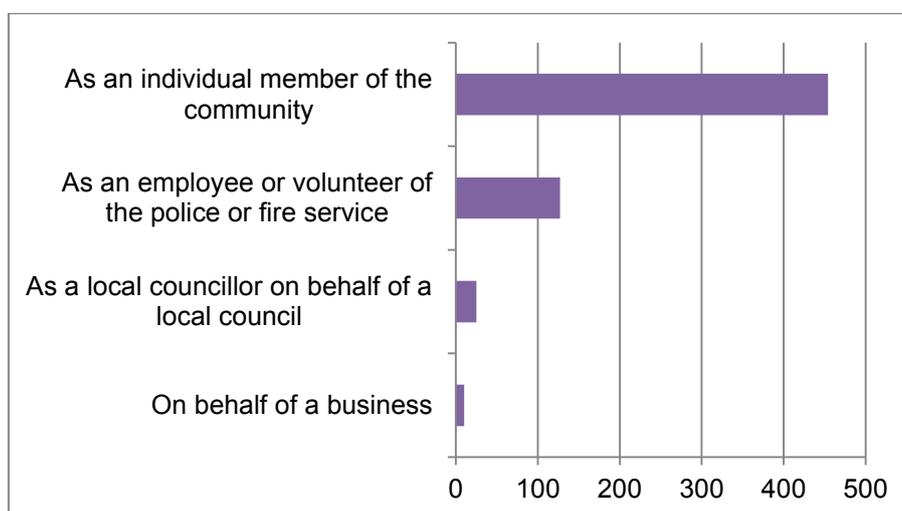

The results are discussed below.

Should the PCC be governing the Fire and Rescue Service?

Respondents to the survey were firstly asked whether the PCC should be governing the Fire and Rescue Service.

Of those that answered the question (5 did not provide a response), 60.4% responded *'yes'*, whilst 39.6% said *'no'*. It should be noted that there was not an option to abstain, or provide a 'don't know' response, so those without a strong preference either way, were forced to respond 'yes' or 'no'.
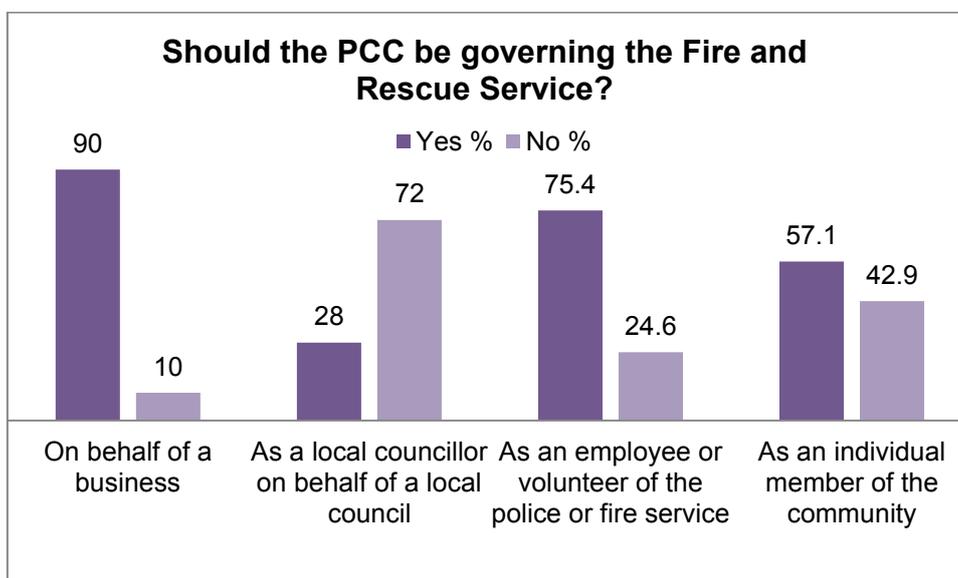
Should the PCC be governing the Fire and Rescue Service?

- Yes: 374
- No: 246

When asked about the capacity in which they were responding, the results were as follows:

- As an individual member of the community
- As an employee or volunteer of the police or fire service
- As a local councillor on behalf of a local council
- On behalf of a business

(axis: 0, 100, 200, 300, 400, 500)

The majority were members of the community (73.8%), followed by employees or volunteers of the police or fire service (20.7%). Not discounting the remainder, 4.1% were responding as a local councillor or on behalf of a local council and only 1.6% on behalf of a business. 9 people did not provide a response to this question.

Responses to the question, *'Should the PCC be governing the fire and rescue service?'* varied according to the capacity in which someone was responding to the survey. The chart below demonstrates that local councillors are more likely to respond *'no'*, when compared with employees of the police and fire service and businesses, who were the groups most likely to respond *'yes'*. Members of the public were least likely to express a strong preference either way, although those responding *'yes'* were most dominant at 57.2%, compared to 42.8% responding *'no'*.

Should the PCC be governing the Fire and Rescue Service?

Bar chart legend: ■ Yes % ■ No %

	On behalf of a business	As a local councillor on behalf of a local council	As an employee or volunteer of the police or fire service	As an individual member of the community
Yes %	90	28	75.4	57.1
No %	10	72	24.6	42.9

What are the main reasons for your answer to question 1?

Respondents were then asked to provide their main reasons for their 'yes' or 'no' response. There were 5 response options provided; 4 specific answers and an 'other' choice, which respondents were then asked to enter as an open-ended comment.

Reason	Yes (%)	No (%)
Financial considerations	48.7	30.9
Service resilience	48.1	37.4
Levels of collaboration	62.0	26.0
Replacing the existing Fire and Rescue Authority	41.7	47.2
Other (see below)	22.7	48.4

Of those that responded, *'yes'* in favour of the PCC governing the Fire and Rescue Service, the most common reason selected was *'levels of collaboration'*, with 61.9% of *'yes'* respondents selecting this option. The most common reason for a *'no'* response was provided via a free text comment however perhaps unsurprisingly, this was closely followed by *'replacing the existing Fire and Rescue Authority'*, something they evidently do not want to see happen.

'Other' responses

For respondents having providing their support for the PCC governing the Fire and Rescue Service, 85 of the 374 provided an open-ended comment in the *'other'* category. Comments have been themed and are as follows:

Reason	Frequency	% of respondents
Link to Stroud incinerator or dislike of local Councillors – lack of trust	37	43.5
A new arrangement is needed – the current system isn't working, mention of recent Fire and Rescue inspections	24	28.2
Benefit of emergency services working more collaboratively	19	22.4
Improved governance and accountability	14	16.5
Better use of resources, more efficient, one plan	13	15.3
Opportunity to make savings	6	7.1
Improved service provision for the public	3	3.5

Please note: The percentages have been calculated by dividing the frequency of a response, by the total number of respondents that provided an open ended response. Therefore, as each comment may have contained more than one theme, the percentages total more than 100%.

For respondents that <u>did not</u> provide their support for the PCC governing the Fire and Rescue Service, a larger proportion provided an open-ended response via the 'other' category (119 out of a possible 246 people). Again, comments have been themed and summarised and the results included in the table below. Interestingly, in this case, comments were more varied in their nature.

Reason	Frequency	% of respondents
PCC needs to prove success with policing first – existing mismanagement and mistrust	29	24.4
If it's not broken don't fix it – the current arrangement serves well – trust and confidence in the Fire and Rescue Service is positive	18	15.1
The current arrangement is the most transparent and accountable of the options presented	17	14.3
Empire building and opportunistic on the part of the PCC	15	12.6
Leave the Fire and Rescue Service to the people who know what they're talking about	14	11.8
Fearful of further cuts, particularly in rural areas	7	5.9
Fire and police are separate skillsets and should be treated as such	7	5.9
The business case needs more detail	6	5.0
Making the governance political is the wrong thing to do	6	5.0

Please note: The percentages have been calculated by dividing the frequency of a response, by the total number of respondents that provided an open ended response. Therefore, as each comment may have contained more than one theme, the percentages total more than 100%.

The opinions of employees or volunteers of the police or fire service

Considering employees or volunteers of the police or fire service as a standalone category, the results for this group have been broken down further. *Please note however that as numbers of respondents for each group are relatively small and would not be representative of the total workforce, the results should be treated with caution.*

Earlier in the report, we saw that employees or volunteers of the police or fire service were more likely to support PCC governance than members of the community or Councillors, or those responding on behalf of a local council. To clarify, 75% of police or fire service respondents said 'yes' to the PCC governing the fire and rescue service, compared to 57% for members of the community and 28% for those representing local councils.

A total of 60 respondents were employees the Fire and Rescue Service and 62 of Gloucestershire Constabulary.

Employees of the Fire and Rescue Service

Of the 60 respondents, 68% (41 people) voted in favour of the PCC governing the Fire and Rescue Service. Of the 41 'yes' respondents, their reasons for their response were:

- Replacing the existing Fire and Rescue Authority - 32
- Levels of collaboration - 18
- Service resilience - 16
- Financial considerations – 15

Those that provided an open-ended response tended to mention that a fresh start is needed and that they are 'fed up' with and have a lack of faith in the council.

32% of fire service employees did not support the PCC taking over governance and the reasons provided for their decision were:

- Replacing the existing Fire and Rescue Authority – 12
- Financial considerations – 10
- Service resilience – 10
- Levels of collaboration - 5

Again, open-ended comments provided further insight and suggested a desire to remain independent, with fears that the reputation and brand that is currently so popular with the public, as well as links that have been formed with community groups and agencies would be negatively affected. There was also a suggestion that respondents would like the PCC to demonstrate that he has been effective with policing first.

Employees of Gloucestershire Constabulary

There were 62 completed surveys from Gloucestershire Constabulary employees and of these, 84% (52 people) selected 'yes' to the PCC governing the Fire and Rescue Service. Reasons for this choice were as follows:

- Levels of collaboration – 34
- Financial considerations – 32
- Service resilience – 31
- Replacing the existing Fire and Rescue Authority – 18

The reasons selected by fire and police employees are weighted differently in that fire employees are focussed primarily on governance arrangements, whereas police focus more on the perceived benefits of working more collaboratively, efficiency and improving service delivery. The open-ended comments of the police employees further reflect this and mention opportunities for improved service, shared use of fire stations and their previous positive experiences of working with the fire service.

Only 10 police respondents (16%) said 'no' to the PCC governing the Fire and Rescue Service. Reasons for their response included that the PCC has no experience of the fire service, it would be too much work for one person and that having a PCC that is locally driven is getting in the way of opportunities for national collaboration.

Summary

Overall, the majority (60.4%) of respondents to the survey were in favour of the PCC governing the Fire and Rescue Service. This percentage varied depending on the group being represented however generally, members of the community, employees of the police and fire service and local businesses were more likely to vote 'yes' than 'no'. The only group to not receive a majority 'yes' response were Councillors, or those representing a local council.

Many respondents saw the benefits of collaboration in terms of service resilience and financial considerations however a number of respondents also raised questions or observations, which would be worthy of consideration.