

Police and Crime Commissioners and Fire and Rescue Authorities

Purpose of report

For discussion and direction.

Summary

This paper proposes the establishment of a joint task and finish, group made up of members from the Safer and Stronger Communities Board and Fire Services Management Committee, to look at the relationship of Police and Crime Commissioners to Fire and Rescue Authorities.

Recommendation

Members are asked to consider the proposal to establish a Task and Finish Group to examine the relationship of Police and Crime Commissioners and Police and Crime Panels to Fire and Rescue Authorities.

Action

Officers to take action as directed.

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Background

1. There is new impetus to ensure the emergency services work together with the Home Office providing funding of £1.76m to cover a 24 month programme of work called the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP). This will ensure that emergency services are trained and exercised to work together as effectively as possible at all levels of command in response to a major incident. This programme of work aims to produce a common approach/set of principles that is applied to all major incidents and therefore provides an important context for a discussion about how PCCs, Police and Crime Panels and FRAs (both independently and as responsible authorities on Community Safety Partnerships) work together.
2. Delivering the JESIP programme will require high level agreement about structures and doctrine, but at its heart will need to build on the extensive partnership working that takes place locally across the blue-light services, and with local authorities. Police and Crime Commissioners and Police and Crime Panels will need to develop a close working relationship with fire authorities, as well as ambulance services and as new governance arrangements come into effect, Members may wish to examine these interdependencies.
3. As Members are aware, Police and Crime Panels will scrutinise the actions and decisions of PCCs. This role will include ensuring that the PCC's actions and decisions have:
 - 3.1. achieved the aims set out in their police and crime plan;
 - 3.2. considered the priorities of community safety partners; and
 - 3.3. consulted appropriately with the public and victims.
4. Fire authorities are important partners in local community safety partnerships. They provide strategic input, but also deliver diversionary and education programmes for young people, and activity that is successful in reducing re-offending. A recent LGA poll of PCC candidates showed that Community Safety Partnerships were rated by 83% as being important partners to work with, although none identified Fire and Rescue Authorities independently.
5. Police and Crime Commissioners have the primary role in scrutinising police forces' performance in delivering the Strategic Policing Requirement, which includes the requirement for the police to work effectively with other blue-light emergency services in emergency planning and response to major incidents.
6. The fire services are scrutinised by scrutiny committees in county run services and by a variety of arrangements in stand alone authorities. As the legislation is currently drafted, Police and Crime Panels cannot scrutinise the performance of fire authorities as their sole role is to hold Police and Crime Commissioners to account, although Panels will of course be examining community safety activity more broadly. Fire

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services do remain accountable as responsible authorities on community safety partnerships to councils' crime and disorder overview and scrutiny committees. Currently however there is no link between Police and Crime Panels and crime and disorder overview and scrutiny committees. Some councillors sitting on Police and Crime Panels though will have fire authority experience and fostering a closer sense of working collaboratively across services in the interests of delivering the JESIP work, efficiencies across services and making communities safer will, no doubt, be a priority.

7. The LGA has already done a substantial amount to identify and explore the relationship between PCCs, Police and Crime Panels and local authorities including through its discussions with the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, the guidance produced on the establishment of panels and their scrutiny role, and the support provided to community safety partnerships on how they might work with PCCs. It would however be helpful for a Member-led group to examine how the arrangements might work post PCC elections in November and to explore what this changing landscape means for Fire and Rescue Authorities going forward.

Relationship with Fire and Rescue Authorities

8. Police and Crime Commissioners and Police and Crime Panels will want to be aware of the full range of resources and decision-making processes that are available locally to address community safety and emergency and civil contingencies:
 - 8.1. It will be important for PCCs to be aware of and to be able to factor in the broad community safety work of fire authorities.
 - 8.2. Similarly it will be important for PCCs to understand the wider emergency planning framework and their links alongside fire services and councils with local resilience forums and emergency planning in their force area.
 - 8.3. The relationship between FRAs, local resilience forums, Police and Crime Panels, and crime and disorder overview and scrutiny committees will also need to be explored and understood.
 - 8.4. It will also be important to understand the role of the police and crime panels and scrutiny functions within councils and fire authorities in assessing the effectiveness of "blue light" collaboration on emergency planning and response.

Establishing a task and finish group

9. It is proposed that:
 - 9.1 A task and finish group is established to consider the issues set out above.
 - 9.2 The task and finish group will have four members, two from the Safer Communities Board and two from the Fire Services Management Committee.
 - 9.3 The task and finish group will be supported by LGA staff and also advisers from the fire service, the police and councils as appropriate.

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- 9.4 The task and finish group will draw on emerging good practice and set out a broad blue-print for PCC and fire authority collaboration as well as collaboration across the scrutiny functions.
- 9.5 The task and finish group will aim to complete its work by June 2013.

Conclusion and next steps

10. If the broad proposal is agreed, nominations for membership of the task and finish group will be sought and terms of reference will be developed following discussion of the issues set out in paragraph 8.