

Police and Crime Commissioner Review

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

The report outlines the Government's work on reviewing the Police and Crime Commissioner role.

Recommendation

That members note the report.

Action

Officers to continue to provide updates as the Review progresses.

Contact officer: Lucy Ellender
Position: Senior Adviser
Phone no: 020 7664 3321
Email: lucy.ellender@local.gov.uk

Police and Crime Commissioner Review

Background

1. The Home Office started an internal review on the role of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) in July 2020. The review is in response to the Government's manifesto commitment to strengthen the accountability of PCCs and expand their role. The review will be in two parts, with the first part concluding this month, and the second part taking place after the May PCC elections. The Home Office were also using the first part of their review to examine their long-term ambitions on fire governance.
2. The LGA submitted a response to the consultation, looking at both Police and Crime Panel issues as well as fire governance. The response is attached at **Appendix A**.

Issues

3. The LGA submitted evidence to the review on behalf of both the Fire Services Management Committee and the Safer and Stronger Communities Board. The LGA represents Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs), PFCCs and Police and Crime Panels (PCPs).
4. The review is examining how to reinforce and sharpen the accountability of PCCs, ensuring that the role is resilient, improving the current scrutiny model for PCCs, the effectiveness of the PCC and Chief Constable relationship, learning from the existing transfers of governance and outlining their long term ambitions on fire governance.

Engagement with the Review

5. The LGA's submission took in the views of Police and Crime Panels and Fire and Rescue Authorities. The LGA wrote to PCPs and FRAs to ask them to share their contributions into the review with the LGA.
6. The Lead Members held a meeting with the Fire Minister to discuss the review and feed in the key points from our submission. We also suggested that the Home Office interview a number of FRA Chairs directly, as they had done with Chief Fire Officers and PFCCs, to ensure that a broad cross section of views were feed into the review alongside written submissions.

Submission

7. The submission outlined the need for the Government to undertake further work ahead of the 2021 PCC elections, to ensure that there was widespread awareness of the role of the PCC. Beyond the core policing core, we outlined that the role should be flexible reflecting local concerns and what is right for the area.
8. Police and Crime Panel's role was also examined within the submission as the key scrutiny and accountability mechanism for the PCC. There was sometimes a lack of

understanding of the breadth of the role of PCPs. The Home Office could do more to acknowledge the role of panels and strengthen them.

9. The LGA believes that local areas are best placed to determine how they should be governed, and we do not believe that there should be mandatory transfers of fire governance, either to PCCs or to Mayors. By ensuring that there is local agreement to the transfer it will ensure that issues such as coterminosity and existing partnerships can be considered at the outset of any transfer to ensure that communities are receiving the service that is right for them.
10. Where there is no local agreement to the transfer of governance, the contested business case should be looked at by a panel with a range of expertise in fire, policing, local government and finance. This will help to ensure that the decision on the business case is robust and less open to challenge.
11. To improve the accountability and transparency of the current governance arrangements we would recommend extending inspection to the governance of the fire service, to provide a baseline for future work on governance.

Next Steps

12. The first part of the internal review is expected to initially report to the Home Secretary in October, with a view to ensuring that any changes to strengthen the model can be put in place, where possible, prior to the May 2021 PCC elections. At the time of writing no details of the recommendations of the review have been released. We will respond to the review once the recommendations have been published.

Implications for Wales

13. Fire and rescue related policy is a devolved matter and much of the Committee's work will focus on changes for FRAs in England, with the Welsh Local Government Association leading on lobbying for Welsh Fire and Rescue Authorities in Cardiff.

Financial Implications

14. There are no financial implications.

Next steps

15. Officers will provide further updates to the FSMC as the recommendations from the Review are published.