

GREATER MANCHESTER POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANEL

Date: 7th June 2022

Subject: Fire Service Reform – Government White Paper

Report of: Dave Russel – Chief Fire Officer

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To bring your attention to the Government's recently published white paper on fire service reform - *Reforming our Fire and Rescue Service*. The summary that accompanies this report identifies the main themes in the white paper and provides some context to the paper's consultation questions.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To note the contents of the summary and provide any feedback.

CONTACT OFFICERS:

Jim Cessford – Senior Policy and Partnership Officer – cessfordj@manchesterfire.gov.uk

Carlos Meakin – Assistant Chief Fire Officer - meakinc@manchesterfire.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Reforming our Fire and Rescue Service

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reforming-our-fire-and-rescue-service>

INTRODUCTION

1. The Government's white paper into fire service reform identifies the future direction of national Fire policy. The paper is in the form of a consultation with 48 questions.
2. The consultation closes 26 July 2022.
3. The white paper is framed around three themes – People; Professionalism; Governance.

HEADLINE PROPOSALS

4. The main proposals in the white paper (the Paper) are:
 - a. Fire and rescue services (FRS) should be able to widen the role of their firefighters without national negotiations.
 - b. There are no current plans to remove the right to strike but the Civil Contingencies Act will be reviewed.
 - c. An independent review into the current pay negotiation process.
 - d. Entry requirements for fire officers and a new leadership programme.
 - e. New systems to improve data use and sharing.
 - f. A new central research capability.
 - g. A statutory code of ethics for FRS and a mandatory oath for all employees.
 - h. An independent college of fire and rescue.
 - i. Transfer governance to directly elected individuals such as PCC and mayors.
 - j. Create operational independence for Chief Fire Officers.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

5. The suggestion in the HMICFRS Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services 2021 to remove firefighters' right to strike is not a proposal in the Paper.
6. The Fire Brigade's Union has expressed their concern regarding the proposal to reform the current pay negotiation process.

7. Proposals around governance of fire and rescue authorities (FRA) identify the preferred model as directly elected individuals such as PCC and mayors, which will move other FRA into a model similar to the one in Greater Manchester.
8. The Government is considering legislation that could set out the role and function of an FRA including its oversight and scrutiny functions, specifying how transparency objectives should be met.
9. There is nothing in the Paper about Fire funding besides an assertion that Government has recently increased funding, and a question about ring-fencing Fire funding for county / unitary authorities.

NEXT STEPS

10. Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service is holding sessions with relevant internal colleagues to address the questions in the consultation and formulate a response.
11. Panel members are requested to consider the contents of the summary and offer any feedback.