



Home Office

Lord Greenhalgh
Minister of State for Building Safety, Fire
and Communities

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To: Chief Fire Officers
Fire Authority Chairs
Fire Partners
By Email Only

16 March 2021

Dear Colleagues,

Review into the role of Police and Crime Commissioners: Part One Recommendations and Next Steps

As you may be aware, we have today laid a Written Ministerial Statement in Parliament setting out the findings from part one of the Review of the role of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs). I have attached a copy of our statement to this letter.

Last year, in line with the manifesto commitment, this Government committed to consider the model and how we could strengthen PCC accountability and expand their role. Part One of the Review commenced on 22 July 2020 and sought to identify areas where the model can be improved, drawing upon wide-ranging consultation with stakeholders across policing, fire, local government, and the views of the public. The first stage of the Review, which concluded last October, made recommendations to the Home Secretary on how to improve the accountability, scrutiny and transparency of the current PCC model. It also considered how we set out our long-term ambitions on fire governance reform, and the links of the PCC model to mayoral devolution.

I am confident that once implemented, these recommendations will ensure that the public have a greater say over policing and can better hold PCCs to account for bringing crime down – making their streets and neighbourhoods safer, and restoring confidence in the criminal justice system.

We also used the Review to map out our longer-term reform ambitions in order to respond to the significant recommendations arising from Phase 1 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, the Manchester Arena attack, and to build on the findings from HMICFRS inspections and Sir Thomas Winsor's State of Fire and Rescue Report 2019. The response to the Covid-19 pandemic has also demonstrated the wider support and skill that fire services can provide for their emergency service partners and in keeping the public safe. I am keen to build on this learning to create and embed services which are fit for the challenges of the 21st century, supporting both their people and the public.

We have identified a number of options and recommendations to this effect and I am keen we explore these with you in more detail, to gather further evidence and garner wider input from both stakeholders and the public. As a result, the Home Office will be launching a White Paper on fire reform.

The White Paper - centred around improvements in **Professionalism, People, and Governance** - will set out a clear vision and roadmap for reform. Taken alongside our comprehensive legislative programme on fire and building safety, it will build on the progress we have already made to ensure that fire and rescue services are outward looking, professionally led and governed, and fully support the communities and public that they serve.

On **Professionalism**, I want to see professional, well led services with credible operational standards at their heart. This will include a strengthened model of sector leadership and greater assurance through inspection. We will also consult on the development of a mandatory 21st century command course for progression to senior roles, minimum entry requirements for anyone joining services, and look to develop schemes to consistently identify and nurture talent.

On **People**, it is vital that we get the best out of our people and ensure the fire service is fit for the future. We will work to unlock talent and diversity within services and develop clear skills pathways with clear competency frameworks. We will also take action to ensure we are supporting the creation of a positive culture in services.

In addition, and as highlighted most recently in HMICFRS' Covid-19 report, the role of fire and rescue services and the firefighter needs urgent clarification. Local flexibility to determine roles would enable firefighters to do more to support their communities, other emergency services (including providing significant support to ambulance services) and other local partners, as demonstrated in the response to Covid-19.

On **Governance**, the majority of our focus will be on implementing the recommendations arising from the PCC Review. We know that the variation of 45 fire and rescue authorities across England operating under a range of different governance models has led to a lack of consistency which has led to challenges of accountability and transparency. As a result, we will be considering the following recommendations within the White Paper:

- Consulting on whether to mandate the transfer of fire and rescue functions to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner model across England where boundaries are coterminous, unless there is an option to transfer fire governance directly to an elected Mayor.
- Consulting on how to address coterminosity challenges, including in the South West.
- Legislating to create operational independence for Chief Fire Officers and to clearly separate and delineate strategic and operational planning for fire and rescue.
- Considering options to clarify the legal entities within the PFCC model.

Regardless of any changes which may be made, we are committed to preserving and utilising the expertise developed in local authorities with regard to the oversight and scrutiny of fire and rescue services.

We will now focus on implementing the agreed reforms and launching the White Paper consultation. I would like to reiterate my thanks to you all for your ongoing engagement and contributions to developing this reform agenda and would welcome your continued engagement as we progress this work. I look forward to communicating more about these plans in due course.

Yours Ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lord Greenhalgh', written in a cursive style.

Lord Greenhalgh
Minister of State for Building Safety, Fire and Communities at
Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government and Home Office