



Safest People, Safest Places

Combined Fire Authority

5 January 2024

Government Consultation Response to the Fire Reform White Paper

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Purpose of Report

1. To provide an update to Members regarding the Government's response to the Consultation on the Fire Reform Paper.

Background

2. The "Reforming Our Fire and Rescue Service" consultation paper was first published in May 2022 and the fire sector, stakeholders and the public were given the opportunity to respond with their views. The consultation has now concluded and the government has published its response.
3. The case for reform is considered with the consultation to the White Paper reflecting on the Independence Culture Review of London Fire Brigade, released in August 2022, which amongst other published concerns to the Minister For Crime, Policing and Fire resulted in commissioning His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to produce a spotlight report on values and culture. This has led to further commissioned work to the HMICFRS in the form of a thematic inspection of the handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services.
4. The Government's consultation also reflects on the introduction of Minimum Service Levels Act 2023 which received Royal Assent in Parliament, ensuring workers maintain the ability to strike whilst giving the public access to essential services they need.

Government Proposals - Setting the course for reform

5. The Fire Reform White Paper consulted on the governments vision for fire reform, centred around three main themes:
 - People- improving systems, flexibility and culture

- Professionalism- helping fire professional to best service their communities
- Governance- strengthening oversight and leadership

People

Talent and inclusion

6. The White Paper outlines plans to help fire professionals to further develop their skills and ensure that everyone could thrive in their work.
7. The White Paper set out the intention to build on existing progress to provide effective leadership of the sector and building capacity, embedding values and nurturing talent within services.
8. Funding will be made available to support and widen the direct entry schemes which will allow more non-operational professionals to lead Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs).

Pay and role

9. The government will work with fire employers and unions to crucially review the National Joint Council (NJC) own mechanisms, operations and transparency. This should be completed by early 2024.
10. If this does not result in meaningful change the government will explore other routes to ensure a modern, fair pay system which constructively enables role reform in England.

Professionalism

Creating a College of Fire and Rescue

11. To assist in the strengthening the overall professionalism of services it is proposed that a College of Fire and Rescue be created, with the most appropriate delivery model for this to be developed. Such a College would have responsibility for professional standards.

Raising standards

12. The White Paper will propose creation of a statutory code of ethics. Furthermore, the Home Office will place future responsibility for professional standards with the College of Fire and Rescue.

Governance

Governance Change

13. Although the White Paper outlined support for a single point of accountability for fire governance, it is not proposed to mandate the transfer of governance to Police and

Crime Commissioners (PCCs). Voluntary transfers and those facilitated in local devolution deals will be supported.

Operational Independence

14. Legislation will be introduced at the earliest opportunity to give chief officers operational independence, with FRAs retaining responsibility for their services. Clarity will be provided on providing a clear separation of strategic and operational planning requirements, and overall governance.
15. Members can read the full document to be set before Parliament using this link: [A profession we can all be proud of - Reforming our Fire & Rescue Service – Government consultation response to the Fire Reform White Paper \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/consultations/a-profession-we-can-all-be-proud-of-reforming-our-fire-and-rescue-service)

Recommendation

16. Members are requested to **note** the content of the report.

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