



**Safest People, Safest Places**

## **Combined Fire Authority**

**20 January 2025**

### **Police and Crime Commissioner's Request to Join the Combined Fire Authority**

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#### **Report of the Clerk**

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#### **Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to inform members of the Durham Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) request to join the Combined Fire Authority (the Authority) as a member and to request that members make a decision as to whether the PCC may join the Authority.

#### **Background**

2. Cllr John Shuttleworth, Chair of the Authority, received a letter dated 20 November 2024 from the Durham PCC Joy Allen. The PCC has made a request to join the Authority as a voting member. In addition, a request was made for the Deputy PCC, Graham Hall, to deputise as a non-voting member in the PCC's absence. The PCC's letter is set out at Appendix A.
3. The Authority's governance structure is set out within The Durham Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1996 (the 'Scheme'). This Scheme has been varied recently by Schedule 7 of The Combined Fire and Rescue Authorities (Membership and Allowances) (Amendment) Regulations 2020. These Regulations created a process within the Scheme for PCCs to be appointed to the Authority as members.
4. Only a relevant PCC may be appointed as a member. This is defined in Paragraph 2 of the Scheme as a PCC:
  - a. whose area is the same as or contains all of the Authority's combined area, or
  - b. all or part of whose area falls within the Authority's combined area.

5. Paragraph 12A (1) of the varied Scheme states that a relevant PCC may be appointed as a member of the Authority, Paragraph 12A (2) specifies that the Authority may only make this appointment in response to a request from the PCC.
6. Upon receiving a request from a relevant PCC, the Authority must take three actions as per Paragraph 12A (3) of the Scheme. The Authority must:
  - consider the request,
  - give reasons for its decision to approve or refuse the request, and
  - publish those reasons in such a manner as it feels appropriate.
7. If the PCC's request is approved, the PCC will immediately become a member of the Authority with the ability to attend, speak at, and vote at meetings of the Authority. Paragraph 13A of the Scheme states that the PCC ceases to be a member of the Authority at the end of their term of office or when there is a vacancy in their office. Once a new PCC is elected or re-elected, it would be at their discretion to request to join the Authority as a voting member.
8. Paragraph 12B of the Scheme allows a PCC who is appointed as a member to arrange for a Deputy PCC to attend and speak at a meeting of the Authority on the PCC's behalf. However, this deputy may not vote and may not be treated as a member of the Authority for any purpose. No permission needs to be granted by the Authority to the PCC in relation to this power.
9. Per the operation of Para 11 of the Order, an appointed PCC is in addition to the standard membership and does not count against the maximum number of members which the CFA may have.

## **Recommendations**

10. Members are recommended to:
  - a. Note the request of the PCC to join the Combined Fire Authority,
  - b. Make a determination as to the PCC's request and give reasons for their decision,
  - c. Authorise the publication of those reasons and specify how these reasons should be published.



20<sup>th</sup> November 2024

Dear Cllr Shuttleworth

You will be aware through your discussion with my Deputy that I am keen to further develop the relationship between elected officials and officers of police and fire governance bodies for the benefit of our residents across County Durham and Darlington.

I would like to register my interest in joining the Fire & Rescue Authority as a voting member and for my Deputy PCC- Graham Hall- to deputise in my absence as a non-voting member. I understand that this is permitted in legislation and I am aware of other Police and Crime Commissioners around the country having a 'seat at the table' on the Fire Authority. I am sure you will agree that we hold a unique position in scrutinising/holding to account our respective emergency services to ensure our residents receive the best possible service.

I believe my participation on the Fire & Rescue Authority as Police and Crime Commissioner for County Durham and Darlington will not only add value to closer partnership working between the Fire Service and Durham Constabulary, but will bring additional benefits in areas such as:

- Response to serious and organised crime within the Force area for issues such as arson
- Road casualties and collisions
- Diversity across the emergency services workforce across Durham and Darlington
- Anti-social behaviour

I would appreciate the Fire Authority's consideration of my request and look forward to hearing back from you.

Yours sincerely

Joy Allen  
Police and Crime Commissioner for Durham