

Options for approach to an operational

# Essex Police Fire and Crime Panel



Essex County Council

# Context

In April 2017 the Home Office approved the Local Business Case submitted by the Essex Police and Crime Commissioner, Roger Hirst, to proceed with a move to joint governance of Essex Police and Essex Fire and Rescue Service.

- **This was supported by an extensive consultation – scrutinised at the time by the PCP**
- **The PCC effectively replaced the role of the Fire Authority and will be accountable for making and taking the decisions that would have previously been taken by that Fire Authority**
- **The go live date was is 1 October 2017**
- **This was the first such role in the country and as such there was a need for the existing PCP to expand its scrutiny function of the PCC to also cover those decisions made with regard to EFRS as well as Essex Police**
- **What does an effective Police Fire and Crime Panel (PFCP) look like for Essex?**
- **Working Group of the Panel established to consider the options**

# **Two main options were identified:**

- 1. To co-opt extra members onto the Panel who will have specific knowledge relating to the business of Essex Fire & Rescue Service**
- 2. To keep the Panel membership as it is but to increase the support and secretariat function to provide briefings on papers and analysis of issues to the panel to assist with their scrutiny function**

**Question: Are there any other options that should be considered? Should both be considered?**

# To co-opt extra members onto the Panel who will have specific knowledge relating to the business of EFRS

## *Benefits:*

- There are Members who have served on the Fire Authority who may bring specific knowledge to the panel regarding the business of EFRS that would add to the strength of the panel

## *Challenges/considerations:*

- The PFCP will NOT replace the Fire Authority – it is the scrutiny body for the PCC who will effectively replace the Fire Authority
- There are a number of existing members on the PCP/PFCP who have also served on the Fire Authority and bring this knowledge and expertise with them
- Home office sources indicated that there is a significant wait for HO approval for co-opted members (6-12 months)

# To keep the Panel membership as it is but to increase the support and secretariat function

## *Benefits:*

- Panel numbers are kept manageable and an increase in support staff should help to mitigate the expected increase in demand on their time for this purpose
- The Home Office Grant could be used to fund additional support
- This is likely to identify a more dedicated support function for the wider work of the panel and the proposed national association
- This support function will be in a position to share the Essex experience

## *Challenges / considerations:*

- Where will this support come from? In practice usually the host organisation. If a preferred option then this will need to be acted upon quickly to arrange
- The dedicated resource will need to be intensive in the first 6 months in order that their own knowledge and expertise around the subject matter is sufficient to advise the panel

# Or another option?

- Do the panel need any extra resources in order to effectively scrutinise the PCC for both his role in governance of Essex Police and Essex Fire and Rescue Service?
- Do existing members require further (or any) training on the business of the Fire and Rescue Service in order to fulfil an effective scrutiny function?