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Dear Home Secretary

It gives me great pleasure to submit my proposal to you to take on the responsibility for the governance of Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service (the “Fire Service”).

The Government has been clear that it wants blue light services to explore opportunities to collaborate and, in particular, for Police and Crime Commissioners to take a greater role in the governance of the fire and rescue services in their area. In response to this a Local Business Case was prepared by independent consultants, commissioned jointly by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority (the “Fire Authority”) and myself, to evaluate whether a change of fire governance could bring benefit for Cambridgeshire.

The Local Business Case carefully considers the advantages and disadvantages of four options (three of which are provided for in the Policing and Crime Act 2017 and a ‘No Change’ option) against seven local critical success factors and how they will impact on the statutory tests of economy, efficiency and effectiveness or public safety. The four options (or models) evaluated were the:

1. ‘No Change’ Model: Police and fire continue to have governance arrangements that are independent of each other
2. ‘Representation’ Model: The Police and Crime Commissioner has a seat and voting rights on the Fire Authority becoming the 18<sup>th</sup> member of the Fire Authority
3. ‘PCC-style FRA Governance’ Model: The Police and Crime Commissioner takes on the functions of the Fire Authority.
4. The ‘Single Employer’ Model: There is a single Chief Officer for police and fire personnel under the governance of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.

The Local Business Case recommends the PCC-style FRA Governance Model as offering the greatest benefits to improvements in economy, efficiency and effectiveness with no detriment to public safety. This would include the transfer of assets, liabilities and funding.

The Local Business case has benefitted from a wide consultation including the two upper tier authorities, representatives of people I consider may be affected by the proposal and the public. A total of 2,426 people and organisations responded during the nine week consultation period. Demographic data collected demonstrates a wide range of people participated and engaged in the consultation. While neither of the two upper tier authorities supported my proposal for the PCC-style FRA Governance Model, the public are broadly supportive with the prevailing view of “it makes sense” featuring strongly. 53% of respondents to the public survey supported the PCC-style FRA Governance proposal as set out in the Business Case. 39% did not support the proposal and 8% were neutral. I have listened to the concerns raised and received many helpful comments which have been used to inform my approach. Details of the comments made and my responses to them can be found in the attached documents.

### **The Local Business Case**

The Local Business Case sets out that under the proposed new PCC-style FRA Governance Model the Chief Fire Officer will retain operational responsibility for leading the Fire Service. It preserves the current operational direction set out in Fire Service’s Integrated Risk Management Plan and seeks to retain the current number of fire stations. The Local Business Case then sets out my plans to build on what is already proposed by the Fire Authority whilst then setting out that a change in governance is the best option to:

- make better use of capital assets and reduce the overall cost of governance to drive economy and efficiency;
- accelerate the effectiveness of police and fire collaboration to drive the improved effectiveness of the Fire and Rescue Service and public safety;
- enable Cambridgeshire Fire Service and Cambridgeshire Constabulary to work more effectively with wider public service partners to prevent crime, prevent fires and promote public safety through public sector reform.

### **Economy and Efficiency will be driven by:**

- Better use of estates

Since elected I have been proactively working with the Fire Service and the Fire Authority to look at ways in which we can jointly rationalise our estate to achieve efficiencies and dispose of excess properties. Although this has progressed well to date, it is by negotiation and discussion between the two services which both takes time and does not have a guarantee of success. As the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, where I have overall control of both the Fire Service and Constabulary estate, I would be able to escalate the estates programme, both in terms of the speed

of implementation and likelihood of implementation once a decision has been made. In short, the chances of success greatly increases if one person is responsible for the decision making as opposed to a negotiation with a committee.

Better use of police and fire estates will initially require investment but the estimated financial benefits contained within the business case are £4.34 million over 10 years.

- Reduced cost of governance

The Fire Authority currently costs £110k in Members' allowances which will be immediately saved once I take over the governance of the Fire Service.

In addition it is proposed that my office and the Fire Service share a Chief Finance Officer post. After allowing for increasing the hours of a Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, the overall savings will be a further £72k per annum bringing the total savings to £182k per annum.

### **Effectiveness will be driven by**

- Improved transparency and accountability

During consultation concern has been expressed that replacing 17 Councillors with one Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner will reduce democratic accountability. Currently each of these Councillors are accountable to their ward; the Fire Authority is not directly held to account by the public. A 2014 Home Affairs Select Committee report recognised that Police and Crime Commissioners bring a beneficial effect on public accountability. In contrast the Thomas Review of conditions of service for fire and rescue staff in England highlighted that a number of authorities, including Cambridgeshire, could do more to improve transparency.

A Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner will provide a more visible approach to supporting and challenging the Chief Fire Officer for their operational delivery.

It is also worth noting the number of responses received to this consultation and other consultations my office has undertaken. When consulting on my Police and Crime Plan I received 3,489 responses whereas the Fire Authority received double figure responses to their Integrated Risk Management Plan consultation demonstrating a different approach and reach in this area of work.

- Accelerates pace and effectiveness of police and fire collaboration and public service transformation

I am confident we can increase the pace and effectiveness of police and fire collaboration by:

- fully aligning the strategic direction of both the Fire Service and Cambridgeshire Constabulary;

- streamlining decision making;
- creating a louder and more coherent voice when forming agreements with other blue light services within, and outside, Cambridgeshire.

## **Public Safety**

Peterborough City Council have shared a concern that the change is not in the interests of public safety. It is important to note that the move to the PCC-style FRA Governance model:

- maintains the Chief Fire Officer who will retain operational responsibility for leading the fire service;
- preserves the unique and separate roles of fire and police services while accelerating the pace of collaboration when this is in the interests of public safety;
- commits to maintaining the current operational direction set out in Fire Service's Integrated Risk Management Plan and does not contain plans to reduce the current number of fire stations.

As an early priority I will explore how bringing together Police and Fire community safety capacity could maximise their effectiveness and capacity to drive this important agenda.

As set out in the Local Business Case, stronger shared governance at the strategic and political level would enable full alignment of strategic objectives across police and fire which would place greater focus and accountability for collective community safety as well as individual service outcomes. My Police and Crime Plan (Community Safety and Criminal Justice) already focuses on system wide outcomes. I plan to expand this to cover fire more explicitly and set a shared strategic direction to complement the more operational direction set in the Integrated Risk Management Plan.

## **Implementation**

I have a stable and experienced office who managed the transition from the Police Authority to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. They have the experience and skills to ensure a smooth transition to a new Cambridgeshire Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.

Using my team's experience of managing the transition from a Police Authority and learning from Essex's experiences, initial priorities will be the new scheme of governance, new financial standing orders and updating the terms of reference of the Commissioner's finance, performance, audit, estates and strategic business co-ordination committees to cover fire as well as police governance. There will be explicit reference within these terms of reference to monitoring the deliverables identified within the Local Business Case.

The Business Case includes within it non-recurrent resources to support a smooth transition. Day to day business will initially be supported by both my existing office and the support historically assigned to governance by the Fire Authority. Over time and subject to appropriate consultation of staff, an integrated Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner structure will be put in place.

Finally, the Local Business Case identifies the potential strategic risks of loss of public trust or compromise to fire and rescue service links with health and local government services. Consultation has shown that the majority of the public support the change. The Clinical Commissioning Group has also given their support to the proposal. The two main organisations not supporting the proposal are the two upper tier authorities whose Councillors are most directly affected by the changes to Members' allowances.

## **Conclusion**

Having studied the issue in detail for several months I am convinced that, under Police and Crime Commissioner leadership, the governance of Cambridgeshire's Fire Service can be strengthened offering greater transparency and accountability, speedier decision making and closer working between the services resulting in improvements in economy, efficiency, effectiveness and public safety. This conviction has been strengthened by the positive public support demonstrated through the consultation and I know that this is the right thing to do both for the services involved and for the people of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

The changes outlined here are truly just the start of the journey and in the long term I will be working to ensure continued delivery of efficiencies and savings while protecting and promoting public safety.

I therefore present this proposal to you and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



**Jason Ablewhite**

**Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioner**

Attached

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| Attachment 1 | Local Business Case for fire and rescue governance options to improve the effectiveness of emergency services delivery in Cambridgeshire |
| Attachment 2 | Consultation report  |
| Attachment 3 | Report on views and representations made by Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council                                  |