

Edward Leigh
Chair
Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Panel
c/o Jane Webb
Peterborough City Council

By email: jane.webb@peterborough.gov.uk

27th September 2017

Dear Edward

I refer to the Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Panel's (the "Panel") report of the 13th September 2017 entitled 'Consideration of the Police and Crime Fire and Rescue Governance – Local Business Case Report'.

In accordance with the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, this letter acts as my formal response to the Panel's report.

Firstly as background, the Local Business Case assessing the police and fire governance options in Cambridgeshire was jointly commissioned by a joint Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority and Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Working Group. Information for the independent assessment was provided by a number of sources including my office, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority, Cambridgeshire Constabulary and Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service.

As the Panel will be aware, the consultation on the Local Business Case was promoted from 12 June 2017, with the formal consultation running for nine weeks from the 3rd July 2017. In addition, the Panel has been made aware of my proposal regarding fire governance since 2016 through reports to both my governance board and the Panel and discussions at Panel meetings.

Nonetheless, I have considered the Panel's formal recommendation referred to above. As such I am of the opinion that the promotion and engagement that both myself and my office has undertaken as part of the formal consultation, has provided ample opportunity for responses from statutory consultees, stakeholders and the public. As a consequence there were over 2400 responses received through the public consultation, responses from the two statutory consultees, and a comprehensive response received from the Fire Authority, all of which have been considered.

I would also like to clarify the reference made by the Panel in their recommendation to an arbitration process. In circumstances where there is not local agreement to a Commissioner's governance proposal, the Secretary of State is legally required to secure an independent assessment of the proposal before she, not an arbitrator, makes the decision as to whether a Commissioner takes on the duties and functions of a Fire Authority.

I am aware that the Local Government Association (LGA) will be providing guidance for Panels so they are equipped to take on the role of scrutinising a Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. Can I suggest that the Panel's Secretariat may wish to contact the LGA. Essex Police and Crime Panel may also prove to be a useful contact given that the Essex Police and Crime Commissioner has already been approved to take on the responsibility for fire.

Finally, I am grateful for those who have taken the time to respond to my consultation. Should the Secretary of State make an order for me to become Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, I welcome working with you to ensure a smooth transition of both my role and that of the Panel becoming a Police, Fire and Crime Panel.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jason Ablewhite', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jason Ablewhite
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Police and Crime Commissioner