

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Why can they become responsible?**

Parliament passed the Policing and Crime Act 2017 which allows the PCC to apply to the Home Secretary.

### **How is the Fire Service currently governed?**

Currently the North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority governs the Fire Service in North Yorkshire. It is made up of 16 County Councillors who meet 4 times a year.

### **Does the FRA not do a good job?**

The FRA's auditors say they provide a good service. However the evidence in the business case shows that decision making is slow, collaboration has not happened quickly enough to date and that more can be done.

### **Is this a merger of the police and fire services?**

No. The two organisations will remain entirely separate, with separate budgets. There will also be separate chief officers for each organisation, and distinct operational roles – Firefighters will continue to be firefighters and police officers will be police officers.

A joined up governance structure, even though the organisations remain separate, will mean policing and fire services work much closer together, delivering better services more efficiently.

### **Why does the Police and Crime Commissioner want to do this?**

The Commissioner feels that there is a lot to be gained from joining up the governance of policing and fire services, not least by ensuring the services work much better together. By doing that, it will in turn improve the way we support the most vulnerable in society, saving money which can be put into frontline services to prevent harm, crime and anti-social behaviour earlier.

Policing underwent a similar process in 2012, when Police and Crime Commissioners replaced Police Authorities. Evidence undertaken nationally has indicated the new model of Commissioners has led to much better and faster decisions, and much better engagement with the public, significantly increasing transparency. In North Yorkshire, the Commissioner believes that by creating one decision making process for both services, we can speed up decision making and create one strategic vision for community safety in the county.

### **What is 'governance'?**

Governance is the term used to summarise an organisation's oversight structure and decision-making processes e.g. setting budgets, spending money, drawing up plans. Governance will be different at different organisations, but often dictates how decisions are made and implemented, and the speed of the process. Good governance leads to improved spending decisions, policies, practices and procedures, quality of service, leadership and conduct.

### **How much has this cost to do?**

The PCC has successfully sought funding from the Home Office to cover the large majority of the costs for developing this business case. You can find more information on that on the Government's website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-office-funds-pccs-to-support-further-police-and-fire-collaboration>

This means that the cost to the public of North Yorkshire is much lower. The full details are still commercially sensitive, but will be published in October.

### **What does the PCC do at the moment?**

The PCC has a number of different responsibilities, of which the most important are to understand the public's views and work with the police and partners to improve local services. She holds the Chief Constable to account for an efficient and effective police service, sets the local policing budget and has responsibility for providing services for victims. There are many other things too, but these are the most important.

Overseeing the fire service would be slightly different, in that a PFCC would have more direct responsibility for the provision of fire services, and is legally accountable for performance. This is slightly different from policing where the Chief Constable retains operational independence and therefore has full control over the direction and use of frontline policing.

### **Why isn't the ambulance service included in this consultation if you are talking about emergency services?**

The Policing and Crime Act 2017 states that all emergency services, including the ambulance service, now have a legal duty to collaborate.

However, the Act also gives Police and Crime Commissioners specific powers to apply to take on the governance of the fire service, and did not include the same power to take on the governance of an ambulance service. So, whilst emergency service collaboration will always include ambulance, this particular consultation on governance is not able to include ambulance.

### **How would this benefit me?**

You can read the business case at [www.telljulia.com](http://www.telljulia.com) which sets out how, by bringing the governance of the two organisations together, new opportunities would emerge to shape how we can deliver community safety services on behalf of the public.

Where savings would be made, these can be reinvested in frontline services, directly benefiting the people of North Yorkshire. Equally, by working closely with police, fire, health, social and other local

authority services, we could improve the way we can work with vulnerable people, improve community safety, strengthen our communities, and prevent and reduce harm.

**Will fire stations close as a result? Is this just a way to save money?**

No. Fire stations will not close as a direct consequence of this business case. The Commissioner has said though that she would look to combine police stations and fire stations where possible – meaning that where stations are already close to one another they could move in together. This would of course save money, and should also lead to a better, more rounded emergency service response as a result. By saving money, it is more likely that local services could be protected.

If, in future, there were any plans to rationalise the fire service estate, this would be subject to a further business case which you would be able to have your say on.

**Will the Home Secretary read the responses residents submit?**

A summary of the response to this consultation will be included in the final business case submitted to the Home Secretary.

**When will the proposal be submitted to the Home Secretary?**

Once the consultation has finished, on 22<sup>nd</sup> September, the business case will be finalised following your feedback, and then the Commissioner will make her final decision on which model to put forward to the Home Secretary. At the moment, we foresee the final business case being submitted to the Home Secretary before the end of October 2017.

**Will the change in governance impact my council tax?**

No. The police and fire council tax precepts will continue to be collected as they currently are. The precepts will also continue to be collected and managed separately, and neither can be used to fund the other service.

If the Commissioner takes on the responsibility of the Fire Authority, she will also propose the fire precept and will consult on this every year, as she does with the policing precept.

**Are other Police and Crime Commissioners doing this?**

Yes. More than ten Commissioners are looking at the different options available. For example, Essex have already completed their consultation and presented their case to the Home Secretary whilst Northamptonshire, Staffordshire, West Mercia and Cambridgeshire are currently consulting their communities. Other PCCs considering this include Sussex, Hertfordshire and Gloucestershire.

**Where can I find detailed information about the three options?**

We have a dedicated section on the consultation website, [www.telljulia.com](http://www.telljulia.com), where we have published all information relevant to this consultation.

Details of the legislation that allows for this process to take place can be found at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/3/schedule/1/enacted>.

### **Where will I find the local business case sent to the Home Secretary?**

This will be published on the Commissioner's website once the business case has been submitted.

### **Will police officers and fire officers take on each other's duties?**

No. Their roles will remain distinct. Firefighters will continue to be firefighters and police officers will be police officers. The law says that full time police officers cannot be firefighters.

### **Do the fire service and police service collaborate already, and if so how?**

Yes they do. A number of low-level operational initiatives have been undertaken together, and we also share some buildings. A full list of current collaboration can be found in the business case in Section 8.3

### **Who are North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority?**

The Fire and Rescue Authority are the body who oversees the North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service. The 16 members of the Fire Authority are appointed from North Yorkshire County Council and the City of York Council. The number of members for each authority is determined by the size of the electoral representation within each authority.

The Authority meets four times a year.

Find out more about the North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority on their website.

### **What happens once the Home Secretary receives the local case for North Yorkshire?**

There are two options here, depending on how well the business case is supported locally.

Options 1 – If there is agreement about the business case amongst local tier one authorities (in North Yorkshire these are North Yorkshire County Council and City of York Council), the case is put before the Home Secretary. There is a process of review by the Home Office against the statutory tests to determine whether the proposal is in the interest of economy, efficiency, effectiveness or public safety, which recommends a decision to the Home Secretary. This takes 4 weeks. Once the Home Secretary has taken a decision, secondary legislation is laid before Parliament for approval. This takes 8-12 weeks.

Option 2 – If there is not agreement amongst local tier one authorities, an independent assessment of the business case will be undertaken by an independent assessor appointed by the Home Office prior to the case being put before the Home Secretary. This process would take 8 weeks. Once the Home Secretary has taken a decision, secondary legislation is laid before Parliament for approval. This takes 8-12 weeks.

### **Where will the savings go?**

Any savings will be used to make sure that police and fire services remain sustainable for the future, and will continue to be invested to make sure that they are providing the best possible service to the people of North Yorkshire.

### **Will staff terms and conditions change?**

There will be no changes to staff terms and conditions as a direct result of this business case. Staff would be consulted regarding the transfer of their contracts from the current Fire Authority to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner if that were to happen.

### **What happens if the business case is not approved by the Home Secretary?**

The Police and Crime Commissioner would consider the other available options, consider amending the business case or undertaking further work to improve the case for change.

### **Where can I find the Policing and Crime Act 2017?**

Policing and Crime Act 2017

### **Who would hold the Commissioner to account if she were to take on governance of the fire services?**

First and foremost it is the electorate who would still hold the Commissioner to account as they do for policing. On policing matters, currently the Commissioner is scrutinised by the Police and Crime Panel. If these proposals go ahead, the Panel's role would also be expanded to become the Police, Fire and Crime Panel.

### **Will the PCC get paid any more for this?**

The PCC's salary is set by the Senior Salaries Review Board and currently there are no plans to change the salary. Nor is the Commissioner seeking for a change to her pay if she were to become PFCC.

### **Will the police service respond to fires and the fire service respond to crimes?**

No. The two services will retain distinct operational roles. Firefighters will continue to be firefighters and police officers will be police officers. The law says that full time police officers cannot be firefighters.

### **Will the change in governance lead to redundancies?**

This consultation is purely about governance, and a change in governance won't itself lead to redundancies. However, a joined-up governance system may lead to further work and collaboration which might more directly affect staff, and it is very hard to predict what will happen in the future.

Rest assured though, any specific proposals in that regard would be subject to a separate full business case, developed in conjunction with staff through consultation, and alongside all the normal processes you would expect.

### **Isn't the North Yorkshire Fire Authority more democratically accountable than a Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner?**

They are two different systems so aren't very easy to compare:

- The Commissioner is directly elected by everyone in North Yorkshire and is a visible and well known position across the county. For example, compared to the Police Authority which she replaced, the Commissioner is more recognised, more accessible and has specific roles in her team for dealing with members of the public, like her Caseworker. As a result, the Commissioner can easily take into account the views of every part of North Yorkshire in her decisions, be they rural or urban, young or old. Evidence suggests that PCCs also use more modern methods of making themselves accountable to the public, providing greater transparency by publishing more documentation and being more accessible to the public.
- The North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority is made up of 16 elected Councillors, appointed to the Authority from North Yorkshire County Council and the City of York Council, and reflecting the political makeup of the overall numbers of elected councillors in the county and city. These Councillors represent lots of smaller areas, but which taken together cover a large part of the county. However, not every area is represented on the Authority and so not everyone has a voice.

### **Would there be an election to appoint the new Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner?**

No. The existing Police and Crime Commissioner would take on the new role of Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. The next election is in 2020, at which point the public would formally elect a Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for the first time.

### **Will savings made in one service be used to finance the other service?**

No. By law, the two organisations budgets and precepts will remain separate. Savings made in either service must be allocated back to that service's budget.

### **Will I still call 999 to reach the emergency services?**

Yes, the 999 number will remain unchanged.

### **How long will it be before we see any changes and savings?**

The total savings set out in this business case will be made over the next 10 years, with the different options achieving those savings faster or slower depending on the option.

All options should start to realise those savings in the first three years, but to differing levels.

### **Why didn't you merge HQs before you just bought a new one?**

The Commissioner approached the Fire and Rescue Authority at the time about the potential for a shared headquarters. There was initial interest which has recently been revisited. The lease on the current Fire and Rescue Service HQ comes up for renewal in 2021/22.

### **Is there enough space in Alverton Court to accommodate the fire service staff from their headquarters?**

Yes. North Yorkshire Police is currently introducing a new 'agile' way of working, and by using new technologies, it enables people to work from home or different buildings, and at more flexible hours. Although this new system isn't appropriate for all roles it does mean that we don't need a desk for every member of staff which greatly reduces the space required for a motivated and efficient workforce. By managing where police teams are based, we would definitely be able to fit the Fire and Rescue Service team into the new building.

### **Would this change mean a reduced presence or visibility from our police or fire services in our communities?**

No. There will be no change to police officer or firefighter numbers as a direct consequence of this business case, or a negative impact on their visibility. In the business case it suggests it should be possible that, by sharing our buildings more effectively for example, both services can save money, and can therefore maintain their presence in communities and even reinvest in frontline services in the future.

### **Would these changes mean a loss in local identity for our fire service?**

No. Fire and Police services would still exist as separate, distinct organisations. Their names, uniforms, roles and branding would not be affected.

### **You're not saving much money, so what is the point?**

The point of this proposal is not just about saving money. Money is a factor, but the proposals are more about providing the best possible service to the people of North Yorkshire. While the savings outlined in this business case are not huge they do reflect a number of ways we can become more efficient and reinvest money in our frontline services. Also the savings do mean that current cuts to firefighter numbers that the Fire Authority has approved could be reversed.