

Frequently Asked Questions received during the Consultation Period

What is governance?

Governance is the policies and procedures in place to help an organisation run.

Governance will include responsibility for:

- Legal.
- The employees of CFRS.
- The budget.
- Contracts, permits, and licences for the service and with external contractors.
- Estates and property.
- Accountability and transparency to the public and to employees for providing a public service.
- Ethics and integrity responsibility.

Will a PFCC politicise the governance delivery?

The current delivery of CFRS's governance is a panel made up of 84 elected members across Cumbria with an elected Cabinet Member as the Lead for fire governance. The PCC is elected by the same electorate that has elected the current panel and, if the option of a Combined Fire and Rescue Authority is successful, this panel will also be made up of elected members. Therefore, a PFCC will be no more political than the current system or the option of a CFRA.

Have CFRS staff been consulted?

Yes. Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service employees have all been offered the opportunity to take part in the public consultation and the Police and Crime Commissioner has hosted staff briefings to answer any questions and hear any concerns.

Have administrative changes been thoroughly considered?

The PCC is aware that administrative changes will be needed to fully resource Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service. The details of all governance aspects, including administrative changes, will be looked at in Phase Two of the transfer of governance once the business case has been submitted to the Home Office.

Is this business case truly unbiased?

The business case is an unbiased report that considers and compares both options available for Cumbria. An independent consultancy company called BearingPoint has developed the business case to ensure that all the information is independently reviewed and factually accurate to avoid bias.

Would Fire and Rescue staff be called on to do more community work?

The PCC aspires for more collaboration between the services including, if viable, for Fire and Rescue staff to conduct more community work based on the suggestions of Cumbria Fire and Rescue employees.

Why do things need to change?

The governance for CFRS sits under Cumbria County Council which, following the Government's announcement in July 2021, will no longer exist as of April 2023. This means that the governance responsibility needs to transfer to a new organisation and the two viable options for this are either a Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner or a Combined Fire and Rescue Authority made up of elected members from the two new unitaries.

Why spend money on a consultancy firm?

A consultancy firm provides an independent review of the business case and the scrutiny needed to ensure that the business case is as balanced and as unbiased as possible. The funding for the consultancy company and the development of the business case has been provided by the Home Office. The Policing budget has **not** been used to pay for any aspect of this project.

What experience does the PCC have to run the Fire and Rescue Service?

The PCC will not be running Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service. If the business case is successful, the PCC will only acquire the governance aspect of CFRS, all operational matters will remain with the Chief Fire Officer (CFO), similar to how operational policing remains with the Chief Constable. The PCC will help the CFO set the public priorities and hold the CFO accountable for the delivery of these priorities but will not control how these priorities are met.

Isn't a Combined Fire and Rescue Authority like the former Police Authority?

In some aspects, yes. The benefit of a PFCC and a PCC is a move away from the committee structure of running an authority. This allows the business to move much quicker and be more responsive to the issues that it is dealing with. The PCC also gives the public a voice in policing.

How do you propose to better integrate the NW Ambulance Service?

Collaboration amongst all Blue Light Services is a priority for the PCC. Although the governance of NW Ambulance Service will not be held by the PCC, it is key that they are involved in any potential and appropriate collaboration.

Why is devolution to the two new unitaries not an option?

The option to devolve the governance in to two new unitaries was considered as part of the business plan. After consideration, this option was found to be not viable. If you would like to read more on the five options that were considered for the governance of CFRS, the table comparing the all options is on page 31 of the business plan with explanations below to why certain options weren't viable.

Did the PCC have a mandate to conduct this survey?

The Police and Crime Commissioner had a statutory duty to conduct a survey to gain public opinion on the business case. The results of the survey will be included in the business case submitted to the home office.

Will the level of service provided by Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service reduce?

The level of service provided by Cumbria Fire and Rescue service will remain the same, operational matters will not be affected. The public should not see any changes to the level of service received.

Will Cumbria Constabulary and Cumbria Fire and Rescue be combined?

No. Both organisations and budgets will remain separate, and money cannot be transferred between the two. A Chief Constable will remain the head of operational matters for Cumbria Constabulary and a Chief Fire Officer will remain the head of operational matters for Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service.

Will the PCC close fire stations?

There are no plans to close any fire stations at this time. The PCC is keen to further utilise fire stations, if the business case is successful, and put more resource in to keeping stations open. The amount of risk of stations closing under a PFCC is the same as the risk of station closures under a combined fire and rescue authority.

End

Editor's Notes