

“Have your say”

Future governance of West Midlands Fire Service



11 January 2018 - 8 March 2018

Introduction:

We want your views on who should run West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) in the future.

More people are coming to live and work in the West Midlands, new businesses are starting up here and plans for HS2 means our population will continue to rise. Your fire service must be ready to meet these additional demands and tailor how they work to meet future challenges.

We are carrying out a consultation on whether your fire service should be run by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).

This follows an independent review of how WMFS is currently run and governed, and whether changes need to be made for the future.

The review focused on how a new governance model would impact your community, how WMFS could deliver improved public services across the region, improved scrutiny, transparency and accountability - all while providing value for money.

Several options were considered and evaluated before the WMCA was identified as the best option to ensure your fire service continues to meet its overarching vision: making the West Midlands safer, stronger and healthier.

Following this the WMFS and the WMCA undertook a 'Governance Review' which can be found on the WMCA website. This identified the benefits that could be achieved by coming together.

Possible benefits include a more joined up way of working with the WMCA and its members – including local councils, health providers and the police – contributing to a shared vision for the region. This could result in public services being delivered at a reduced cost in a coordinated, integrated and collaborative way.

Following this a 'Scheme' was prepared which details how the WMFS would operate within the WMCA and who would be responsible for making decisions. The scheme can be found on the WMCA website. It would also see existing fire service staff transfer to and be employed by WMCA.

It is this scheme we are now consulting on to get your views.

If WMFS were to move under the WMCA, it would not change the type of incidents and emergencies you are used to seeing firefighters attend.

Currently WMFS is governed by a Fire Authority, which is made up of 27 councillors from the seven West Midlands local authorities which make up the WMCA.

If the WMCA were to govern WMFS, the elected Mayor would be singularly accountable for the fire service. A Fire Advisory Committee would also be put in place - made up of councillors, the Police and Crime Commissioner, and representatives of the Health and Ambulance Trusts – who would advise and support the Mayor, while reviewing and scrutinising the Mayor's decisions.

The WMCA is made up of seven *constituent councils which vote on policies and plans to improve the West Midlands. The Mayor is an elected official (a key requirement of the first devolution deal) who chairs the board of the WMCA. To date, the WMCA has secured two devolution deals with government which means money and powers are transferred from central government to local authorities. This means they can decide for themselves locally on the best ways to spend that money for the overall benefit of the region.

By coming under the WMCA, WMFS would work with organisations across the region more effectively. This would include sharing workspaces, better emergency planning and an easier exchange of key information, ensuring your safety is at the heart of everything we do.

We will be consulting across the seven constituent council areas including: local people, businesses, local enterprise partnerships (LEPs), organisations and people who work with the fire service for their views.

The consultation will run for eight-weeks from January 11th to March 8th 2018. Your responses will be fed back to the Home Office and if the government decides this is the best option, they will create a *Statutory Order, based on the 'Scheme', which will enable the changes to take place.

You can find out more information and give us your views by taking part in the survey through our website <https://www.wmca.org.uk/>

Links to the consultation are also available on the seven constituent council websites.

*Please see glossary for more information and explanation of terms

Question 1:

Following an independent review of how your fire service is currently governed, we are proposing that the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) will take on responsibility for West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS). The review examined how a new governance model could impact communities; deliver improved public services across the West Midlands; improve scrutiny, transparency and accountability, while providing value for money. Benefits of changing the WMFS governance include a more joined up way of working with WMCA members - such as local authorities, health providers and the police – contributing to a shared vision for the region, resulting in public services being delivered at a reduced cost in a coordinated, integrated and collaborative way.



Do you agree or disagree that the Mayoral West Midlands Combined Authority should take on responsibility for the functions of West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority which includes:

- ▶ Community Safety (Mayor will approve Community Safety Plan on behalf of the Combined Authority)
- ▶ Budgeting and setting of the Council Tax precept for the Fire Service across the seven constituent Councils
- ▶ Appointment of the Chief Fire Officer by the Mayor of the Combined Authority

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree or disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Don't know

Are there any other points you would like to make?

Question 2:

If the WMCA ran the fire service, there would be a single point of accountability; the Mayor of the West Midlands. If the changes went ahead, a Fire Advisory Committee made up of 15 councillors, the Police and Crime Commissioner, Health and Ambulance Trust, would be put in place to review decisions taken by the Mayor.



Do you agree or disagree that there should be a Fire Advisory Committee, consisting of members from the WMCA constituent councils, the Police and Crime Commissioners Office, Health and Ambulance Trust, that will advise, support and review decisions made by the Mayor?

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree or disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Don't know

Question 3:

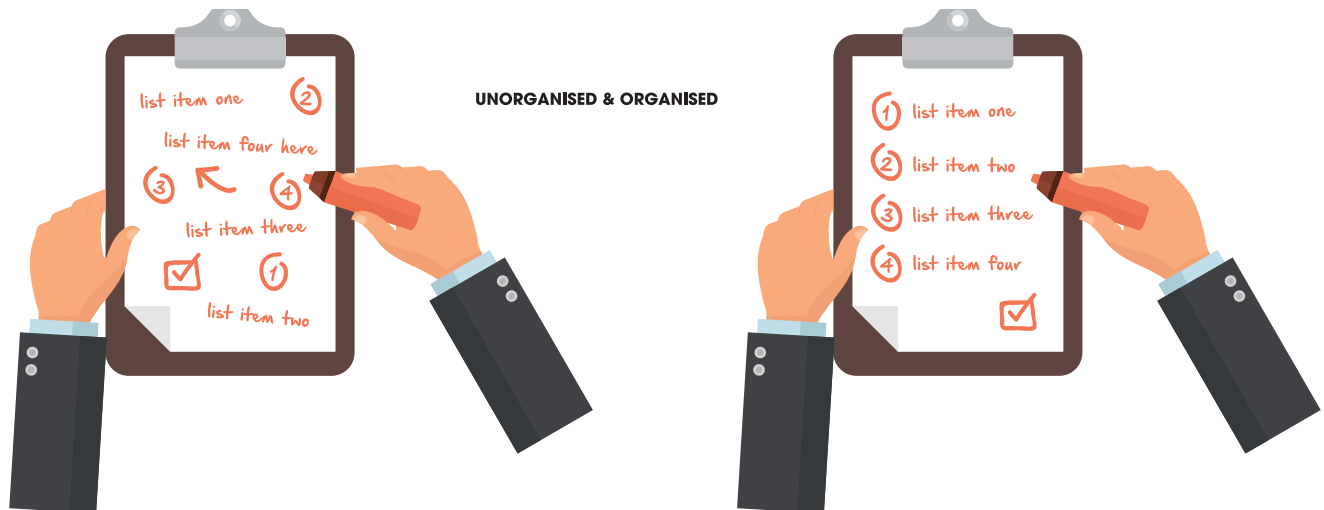
Do you agree or disagree that the Chief Fire Officer should be accountable to the Mayor for the operational functions of the Fire Service which will include:

- ▶ Workforce planning, management, appointment and development of staff
- ▶ The delivery of West Midlands Fire Service strategy
- ▶ Management of the West Midlands Fire Service

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree or disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Don't know

Question 4:

The Mayor would be responsible for approving the community safety plan, budgeting, setting the fire Council Tax precept and appointing the Chief Fire Officer (CFO). The CFO currently reports to the Fire Authority, but under new arrangements would report directly to the Mayor. The CFO would still lead the day-to-day running of the fire service, including staff development, management of resources and importantly, delivering the fire service's strategic aims.

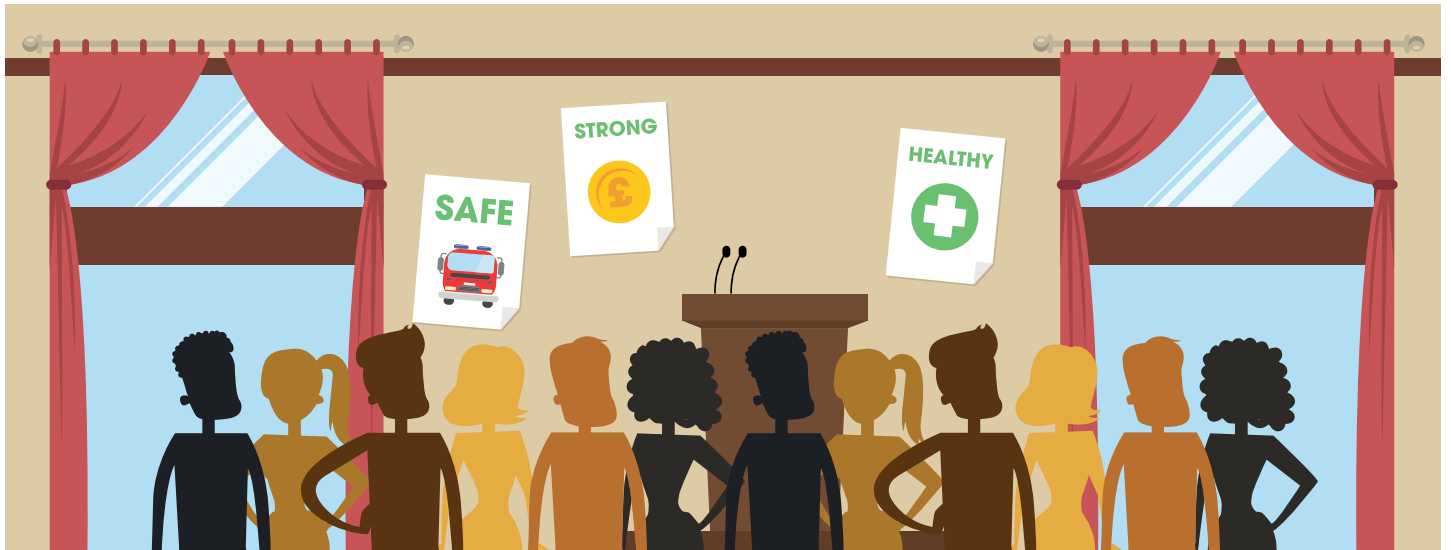


Do you agree or disagree that the Mayoral WMCA taking on responsibility for the function of West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority would

- ▶ Improve the services which West Midlands Fire Service deliver
- ▶ Create a stronger strategic focus
- ▶ Improve collaboration to deliver joined-up services
- ▶ Widen and strengthen prevention and protection work with businesses and communities to reduce vulnerability to fire risks

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree or disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Don't know

Question 5:



Do you agree or disagree with the following statement:

The Order to transfer the Fire Service into the Combined Authority is likely:

- ▶ to improve the statutory functions in the Combined Authority area
- ▶ to reflect the local communities
- ▶ to secure effective and convenient local government

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree or disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Don't know

Tell us about yourself

The WMCA has a commitment to understanding the views and needs of different members of the community in the region. The "Tell us about yourself" section helps us understand which groups of people have taken part in the consultation and how views may vary between different groups. You are not required to answer these questions but your responses will help us make decisions based on evidence and will help us meet our duties under equality legislation.

Question 6:



Could you please tell us your age?

- ☐ Under 16
- ☐ 16 - 24
- ☐ 25 - 44
- ☐ 45 - 64
- ☐ 65+
- ☐ I do not wish to disclose

Question 7:

Could you please disclose your sexual orientation?

- ☐ Heterosexual
- ☐ Bisexual
- ☐ Gay
- ☐ Lesbian
- ☐ I do not wish to disclose

Other (please specify)

Question 8:

Ethnicity

- ☐ Asian British
- ☐ Indian
- ☐ Pakistani
- ☐ Bangladeshi
- ☐ White and black
- ☐ White and Asian
- ☐ Other mixed
- ☐ Black British
- ☐ Black Caribbean
- ☐ Black African
- ☐ White British
- ☐ White other
- ☐ Gypsy or Irish traveller
- ☐ I do not wish to disclose

Other (please specify)

Question 9:

Religion

- ☐ Christian (all denominations)
- ☐ Hindu
- ☐ Muslim
- ☐ None (includes atheist & Humanist)
- ☐ Sikh
- ☐ I do not wish to disclose

Other (please specify)

Question 10:

Could you please disclose your gender

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Transgender
- ☐ I do not wish to disclose

Question 11:

Do you consider yourself to have a disability which has:

- ☐ Severe impact on everyday life
- ☐ Mild impact on everyday life
- ☐ No disability
- ☐ Prefer not to state

Other (please specify)

Question 12:

Which constituent council area do you live in?

- ☐ Birmingham City Council
- ☐ City of Wolverhampton Council
- ☐ Coventry City Council
- ☐ Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
- ☐ Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
- ☐ Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
- ☐ Walsall Council
- ☐ I don't live in the West Midlands
- ☐ I don't know which local authority area I live in

Other local authority area (please specify)

Question 13:

Do you work for the public sector?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

if so, could you please tell us which organisation you work for.

Question 14:

Where did you hear about this consultation?

Many thanks for taking part in this consultation. If you would like more information or to be kept updated, please provide an address or email address.

Glossary:

Community Safety Plan: Sets West Midlands Fire Services priorities and objectives in a rolling, three-year document which identifies and analyses risks across the West Midlands. It is also known as the Integrated Risk Management Plan or IRMP and helps plan the delivery of prevention, protection and response services.

Fire Advisory Committee: A Committee made up of several councillors and partners from across the West Midlands Combined Authority geographical area, which will oversee and scrutinise decisions taken by the Mayor.

WMCA constituent councils: Birmingham City Council; Coventry City Council; Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council; Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council; Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council; Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council; City of Wolverhampton Council.

Statutory Order: This is prepared by government and agreed by Parliament which applies further legislation to an existing Act. In this case, meaning the WMCA would be responsible for Fire Service activities. It allows changes to be introduced without having to pass a new act.

Secretary of State: A Cabinet Minister in charge of a government department. For the purposes of this consultation the Secretary of State is the Home Secretary.

Governance Review: A review of the current arrangements and the benefits that would result from the Fire Service being part of the WMCA.

Scheme: The proposed arrangements and responsibilities to enable the WMCA to undertake the role of the Fire Service.

Once completed please post back to us to the following address: Customer Insight Team, 16 Summer Lane, Birmingham, B19 3SD

You can also fill in the consultation online at www.wmca.org.uk/wmfs

If you require a printed version of this document or if you need this document in a format more suited to your needs please email Anna.Sirmoglou@wmca.org.uk.

If you require help filling out the consultation call us at : 0345 835 8188 and for any other questions email ConsultationViews@wmca.org.uk