

ameo:



Efficient and effective collaboration in
Gloucestershire – an overview of the benefits of a
County Council based Fire and Rescue Service

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Disclaimer

The content of this report is based on information (interviews and documents) gathered in good faith from contacts within Gloucestershire County Council and agreed case study reference sites. Ameo/Alendi cannot guarantee the accuracy of this content and therefore accepts no liability whatsoever for actions taken that subsequently prove incorrect.

Glossary

ACFO	Assistant Chief Fire Officer
CC	Chief Constable
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group
CFO	Chief Fire Officer
DCFO	Deputy Chief Fire Officer
FRA	Fire and Rescue Authority
FRS	Fire and Rescue Service
GCC	Gloucestershire County Council
GCO	Gloucestershire Constabulary
GFRS	Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service
PCC	Police and Crime Commissioner

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Executive Summary

Gloucestershire has a proud history of collaboration across its public services – regardless of governance model. It has a range of established county wide forums where key agencies come together to actively improve services to residents.

The Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) has been a part of this collaborative enterprise and is strongly integrated into the County Council both in terms of mission, structure, oversight, finance and service delivery. There has been significant political and professional commitment to the activities of this critical public service to deliver a remit which is much wider than most members of the public perceive. In conjunction with the County Council's priorities, the Service has used the skills and capacity of its workforce across a range of safety, social and health issues which has reduced demand in a number of key service areas. This has been achieved by a concerted and strategic effort to prevent fires and emergencies which has freed up capacity that the Service has been able to direct to areas of health, social care and antisocial behaviour.

As such hard pressed agencies, such as Public Health, the Ambulance Service and local NHS organisations have had pressure alleviated by the work of the FRS. It has been able to reduce their service demand because it has ensured its fire prevention work has been aligned with the risks associated with isolation, limited mobility, poor physical and mental health. This work aligns with the key political priority of Gloucestershire County Council to use its resources in a more coordinated and effective way. This approach is not unique to Gloucestershire FRS (GFRS) but, given that it is embedded in the County Council, this valuable work has been facilitated and amplified by its location in the county wide local authority.

Given the upcoming legislation where consideration will be given to transitioning Fire from its current home to the Police and Crime Commissioner, it is important that **Gloucestershire has a clear view on what this means for the public of the county and for other partner agencies. It needs to consider this both in terms of the service provided and the risk and benefits that derive from transition.** This report examines the current

position, the opportunities for building on the existing benefits as well as the risks associated with governance led change and why the County Council is committed to building on its collaboration legacy. In order to do this, the study considers the issue of governance of the Fire and Rescue Service as it operates at present and what it might mean were it to move under the remit of the Police and Crime Commissioner in the future. The report examines the present benefits and future risks from the perspective of Public Value, Financial Value and Leadership both political and professional.

The integrated nature of Fire, Rescue, Public Health, Social Services and other regulatory services (such as Trading Standards) in county has enabled the County Council to provide greater support for vulnerable groups in Gloucestershire – this continues to be a political priority. ***Vulnerable people may not receive this integrated support in PCC led model where its mission and priorities focus more on crime and law enforcement.***

An integrated Fire and Rescue Service provides beneficial economies of scale for the County Council – saving Gloucestershire’s tax payers over £500k per annum. Unpicking the Service from the County Council would increase Council Tax bills in the county.

Public and private sector organisations in Gloucestershire have a track record of successful co-working and delivery in times of emergency – the blue light services are highly effective collaborators irrespective of their different governance as evidenced by the sector leading response to the 2007 floods. Operational collaboration is effective, highly prescribed and will not be improved by transitioning governance to the PCC. The cost of transition would be considerable and no obvious operational benefit will be realised.

Gloucestershire Constabulary is a small police force which is relatively efficient compared to its peers with the notable exception of some support services. Absorbing the Fire and Rescue Service will add to its costs and the FRS will achieve lower economies of scale than its present location in the County Council due to the current shared service arrangements. ***Shared services provide a proven model for achieving savings operating elsewhere and Gloucestershire Constabulary and the County Council should explore this in order to build on current shared activities.***

There is currently a degree of duplication and it would be beneficial if Gloucestershire Constabulary explored the use of County Council back office to reduce spend and provide economies of scale.

Background and context

Gloucestershire County Council have commissioned this comprehensive short study to help elected members and others to understand the way the county's integrated Fire and Rescue Service has developed over recent years and the considerable value that this has brought to the public and partner agencies. Specifically, the Council is keen to define the value that the Fire and Rescue Service provides to residents of the county attributable to the current model; not just in relation to fire and emergencies but across a wider definition of safety and well-being.

The study also examines the opportunities for even greater public benefit in the future, improved effectiveness and value for money as well as exploring whether this is enhanced or constrained by the current model. It considers the risks associated with a move to governance by the PCC in terms of reduced efficiencies, additional costs and the impact on public safety. In line with the incoming legislation, the findings are structured around service value, financial value and leadership which will be key to any new governance proposal.

The County Council has commissioned a team from Ameo and Alendi Consulting. These firms have extensive experience of public service delivery and have used their combined experience to identify the current benefits and opportunities for collaboration. Whilst focussed on Gloucestershire, the case studies are drawn from other county Services to highlight key issues and notable practice.

Recent Fire and Rescue Service Transformation

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 marked a significant and wholesale change in the role and activities of Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs). Prior to 2004 there was no statutory obligation for FRSs to prevent fires, and Services tended to focus almost all their resources on responding to and dealing with incidents. Effectively their purpose was to address the risk (the fire, the road traffic collision etc.) once it had occurred. The only exception to this was a

statutory responsibility to advise and enforce fire regulations in non-residential premises. Preventative activity was discretionary and as a result limited, fragmented and rarely evidence based. Partnerships beyond the incident ground with other public services were often extremely limited.

The shift in focus due to this new statutory duty to prevent and mitigate the effect of fires and other emergencies was fundamental. It moved attention and resources away from just responding to the incident, to working upstream to map, quantify and influence those factors that created vulnerability and the likelihood of an incident occurring. This evidence based approach highlighted that the factors which created a vulnerability to fire were strongly linked to other social problems. The impact of this shift has been remarkable; the UK has seen an overall decline in fire deaths to the lowest level in 50 years. All fires including the most dangerous have declined by upwards of 50%, fire alarm calls and arson have shown similarly dramatic falls. The work of the UK FRS is now internationally recognised as a model of highly successful risk management.

In order to reduce the risk factors associated with fire FRS began exploring collaboration and initiatives with other partners in the public sector. At first glance these may appear to be a long way from traditional incident response or even fire education programmes, but in reality, these partnerships have had a direct and dramatic influence on fire vulnerability. **As such, whilst FRSs remain a blue light service with considerable operational responsibilities, increasingly their role is working with agencies to drive down risk of fire and vulnerability more generally**. This includes working the Police, but is often more focused on health and social care agencies including the Ambulance Service where the risk of fire is more closely correlated with their work than with law enforcement.

During a period of significant public sector change a number of structural issues have assisted FRS's expand their role as partnership leads without the need for increased funding – indeed GFRS's budgeted expenditure has reduced by 14% in the last five years whilst delivering improved outcomes. Firstly, resources in Fire Services tend to be allocated on the basis of risk rather than demand. As such, even where the frequency of events is low, there remains a clear requirement to have assets available to respond quickly

and in sufficient numbers to provide a high level of resilience. This creates a degree of capacity which, when not operationally deployed, can and is increasingly turned over to this new evidence based preventative role. Secondly, firefighters represent a positive role model in their communities and together with the FRS brand become an effective means to educate and influence those segments often most at risk.

Policing and Crime Act Proposals

This report is being written at a time of changing legislation and the new Policing and Crime Bill received Royal Assent on 31st January 2017. The Bill imposes a duty on “relevant emergency services in England” – i.e. Ambulance trusts, Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) and Police bodies to keep under consideration the possibility of entering into a collaboration between any 2 (or more) of them which would be in the interests of “the efficiency or effectiveness” of all parties wishing to collaborate. Collaboration is intended to mean, amongst other things, removing FRS’s from their current governance arrangements and placing them under the jurisdiction of the relevant PCC.

If one of the emergency services believes that a collaboration with others would be in the interest of the “efficiency or effectiveness” of that Service it must notify the other Services of the proposed collaboration. Jointly there must be consideration as to whether such a collaboration would be in the interests of the efficiency or effectiveness of all the proposed parties. If it appears that there is a case for collaboration, the parties are required to enter into a collaboration agreement.

Although the Bill provides that an emergency service is not required to enter into a collaboration agreement the decision making is biased in the favour of Home Office responsibilities. In the case of a PCC governance proposal being resisted the PCC may construct a business case for consideration by the Home Secretary. **It is noteworthy that such a business case only extends to the Fire and Rescue Service who recently moved under the Home Office’s jurisdiction and not Ambulance Trusts who fall under a different civil service department, the Department of Health.**

Gloucestershire context

The non-metropolitan County of Gloucestershire covers an area of 1,024 square miles with a population of 617,200¹. The Council is comprised of 53 councillors, each of these locally based representatives provides the public with a channel to inform and challenge the democratic process. The Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service is part of the County Council and has a coterminous boundary with Gloucestershire Constabulary – this is relatively unique. The ambulance services in the County are provided by South West Ambulance NHS Trust whose area covers the bulk of the south west extending from Gloucestershire down to Cornwall. There is a significant level of collaborative working between the County, Fire and Police which is facilitated and simplified by the common geography.

The Council has been a leading proponent of “commissioning” as an approach to service delivery and has well established commissioning processes. All corporate services operate as a shared service and are centrally commissioned. This means GFRS is an integral part of the Council’s governance and support activities – at a practical level it has no Strategic/Technical Finance capabilities, no professional HR capabilities and no property capabilities. Whereas Gloucestershire Constabulary, whilst smaller than the County Council in terms of staff numbers, provides the majority of their own back office services in house. Given its size this is relatively rare for Police Services.

Over recent years the Council’s shared service offer has developed and support services are provided to other local public sector organisations on a chargeable basis – the Police currently buy only payroll and audit services from the Council.

Public Value Services important to the Communities of Gloucestershire

A key element of considering the risks and benefits of continuing with the present governance arrangements for GFRS is the valued derived by the public from the Service being an integral part of the County Council. Currently only 11 FRS's, including Gloucestershire, operate as a department of a county council which in turn acts as the Fire and Rescue Authority . This arrangement has a number of advantages in terms of economies of scale and the opportunity for the FRS to work closely with other complementary services provided by the respective Council.

Significantly, Gloucestershire County Council has done just this and used its strong professional links to other public services to drive down risk in the community. Working alongside other services, the Council has leveraged the Fire and Rescue Service's unique public position and brand to increase engagement with vulnerable groups, be they young or old. **The Service's growing portfolio of protective services, and commitment to collaboration on core operational activities, has proven its ability to create greater public value beyond merely its statutory emergency response role. These elements are described further below.**

Protective public services role

As outlined earlier, since the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, FRSs have been proactively investing in the prevention of risk as part of their Integrated Risk Management Plans. The shift in focus due to this new statutory duty to prevent and mitigate the effect of fires was fundamental. It required Fire and Rescue Services to develop Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMPs) laying out how all its resources will be used to reduce the causes of risk. For Gloucestershire, this intent aligns directly with a key County Council priority and has facilitated a widening of the activities of the FRS even though its core grant funding has reduced. Over the past five years GFRS has adopted a creative and positive approach to prevention (see Case Study 1 below). **This has resulted in dramatic reduction in fires (down by 63%) and road traffic collisions (down by 53%). Gloucestershire's work has been nationally**

recognised as leading practice and the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) has recently been appointed as the national fire lead for prevention.

In 2014, to inform the effectiveness of its prevention strategies, the county was a key commissioner of a specialist study into regional fire risk factorsⁱⁱ. This analysis has since become a significant study in determining the focus of FRS activity across the country. Figure 1 summarises the primary fire risk factors which were identified – subsequently these findings have been confirmed by other studies. Although the Fire and Rescue Service had been undertaking safety related home visits for many years this originally focussed on fire safety. As the vulnerability to fire became better understood they have worked with other partners to transform the visits from being merely focussing on fire to include a wide range of social care and health issues – a broader “safe and well” offer.

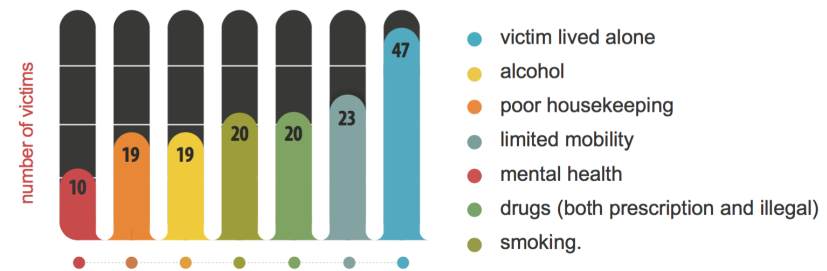


Figure 1 - Fire risk factors and number of victims over 5 years

Across all these risk areas there is a strong natural alignment with the statutory services and political priorities of the County Council (which since 2014 has included Public Health). The infirm, the elderly and those struggling with mental health issues are all high risk in relation to causes of fire and known drivers of demand for other council services. The same cannot be said for police services - whilst criminality has some indirect links to these causes of vulnerability, crime and particularly law enforcement activities are less obvious partners in these groups. The primary partners for each risk factor is shown below:

Risk Factor	Primary Partner agencies
Victim lived alone	Social Care(GCC)/District Councils
Alcohol	Public Health (GCC)/Social Care (GCC)
Poor Housekeeping	Social Care (GCC)
Limited Mobility	Social Care(GCC)/Public Health (GCC)
Mental Health	2Gether Trust/Social Care (GCC)
Drugs	Skillzone/Children Services/Prince’s Trust
Smoking	Trading Standards (GCC)/Public Health (GCC)/ Skillzone GCC)/ Princess Trust

Given the shared risk factors the County’s “Safe and Well” visits continue to be expanded in close collaboration with colleagues in social care, public health and trading standards to maximise their value. These visits are a strong example of firefighter capacity being used to drive change. The visits are targeted based on information and referrals from partners inside and outside the County. Each involves visiting a vulnerable person in their home and is a platform for a number of assessment and service actions (see Case Study 1). In Gloucestershire, the Safe and Well visits are strongly connected to other complementary health and local authority services designed to protect vulnerable individuals and build independence. There is no question that broadening the service has been made simpler and speedier by the shared corporate priorities of the participants; and the personal relationships amongst senior managers who sit on the same corporate management team, something that would not exist in a PCC led model.

Following the successful growth of the visits, fire officers in conjunction with council colleagues are currently exploring whether to expand these visits to include individuals leaving hospital as part of the wider reablement support package. Public partners are not just investigating support in one direction – as an example the Fire Safety Development Sub-Group of the Safeguarding Board is looking to embed Fire Safety referrals into the community interactions of other agencies such as the Police. Overall the collaborative work of the public sector in Gloucestershire has seen an increase, not just in the number of residents being supported, but importantly in more focussed support to those target groups with higher risk factors. This is to be

commended and should continue to be progressed at pace. The fact that GFRS is a department within the local authority should not be underestimated in achieving this level of integration and coordination with other county services. This point is exemplified by work in Hertfordshire (see Case Study 2).

Given GFRS’s success and increasing expertise in the area of prevention and working with the most vulnerable groups there is clearly an opportunity to offer support to the Police. The Service is well placed to assist in helping the constabulary to understand their own risk drivers more clearly. To identify where these align with social care and health priorities would be valuable; not only to reduce demand on Police time caused by unwanted calls but also to develop joint strategies to simultaneously reduce incidences of criminality and vulnerability.

Case Study 1. Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service – championing Safe and Well.

GFRS was one of three Fire and Rescue Services which participated in a Public Health England pilot which saw Fire and Rescue Service personnel undertaking a newly devised “Safe and Well” visit to vulnerable people. Whilst the pilot ceased in March 2016 GFRS has continued with the work and expanded the purview of these visits. Working with its partners Public Health, Age UK, local CCG’s and other county council departments, the visits now include modules relating to doorstep crime, eyesight issues, cold homes, slips and falls as well as providing safeguarding assessments. As part of GCC the Fire and Rescue Service is able to route referrals directly to the relevant county council services via a call centre ensuring those most in need receive immediate and appropriate support across a whole range of issues.

The FRS’s position within the GCC also has the added advantage of ensuring that the trigger points for action across a range of risks is aligned with those operating elsewhere in the county council. This helps to ensure the correct level of service is provided but more importantly prevents the vulnerable “falling between the gaps”.

GFRS’s work now extends still further in the area of vulnerability as it provides dedicated response by trained firefighters as part of the County Council’s Telecare service. A firefighter is despatched following an alarm received via the Service’s mobilising control to assist vulnerable persons who may have fallen or in some way require immediate assistance. Once again, the arrangement provides not only

an immediate response but also a means of directing further appropriate care resources to the individual. Both these initiatives have been achieved by using existing council resources, minimal bureaucracy and without the need for complex legal agreements because of the Service's position as a department of the County Council.

Case Study 2 – Hertfordshire delivering benefits through collaboration

Hertfordshire represents an often-understated benefit of relationship building and trust which inevitably comes from the fire service's position within the county council. Trust is built through strong personal relationships from within rather than across organisations. Inevitably where there are separate organisations with their own missions, relationships tend to be more transactional. This is well illustrated by the data sharing that occurs between the Councils' Health and Community Services directorate and the Fire and Rescue Service. Without the need for lengthy negotiations and Memorandum of Understandings, the Service accesses rich data on vulnerable communities in order to target their "Safe and Well" visits. This not only assists the effectiveness of such work but also avoids the risk of vulnerable individuals falling through the net of public services.

The integrated Fire and Rescue Service in Hertfordshire has facilitated targeting of community safety activities. Specific examples include:

- The Hertfordshire Road Safety Partnership, a joint initiative involving Police, Hertfordshire and Community Protection – regular, seamless sharing of intelligence and data sets is helping to prioritise activities.
- The Youth Connexions Teams in Hertfordshire which support young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs) – are working directly with the Fire and Rescue Service, run Princes Trust schemes around drugs and alcohol, sexual health as well as sign posting to the opportunities afforded by Youth Connexions following completion of the Princes Trust Course.
- Public Health are reviewing the Fire and Rescue Crucial Crew events where over 6000, Yr 6 Hertfordshire children are engaged with annually. This new partnership will look to deliver key

messages around healthy eating and life styles and will not require any Memorandum of Understandings, contracts or complicated money transfers and is the result of senior managers within Hertfordshire who work together regularly simply identifying an opportunity and deciding to deliver something which is pure common sense.

- Sharing of data on product safety between Trading Standards and Fire has not only meant a more effective and efficient response to issues in county but it has also enabled better information exchange across the country. The work Hertfordshire Joint Protective Services (Trading Standards and Fire Protection combined team) did sharing intelligence and expertise collectively on children's fancy dress clothes had a national impact.
- The Hertfordshire County Council Property Team use fire risk information / incident data to inform their fire risk assessment and judgments on installation of sprinklers for their new builds or significant upgrades of schools and other HCC properties.
- Primary Authority work has seen Fire benefit greatly through the existing relationship with Trading Standards where Primary Authority has been established for some time, their business partners have also benefitted from a more joined up approach.
- Bringing together legal professionals to work within one team has meant prosecution (and investigation) work is that much more efficient and effective and Fire has benefitted in an area where traditionally some FRS's have been less confident.
- The Resilience (Emergency Planning) Team has been able to share data around flood risk more readily, in particular the ability to quickly and effectively share and overlay data around vulnerable residents makes the collective response to major incidents (and planning for them) much more efficient.

Responsive Healthcare support

A recent significant development in Gloucestershire, as a result of co-commissioning, has been the Fire and Rescue Service's delivery of the Telecare responder services to meet the needs of a largely rural county. This important service has been developed by aligning two complimentary business drivers: firstly, social care/health seeking skilled first aiders to attend Telecare alarm calls; and secondly utilising the on-call capacity of retained firefighters.

By training retained firefighters to provide Telecare services the public partners are providing a vital response to vulnerable individuals. Additionally, they are able to increase public service engagement within communities and to develop the role of firefighters within their own local communities. The response to these callout services provides firefighters the opportunity to engage on a practical level with members of the community. These groups are typically high-risk groups and GFRS can follow-up with "Safe and Well" visits. This is a good example of aligning the work and objectives of the FRS with other county council departments to achieve the same end - reducing risk amongst the most vulnerable, which is a county council priority.

GFRS is one of only a few Fire and Rescue Services providing this type of care response in the UK and has grown out of its close relationship with local authority care services.

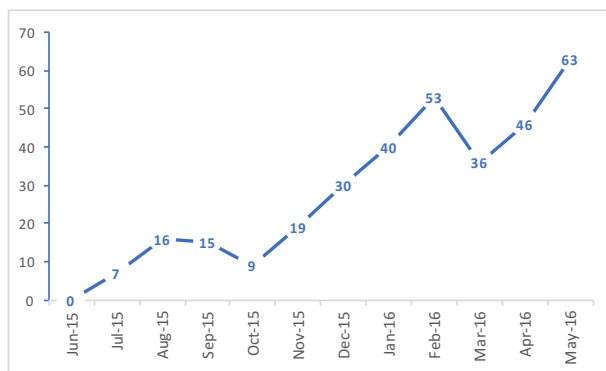


Figure 2 - Telecare responses by Fire and Rescue 2015/16ⁱⁱⁱ

Such integrated services have been developed with blue light partners. In the case of "Cause for Concern" requests – the widening role of the FRS has built stronger service collaboration with the Ambulance service. Historically the Ambulance service would make a request of the Police to gain access. Whilst they have the authority, those called often would not have the equipment or skills to force entry which would thus lead to a request for FRS attendance. This time consuming and inefficient process would tie up all three Services in what would usually be a fairly straight-forward incident. This has now been streamlined and GFRS is now automatically dispatched when a cause for concern 999 call is received without waiting for a Police response. This collaboratively designed, common sense solution has been developed through effective working relationships which already exist across the county.

The County Council has also been quick to respond to new and emerging societal issues, such as the crime of modern slavery. It has used its Trading Standards specialists, in partnership with Environmental Health teams in the District Councils, to train Fire Safety Enforcement Officers to identify signs of modern slavery when visiting commercial premises. Protocols have been established for these officers to route their concerns to the appropriate agency for action.

Developing communities of the future

Whilst more recent developments in partnership with social care, health services, Trading Standards, Registration Services and Coroners are delivering against key council priorities, the long-standing partnership with colleagues in education should not be overlooked. GFRS continues to run a variety of education and engagement programmes with young people in the county. They provide an extensive programme of schools education across all key stages of the curriculum and a road safety programme for young drivers. Their work with Children's Services, and similarly the Princes Trust, ensures they are an active partner in youth engagement and diversion programmes all of which feed into the council's priorities for promoting achievement, confidence and responsibility amongst the young.

Focussing on risk to young people is a key objective of the Service’s “Skill Zone” where the Service works with other partners to educate. This purpose built facility demonstrates a range of threats to young people from a range of hazards including drugs, smoking, fire, anti-social behaviour, train and electrical trespass, road and water safety. This is a model of collaboration between public, private and not for profit agencies using FRS/County premises to deliver a coordinated approach to protection.

At present the PCC’s strategic intent as outlined in the Police and Crime plan is focused predominantly on crime and law enforcement; whilst the need to protect the vulnerable is stated this tends to be in the context of criminality. It remains to be seen if GFRS were to transition to the PCC, whether the understanding of, and priorities towards, broader care and wellbeing issues would ensue such as to allow the current work to continue.

Unfortunately, there is a risk that a lack of appreciation of the wider benefit of this work and an inevitable focus of crime would mean a curtailment of many of these initiatives. Notwithstanding the direction of UK government policy in relation to Fire and Police, it is noteworthy that in no other developed country are Police and Fire organisationally linked, rather Fire is frequently the provider of emergency medical services where skills and priorities more closely align.

The overall impact of progressing a preventative agenda in GFRS is clearly evidenced by the transformed role of a firefighter over the past 5 years. As outlined in figure 3 below, the amount of time spent on incidents has reduced proportionally from almost 95% to around 60%.

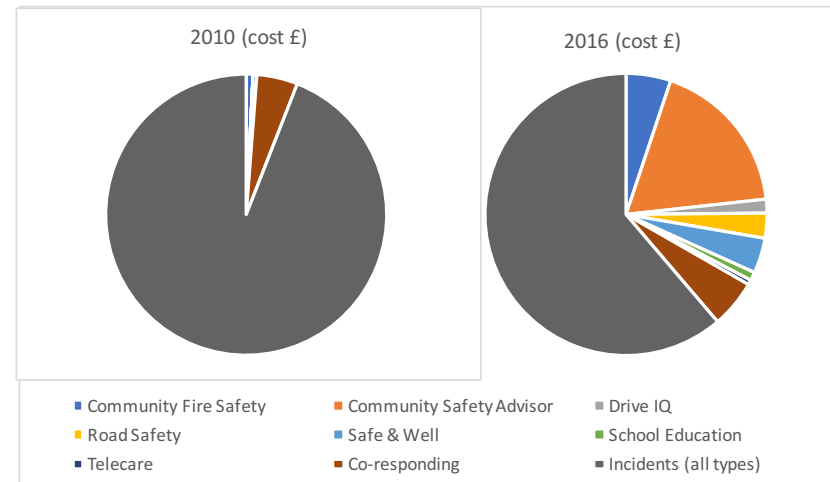


Figure 3 - The shift in operational deployment of retained firefighters

Collaborative blue light service delivery

In terms of operational response, the argument that bringing the Fire and Rescue Service under the remit of the PCC to improve collaboration is unconvincing. Since 2001 the requirements placed on emergency responders to work together more closely has grown significantly. Indeed, the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 places a statutory responsibility on Category 1 responders (which includes local authorities as well as Police, Fire and Ambulance) to work together to assess risk, then plan and respond in a coordinated way to emergencies. In Gloucestershire, the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) which oversees the planning, preparation and communications requirements mandated in the Civil Contingencies Act, is chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable and Fire is represented by the Chief Fire Officer in a dual Fire and County Council role. The secretariat to the LRF is funded by 12 of the key Category 1 and 2 agencies and is housed within Fire HQ. Various cross-service sub groups undertake work as directed by the LRF of which

Gloucestershire FRS leads on three; Search and Rescue, Chemical Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosive Risk (CBRNE) and Resilient Telecoms.

By virtue of the fact that the Chief Fire Officer also manages the County's civil protection team, which in turn provides services to 5 of the 6 district councils, the local authority role during major emergencies is closely tied into the arrangements. **As the Director of the County's Civil Protection Services the Chief Fire Officer is ideally positioned to link the emergency response arrangements of the blue light services to the recovery capabilities provided by local authorities. Were the Chief Fire Officer to be managed within the PCC there is significant risk this co-ordination role would be lost to the detriment of these well-established arrangements.**

In more recent times the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) has established new interoperability protocols as well as training for all emergency services. Common terminology has been introduced and all personnel at all levels in the three emergency services are required to undergo standardised training to ensure understanding and compliance. In Gloucestershire, this has resulted in common Police/Fire training in the areas of specialist equipment, emergency management, illicit drug labs, decontamination and media-handling. Beyond this, both in Gloucestershire and elsewhere, regular strategic and tactical liaison meetings ensure good information exchange and planning takes place.

Almost uniquely Gloucestershire has benefitted from a shared Tri-Service (Police-Fire-Ambulance) despatch and mobilising control that has been in existence for over a decade. In 2004, following a successful joint bid to central government, a shared Police, Fire and Ambulance call handling and despatching facility was established. This Tri-service control is one of only three such buildings granted funds and has now been in operation for over a decade. This has proved particularly important in providing an improved response of the emergency services by speedier data sharing, better liaison and coordinated call handling as acknowledged by the Audit Commission and HMI Constabulary^{iv}.

In 2007 the county suffered some of the worst flooding in recorded history which saw a major multi-agency response handled through this facility and

was praised in the Pitt Review: Lessons learned from the 2007 floods lead by Sir Michael Pitt. All of this achieved by the separate organisations of the Fire and Rescue Authority, Police Authority and Ambulance Trust working together in a trusted and highly professional partnership.

Whilst clearly successful given the length of its operation, it would now seem timely to review further opportunities for collaboration in this area of emergency data handling and information. The Tri-Service control provides an ideal platform to build further the coordination and sharing of information and other capabilities between the two Services. The case study for Northumbria (see Case Study 3) offers examples of where more might be achieved.

For the county, the various training, planning and coordination mechanisms have been strongly tested all too frequently because of the incidents of wider area flooding across the county in 2001/2, 2007, 2012 and 2014. **Indeed, in 2007 the extent of the flooding mentioned above meant that the three emergency services through the LRF were required to coordinate and sustain a prolonged response using national and international resources.** The coordinated response of the three emergency services together with various partners were universally praised by local MP's and members of HM Government at the time. **Within this context, it is hard to understand how moving the FRS from the County Council (which is itself a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004) to the PCC will provide a material benefit to the well-established and robustly tested coordination arrangements which already exist.**

Financial Value for Gloucestershire

Over the past decade funding for all public services has been under continued pressure. The County Council has responded positively to this challenge and has a track record of identifying and importantly delivering efficiency savings. Given GFRS's position within Gloucestershire's upper tier authority it has significantly benefitted from the economies of scale afforded to council based FRSs. Whilst stand alone Fire and Rescue Services have been required to develop shared services arrangements or outsourcing to achieve efficiencies, GFRS has been able to exploit savings through its position within the county council whilst still benefitting from the capacity and specialism which reside in its governing body. This section examines these advantages in more detail, identifies further opportunities for financial efficiencies and the risks of transitioning away from this governance model.

Economies of scale

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service operates as an integrated service within the larger county council, **the Service is approximately 4% of the Council's overall budget. Given the integration GFRS is able to benefit from the full range of specialist governance and back-office services which a larger organisation can afford to maintain whilst only paying a small proportion for them. The impact of these economies is one of the reasons that whilst GFRS is one of the smaller services (rank 7th), it is significantly below average in terms of expenditure per head of population^v. It is worthy of note that these costs include a substantial charge for the five PFI facilities in the county, if excluded GFRS would be one of the lowest cost services in the country.**

At a practical level GFRS has no strategic/technical finance capabilities, no professional HR capabilities and no property function and has developed as an integrated service with efficient processes that have been honed over many years. The only area where the Fire and Rescue Service retains its own specialist support staff is ICT where it's dedicated team manages the Service's specialist network. This separation provides additional resilience to

the County and Service in the event of a major incident or systems failure. These might be put at risk if GFRS were a standalone organisation or transferred to a PCC model where the need to offset additional costs of transition and diminished economies of scale would be significant.

As outlined earlier, within the budget approved by the County Council for the Fire and Rescue Service, it is providing wider support to vulnerable communities as part of their safe and well visits. Assuming "working behaviours" and financial priorities stayed the same then a change of governance need not impact core council services – although this would need to be confirmed. Any changes could have a detrimental impact on the council's agreed public priorities.

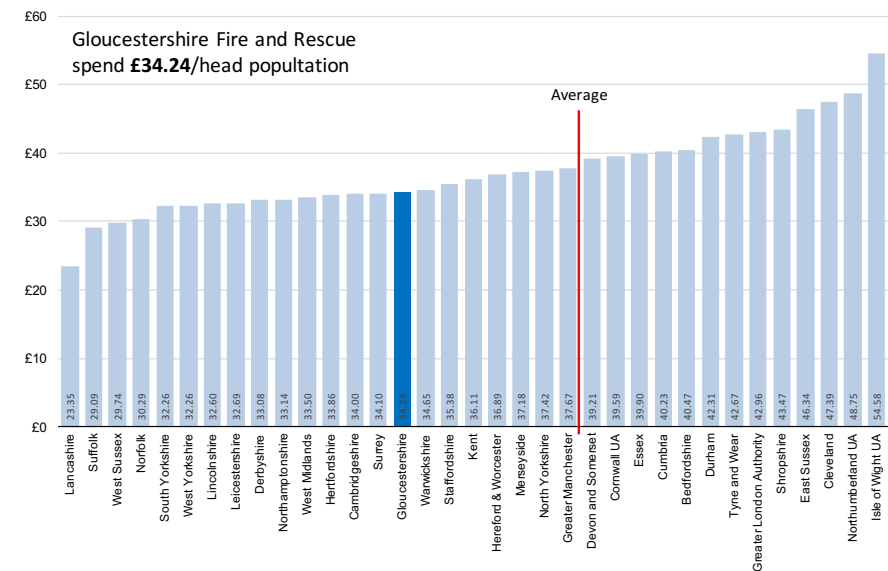


Figure 4 – Net Expenditure Estimates (Fire & Rescue) per Resident 2016/17^{vi}

By way of comparison **Gloucestershire Constabulary is one of the smallest Police forces (rank 4th) yet it's expenditure per head of population is average.** As mentioned above much of the force's back office is in house with the known exception of payroll and audit provided by the County

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Council. These small corporate functions may be a factor in the higher relative cost of service and we believe that whatever future arrangements prevail further shared services should be encouraged (see Case Study 3).

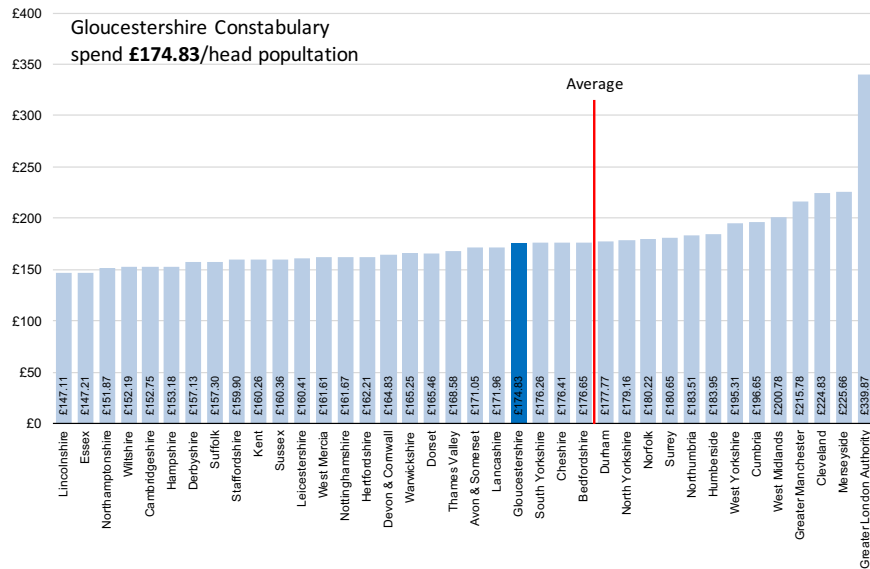


Figure 5 - Budgeted Net Current Expenditure (Police) per Resident 2016/17^{viii}

The Police are subject to regular police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy programme (PEEL) inspections by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC). The results of the latest inspection were published after the completion of this review and were not considered by the authors. **However, the data from the recent ‘HMIC Value for Money Profile 2016’ identified above average costs for ICT, Estates, Fleet, Training and Administration. This reinforces the need to explore further collaboration by the smaller Police force – for example with the larger County Council – to deliver cost efficiencies.**

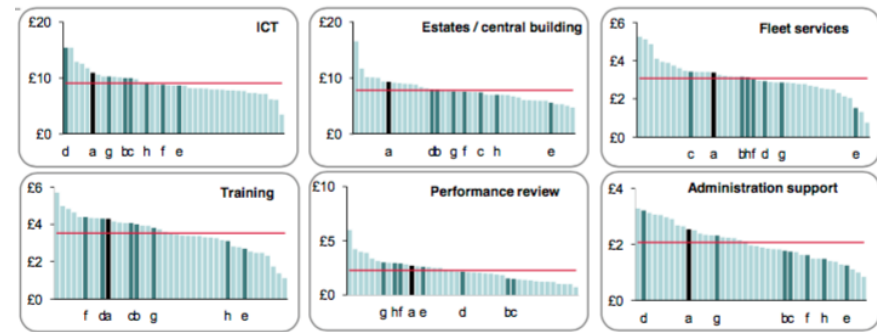


Figure 6 - Spend per head of population on support functions for Gloucestershire Constabulary (Source: POA Estimates 2016/17)^{ix}

Beyond the financial value delivered by GFRS and Police to the public, it is important to recognise the financial value to the wider County Council associated with sharing services. The County Council has embarked on a positive strategy of collaborative partnership working – focusing on maximising the benefits for local residents. This includes the joint appointment of a Managing Director for the City Council and Operational Director for the County Council.

The Chief Fire Officer is the accountable officer for the Fire and Rescue Service, but in recent years his managerial role has expanded to include a number of complementary statutory council services including Registration Services, Coroner Services, Trading Standards and Civil Resilience . This management integration is similar for the Deputy and Assistant Chief Fire Officers who have line management responsibility for Trading Standards and Civil Protection respectively. The way the Council deploys skills and resources flexibly across a number of service areas is further exemplified by the fact that the CFO is the Council’s strategic lead for ICT, takes the lead for the county’s response to asylum seekers and provides on call cover for a major Local Authority incident.

This integrated management structure allows specialist expertise to be maximised and ensures efficient use of senior management capacity. Importantly he is a contributor to the GCC’s Corporate Management Team

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which manages the Council's corporate strategy and ensures coordination of services across the County Council to ensure optimum effectiveness. If this were to cease **with a change in governance the County Council would lose both the managerial capacity across a range of statutory services and an important strategic co-ordinator. Under the PCC it would be unclear what the Chief Fire Officer would, or could, undertake beyond his Fire role.**

This sharing of management capacity has allowed the council to reduce its overall headcount. **For example, when the former Head of Trading Standards retired the council was able to restructure and transfer management responsibility to the DCFO – not replacing this post reduced the cost of public services in the County.**

The council has also been able to draw on the 'on-call' arrangements in GFRS to cover its wider civil contingency responsibilities. Whilst the total value of this is difficult to quantify the value to the tax payer of **such "shared" arrangements is estimated to be in the order of £500k (see below).**

- Strategic Lead for ICT (P/T) - £50k
- Management of Statutory Services (e.g. Registration) - £50k
- Head of Trading Standards - £80k
- Emergency Planning Lead (P/T) - £40k
- Gold Command Cover (24/7) - £60k (assumed additional on-call payments)
- Subject matter input to corporate risk based planning - £20k (reducing external support needs)
- Scale efficiencies of corporate services - £100k (5% of corporate recharge 2015/16)
- Value to Social Care of Safe and Well visits - £100k (Assume £100/visit 1000 visits – 7000 were delivered, but around 1000 were to mobility, not more NHS type related issues)

If the PCC was to provide the governance to the FRS and the Chief Fire officer role were to transition away from the County Council it is highly unlikely these local authority roles would carry over. **As a result, costs within the County would increase and the opportunity to optimise the current skills and experience of the CFO and DCFO would diminish.** The effect would be to create additional cost for the local tax payer and less effective use of strategic capacity.

In addition to the increased cost to the Council, under a PCC led model there is likely to be a need for additional costs for support services resources/

contracts and oversight given the additional organisational responsibilities. Given payroll and audit are provided under contract from the County Council it is assumed at this stage that these stay the same (but this would need to be confirmed as part of any transfer). As specialist ICT is largely self-contained the additional support costs are estimated to be of the order of £200k (see below for additional above current budget):

- Estates Management – £63k (10% of current maintenance budget plus proportion of staffing)
- Human Resources/OD/Finance/Comms - £17.5k (5% of current budget)
- OPCC team resources – £120k (assume mirroring of police arrangement i.e. 1 x commissioning manager, 1x officer and ½ liaison officer)

Furthermore, there will be some transition costs associated with deintegrating the FRS from the County Council and moving to a PCC governance model. The cost of this is estimated to be in the order of £400k (see below).

- Changes to the brand identity/website/contact channels - £50k
- Valuations and legal work to transfer assets and liabilities (vehicles, equipment, premises and property/PFI contracts) - £150k
- Legal and officer support for the development of new decision making frameworks and structures - £100k
- Allowance for any staff made redundant in the County Council as a result of transfer - £100k

Whether the priorities of the PCC would change in a different arrangement are not known. However, within this context the additional costs of moving to a PCC Governance model for Gloucestershire tax payers are estimated to be £2.5m over 3 years.

Collaborative service efficiency

As outlined earlier, the Fire and Rescue Service and Police Force in Gloucestershire already collaborate effectively on an operational level. There are well established systems and protocols in place as there are in all emergency services across the country. The operational leads are in regular dialogue and practical operational improvement constantly identified through local forums and following post incident reviews. **Given this any change in governance model would have a negligible impact on any operational efficiency.**

In the case of non-operational activities and functions collaboration is less mature. The County Council and Police have progressed some projects, but there are further opportunities to exploit.

Fleet Maintenance

The County Council and Police have a shared fleet maintenance workshop. However, the maintenance activity within the workshop is predominantly separate. There are a number of examples where shared workshop facilities between Police and Fire have led to a combined management structure with resultant savings. We understand when GFRS were looking to recruit a new manager for their workshop activities it investigated sharing with the Police but no agreement could be reached. Since this short review has been underway we understand that an operational member of the police team has commenced discussions in relation to sharing resources. We would recommend this is formalised and a review into options be progressed to understand the potential financial and logistical benefits as well as improved resilience.

Property

The County Council decided to invest in a number of innovative and state-of-the-art facilities through a Public Finance Initiative (PFI) and these lend themselves to being shared with other blue light services.

GFRS has four fire stations which are located around the major urban centres of Gloucester and Cheltenham all of these were secured through PFI.

However, as a relatively rural county, the County Council has a number of fire stations well spread in order that it can provide timely operational responses. Given the retained nature of many of these stations they are frequently unoccupied, this presents an opportunity to share their use, particularly the office and parking space to optimise the asset. The Council has made progress in sharing these physical assets with the South West Ambulance Service, at the following stations: Gloucester South, Nailsworth, Dursley, Gloucester North and Cheltenham East.

Police and Fire often have different space needs which complement each other (Fire primarily in terms of garaging whilst the Police requirement is for office space). For that reason, it is surprising there has not been more premise collaboration with the Police. Only in recent times has this been progressed. The new Police front desk in the Council's Shire Hall building, as well as the success of locating a Police office in Lydney fire station, provide a good foundation to build on. It is noted that GCO has further operational Police Stations in Cheltenham, Coleford, Stroud and sharing with the County's Fire Stations team should be explored in these areas. In Cirencester and Stow-on-the-Wold, whilst the current fire stations may not be suitable, shared feasibility studies should be progressed into alternative sites and/or rebuilds that are appropriate for a wider range of use. The Leadership Gloucestershire Board (which includes all councils and the PCC) provides an established forum to progress such activities and its 'One Government Estate' programme is already considering some of these matters. This forum should be better utilised to expedite these projects.

Case Study 3 – Northumberland Blue Light collaboration

The work in Northumberland provides an example of close and effective collaboration between the County based Fire and Rescue Service and Northumbria Police. As well as the normal operational coordination and collaboration which flows from the JESIP arrangements there is a proactive sharing of estates (currently four Fire Stations and a further one due in 2017). Northumbria Police use the FRS training facilities for specialist police training including Firearms and Search teams, there are arrangements for the sharing of specialist fire equipment (such as TICs) and capabilities to support police operations particularly around water based incidents, forced entry and sharing of welfare /command vehicles. Joint initiatives around road safety and domestic violence have gained national and international recognition for their collaborative approach and operational success

As a result of political and professional commitment there is also established a Strategic Collaboration Board between Northumbria Police, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue, Northumberland Fire and Rescue and Northumbria PCC. This has an established delivery group which commits all three services to improved value money, better outcomes and to reducing demand - underpinned by a statement of intent. The initial areas of focus are

- Sharing of knowledge and information
- Service Delivery (including: Prevention, demand reduction and response)
- Estate and Asset integration
- Control Room
- Service support functions
- Training and Development
- Threat, harm and risk assessment
- Public engagement and accountability
- Finance e.g. joint bids, pooled budgets and shared contracts and procurement.

Plans are already underway to develop an innovative public service hub in Berwick between Police, Fire, Ambulance, Coroners, Magistrates and Probation, which has already secured One Public Estate funding.

Leadership across Gloucestershire

A consistent feature of a high performing organisation is the quality of leadership found within it. For public services this leadership will necessarily be both political and professional. This section examines the strong leadership reputation that Gloucestershire's Fire and Rescue Authority and Service have developed in recent times and how this contributed to the delivery of an innovative and all encompassing public protection service. It is testament to that leadership that this progress has been achieved during a time of continued austerity which has required both the Authority and Service to take difficult decisions and develop lasting partnerships to manage costs. All this has been delivered within a governance structure which has proved itself to be thorough, publicly accessible and transparent.

Effective Governance – Scrutiny and Democratic decision making

As a service within the County Council all decisions are made in line with agreed delegations to officers, the relevant Cabinet Member, Full Cabinet and/or Council, all of which are subject to established scrutiny arrangements. The lead responsibility for the Fire and Rescue Authority is held by the Cabinet Member for Fire, Planning and Infrastructure and he meets with the Chief Fire Officer weekly to review performance and discuss any issues. In recognition of the importance of the service to the Council, the CFO provides a separate monthly report to the Leader and Shadow Leader of the Council.

Unlike Police many operational decisions are not confined to professional officers but are a matter for consideration and scrutiny by the FRA. Were the FRS to fall under the scrutiny arrangements of the PCC these two quite different delineation of operational and political decision making has the potential to cause considerable confusion.

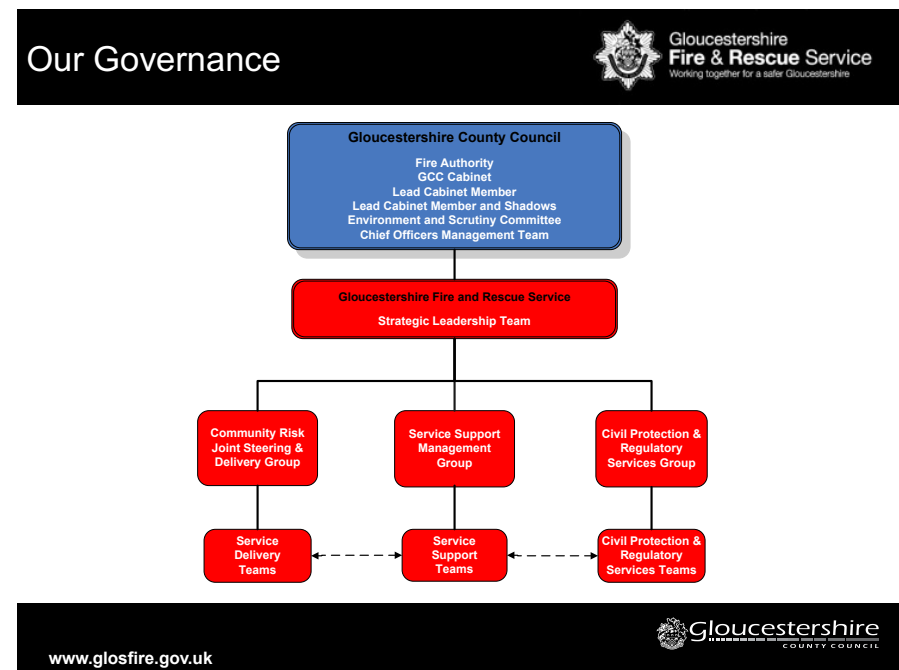


Figure 7 - GFRS scrutiny framework

In line with the council's constitution the activities of the Fire and Rescue Service are subject to overview and scrutiny by the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee. This Committee receives regular performance reports to allow open and transparent review of progress – this was previously quarterly but following a request from an opposition member this has been increased to bi-monthly.

The Council is comprised of 53 councillors, each of these locally based representatives provides the public a channel to inform and challenge the democratic process. The level of transparency in decision making that is available to Fire and Rescue Service business by drawing on these robust, well established, reporting and scrutiny arrangements is considerable. However, this has not led to inertia or caution but rather the opposite; difficult and innovative decisions have been taken by local members following careful

consideration and debate. Whilst the PCC as a single elected official may have an advantage in terms of direct accountability, the ability for members of the public to raise specific issues on services provided in their locality becomes more difficult. Given the current governance and scrutiny arrangements of the PCC the capacity and expertise to open decisions to this level of challenge is unlikely to exist and would need a change in approach and expectations within the office of the PCC.

Importantly, in Gloucestershire the engagement with decisions is not just a one-way process. The County Council are able to use its specialist consultation resources and established consultation panel to seek prior views on contentious decisions – this expertise was used when reviewing fire cover in the Cirencester and Painswick areas (see Case Study 4). Increasingly the scrutiny panel is being engaged to consider policy changes prior to implementation – an example is the recent changes to policy that affects attendance to automatic fire alarms. By taking concepts to the panel a wider perspective can be brought to complex service issues thus ensuring that such decisions are well considered and highly transparent. In contrast the scrutiny arrangements of the PCC are more narrow in focus and confined to very specific topics.

For all the above, the current arrangements for scrutiny may need to be reconsidered in the light of a changing role for the Fire and Rescue Service. It is clear that while the strategic focus of the Fire and Rescue Service has moved towards prevention and community protection, the scrutiny panel has been maintained as one with an emergency response and place based services remit. The Council may want to consider whether the Communities and Environment Scrutiny Committee still remains the most appropriate overview body or whether moving, or periodic reporting, into the Health and Social Care overview committee for increased focus from a health perspective would have more value. It is worthy of note that the Chairman of the Police and Crime Panel sits on this panel.

Case Study 4 – Cirencester/Painswick Fire Stations

In 2014, following scrutiny by the above Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee the Fire and Rescue Service Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) was approved by full Cabinet and endorsed at full Council. The plan included a review of operational services which took place in 2015 and generated a series of options. One of the recommendations included changes to crewing arrangements at Cirencester station and also the closure of a retained fire station in Painswick . The Chief Fire Officer and Portfolio Lead recognised there would be a significant level of public interest due to the perceived potential Service implications. As such a rigorous review of the decision was undertaken.

The proposals were subject to a separate independent report by an outside subject matter expert which reviewed the proposal and risk analysis. This was then followed by a 12 week public consultation which utilised the Council’s robust consultation processes. Following consultation some amendments were made and then a completed report was approved by the Communities and Environment Scrutiny Committee whereupon the final decision to proceed was taken by the council’s cabinet following consideration of the consultation process and report proposals

This decision was then challenged through the use of the Council’s established “call-in” process and subject to a review by a specially convened oversight committee who upheld the decision. These tested procedures ensured there was a clear and transparent process of determination in what was a contentious decision. Importantly, as this had local service implications at very specific localities, the process allowed for numerous points at which the public and elected members could make representations. Also, whilst the process was transparent, open to considerable consultation and carefully scrutinised, the decision was taken in a timely fashion.

Professional leadership

Notwithstanding that governance of fire and police is currently separate there are strong working relationships between the professional leads of all blue light services in the county and beyond. These have been built up over many years based on both professional and personal relationships. Locally the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Constable have formalised their frequent personal meetings by developing local forum to support closer working at both strategic and practitioner level.

One of the areas of collaboration is the development of contracts which allow PCSOs to be firefighters – essentially permitting individuals to provide two emergency response services. The intention is to expand this scheme in line with the work in Hereford and Worcestershire.

Beyond this there are a multitude of local collaborative projects between police and fire being developed around arson prevention, hoarding, modern slavery and joint crime/fire prevention visits to the vulnerable. Whilst the collaborative activities of police and fire can go further there is no shortage of personal commitment by the CFO and CC notwithstanding they operate with separate governance arrangements.

Similarly, on a regional basis, good interaction occurs between fire and police professionals under the aegis of the SW Emergency Services collaboration group. Pleasingly this group seeks to identify local as well as regional opportunities for greater collaboration between police and fire services.

Given the wider preventative role played by the Fire and Rescue Service, joint working arrangements with key partners are already well established. Indeed, the embedded nature of the FRS within the County Council mean inter-organisational working at an operational level is much simpler due to the ability to share data, rapidly develop trusted relationships and explore new models of service delivery – all without the need for legal agreements, SLA or memoranda of understanding (see Case Study 2).

This agility to support local care and safety priorities is not guaranteed to continue were GFRS to transition to a governance structure that focusses much more specifically on crime and law enforcement.

Case Study 5 – Cumbria

Appreciating the contribution that Fire can make to the wider county council agenda is well illustrated by the arrangements in Cumbria. Here the Chief Fire Officer is a member of the Corporate Management Team by virtue of being a strategic director within the council. He is able not only to build strong and effective relationships with colleague directors particularly those working in Children's Services and Adult social care, but also contributes to the overall strategic decision making of the Council. He is able to leverage the capacity and skills within the fire service to lead on council functions such as Community Safety (including the Prevent agenda) and Emergency Planning. In addition, he is able to support key county council initiatives which have a direct impact on improved health and wellbeing as well as reducing vulnerability to fire. Whilst there is already sharing of some training facilities with the police, the Chief Fire Officer from his position within the County Council has been instrumental in the development of an emergency services shared hub to be located in Ulverston (Furness Peninsula).

Concluding remarks

This review has examined the present governance arrangement of GFRS through the dimensions of Public Value, Financial Value and Leadership both professional and political. In so doing it has drawn a number of conclusions around the risks of transitioning governance to an entity which is primarily structured and necessarily focussed on law enforcement rather than safety, care and risk reduction. This has considerable implications for the public value currently generated by GFRS by virtue of it being part of the County Council.

The review has also highlighted that Fire and Rescue resources currently provides a wider public protection benefit to the residents of Gloucestershire than may be first anticipated. Much of this is supported by, or as a result of, the integrated delivery model that has been developed within the County Council structure. It has allowed GFRS not only to be hugely successful in reducing fires and related deaths but to become an important support to the council's social care and health agenda.

The review has concluded that the scrutiny and decision making within the County Council Fire and Rescue Authority is rigorous and transparent. Under the current governance arrangements the public benefit has potential to grow still further in the future, however this expanded role may not be as assured were the service to be under the direction of the PCC.

The county is already benefiting from strong collaboration across a number of areas and the new legislation is seeking for this to continue and grow. This review highlights a number of areas where there are opportunities to extend collaboration and points to good practise in other parts of the country. In light of this and in the interests of Gloucestershire residents we would advocate an open dialogue between all parties to build on current successes.

Finally the review raises a number of questions around the financial costs of transitioning and the loss of economies of scale moving forward. In a time of significant austerity these financial risks need to be uppermost in the mind of decision makers.

ⁱ www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/policeforceareadatatables/current

ⁱⁱ Fire deaths in the South West between 2008-13 a collaborative review

ⁱⁱⁱ Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service Internal Performance Data, Dave Hornibrook

^{iv} Audit Commission and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (2010), Gloucestershire Police Authority Inspection Report.

^v <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-authority-revenue-expenditure-and-financing-england-2016-to-2017-budget-individual-local-authority-data>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables>

^{vi} CIPFA Fire and Rescue Service Statistics 2016-17 Estimates

^{viii} <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables>

^{ix} <https://www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/hmic/wp-content/uploads/gloucestershire-2016-value-for-money-profile.pdf>