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## **Report to Fire and Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee**

**8 January 2021**

### **Fire and Rescue Service Independent Advisory Panel Closure**

#### **Report by Chief Fire Officer**

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#### **Summary**

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) produced its report on the inspection of West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (WSFRS) in June 2019.

As a result of that inspection, an Independent Advisory Panel was established in line with a recommendation to the Minister for Policing and Fire and Rescue Services following his review of whether the service had the capacity and the capability to achieve the improvements required by the HMICFRS report.

One year on the Panel has now made the decision to close the process given the significant improvement made by the Fire and Rescue Service during that time. The Panel has written to The Fire Authority outlining their rationale for this decision where they make clear that the steps taken by the Chief Fire Officer and her team are such that the foundations for continued progress and improvement are now well embedded within the service.

#### **Focus for Scrutiny**

The Committee is asked to note the letter (attached at Appendix A) received from the Independent Advisory Panel and support the decision to close this part of the process of change for WSFRS and acknowledge the substantial progress made by officers to support the Panel in reaching this decision.

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#### **Proposal**

##### **1 Background and context**

- 1.1 The Independent Advisory Panel was established in line with a recommendation presented to the Minister for Policing and Fire and Rescue Services following a report on whether the service had the capacity and the capability to improve. Its membership included National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and Local Government Association (LGA) representation.
- 1.2 The panel recognised that there has been a significant amount of progress since the first meeting on 11 December 2019 and provided specific evidence of this progress against a number of areas which directly address the recommendations noted by the Minister in relation to staff wellbeing, concerns around member understanding and knowledge of the Fire and Rescue Service,

capacity and capability to deliver the required improvements as well as the sustainability of the change through to long term improvements.

- 1.3 This is the first step in the Fire and Rescue Services improvement transition and is an encouraging start ahead of proposed future inspection in 2021/22. It was particularly encouraging to note the Panel's comments on the positive impact that this work is having on staff and the confidence that 'the service is moving in the right direction in capable hands'. The role of the County Council was also recognised for the additional investment and scrutiny of performance that is now being invested into the service.
- 1.4 Cabinet considered the letter (at Appendix A) at its meeting on 15 December 2020, and acknowledged the positive trajectory and confidence demonstrated by the external Independent Advisory Panel and the progress made against the improvements required. It supported the decision to close this part of the process of change for WSFRS.

## 2. **Finance**

- 2.1 Closing this process has no financial implications to the Council.

## 3. **Risk implications and mitigations**

- 3.1 The Fire Authority and members of the Fire and Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee will continue to monitor the performance of the fire and rescue service to ensure that any risk from ceasing this process is mitigated through effective performance management through the Performance and Assurance Framework.

## 4. **Policy alignment and compliance**

- 4.1 This report has positive implications for the community as it supports the continued improvement journey of the Fire and Rescue Service to all residents in West Sussex.

Sabrina Cohen-Hatton  
**Chief Fire Officer**

Sabrina Cohen-Hatton, Chief Fire Officer Link No: External 033022 24993 |  
internal 24993E-mail: Sabrina.Cohen-Hatton@westsussex.gov.uk

### **Appendix A – Fire Improvement Independent Advisory Panel letter**

#### **Background papers**

**None**