

Dorset Police and Crime Panel – 26 June 2018
Public Question(s) to the Panel

Mr Andrew Beresford (*A Devon resident*) has submitted 2 specific questions:

Question 1

"Can the panel please tell me the extent to which they expect the full business case for the proposed merger with Devon & Cornwall Police to fully reflect the plans being adopted elsewhere for the Police & Crime Commissioner for the existing or a new single Police & Crime Commissioner for the combined force to take full responsibility for the Fire & Rescue Service in this area."

Further context submitted by the Questioner: As you should know in other areas more progress has been made and in Essex Roger Hirst has already become their Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.

Answer:

The Dorset Police and Crime Panel (PCP) are aware that a number of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) are formally considering business cases to take on additional responsibility for governance of their fire and rescue service.

The Dorset PCC advises that Dorset Police and Devon and Cornwall Police are both actively working closely with all of their blue light partners, fire in particular, and have no plans to stop doing so. However, the option of taking on this additional responsibility is not available to either force, either individually or as a merged entity, as the geographic boundaries of local police and fire services do not match.

Supporting information:

The relevant Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) for Dorset is Dorset and Wiltshire Fire. The relevant FRS for Devon is Devon and Somerset FRS. Cornwall has its own FRS.

This might raise the question of whether a regional South West force has been considered. Dorset Police and Devon & Cornwall Police are not considering a regional force at this time. The strategic alliance between the two forces is well established, and they already share a number of functions including People, Finance and Payroll that would make closer working more appropriate. Other forces in the region are in different places, but are watching this work with interest.

Question 2

"Can the Panel please tell me the Panel meeting date upon which they expect to review the full business case for the proposed merger with Devon & Cornwall Police"

Further context submitted by the Questioner: Presumably the Panel knows that after a fairly oral presentation by the Chief Executive of the Office of the Devon & Cornwall Police & Crime Commissioner at the Devon & Cornwall Police & Crime Panel meeting in Plymouth on Friday 15th June 2018 that Panel is in the process of scheduling an urgent special briefing meeting to hear much more detail as to the proposed content of the business case. Allegedly this special meeting may be held in camera which strikes at the heart of public engagement and accountability.

The recording of the full meeting of the Devon & Cornwall Police & Crime Panel was broadcast live and can be watched again at <https://plymouth.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>. Panel may be particularly interested in the unorthodox approach in overcoming a repeated tied vote for Chairman.

This may not bode well for the residents of Dorset in a larger force area.

Answer:

The Dorset Police and Crime Panel (PCP) will formally consider and scrutinise the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) on the proposal for a merger between Dorset and Devon &

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Cornwall Police Forces and the Offices of the PCC (OPCC) on 27 September 2018. This will ensure that our views are formally captured to feed into the stakeholder consultation process. It also meets the Home Office timetable set for the OPCC of a formal submission of no later than 12th October 2018.

In considering any business case the Home Office will want to see sufficient support locally, from the public, local Members of Parliament, Local Authorities as well as staff and Unions.

The Home Office “would expect there to be no clear objection from key policing bodies.” The PCP has been specifically identified as one of these key stakeholders, along with Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS); the National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC); the College of Policing; and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC). The final decision on the merger lies with the Home Office.

As a Panel we recognise that our role, formally established under the Police and Social Responsibility Act 2011, is to scrutinise the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), who has been democratically elected to office by the residents of Dorset. We also are clear in recognising that the approval, or otherwise, of the Full Business Case for submission to the Home Office is not a matter for us, but one for the four Corporations Sole (e.g. the two PCCs and two Chief Constables) themselves.

Therefore, as a Panel, to meet our specific roles and responsibilities, we will formulate some Key Lines of Enquiry (KLoE’s). These will assist us in our objective evaluation of the merger proposal and will help to structure our considered response.

Specifically, the Panel will seek assurance from the PCC in respect of the following:

1. Does the merger proposal have a clear **economic** basis?
(including a clear and viable path for precept equalisation)
2. Will the merger improve the **efficiency** of the police?
3. Will the merger improve the **effectiveness** of policing in the area?
4. Will the merger have an impact on **public safety**?
5. Does the proposal have sufficient **local support**?

Then, having assessed the merits, or otherwise of the rationale for the above, we will also be seeking assurances from the Dorset PCC to confirm:

- i) Adherence to the merger process and its effective management?
- ii) How the merger will ensure an effective public voice / scrutiny on policing?
(e.g. covering a large geographical area from Land’s End to Christchurch).

Following formal consideration and scrutiny of the merger proposal at our meeting on 27 September 2018, the Panel will provide a formal response of its view to the PCC.

We also understand that the process to achieve wider engagement and consultation across a range of other stakeholders, importantly including the public, will soon be announced.