

**Forwarded on behalf of Cllr Chris Mellings, Vice Chair, Shropshire & Wrekin Fire Authority
To Town and Parish Councils, Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin
Cc SALC Executive**

Both the Executive Committee of SALC and Parish Councils across Shropshire were supportive of the Fire Authority's position against the PCC's attempt to assume control of Shropshire Fire Service.

The then Home Secretary accepted the business case submitted by the PCC which was subsequently challenged in the courts via a judicial review.

On Monday, the Fire Authority was advised the Judge has issued his decision. Whilst he agreed with the Fire Authority that economy, efficiency and effectiveness were three separate tests, his interpretation of "Economy" lead him to believe that even if the Home Secretary had used the proper test then she would have been highly likely to come to the same conclusion; therefore its case must "fail".

In terms of next steps, the Fire Authority is considering an appeal but before that we have written to the new Home Secretary, asking her to look at the case afresh and to consider how a business case with "no overwhelming caser for change" has got significantly worse, and propose to engage with the public using the survey at the link below.

The Fire Authority wishes as many people to have its say as possible and I wonder whether SALC would be able to circulate to both its members and the Executive Committee details of the outcome of the JR process and encourage them and as many local residents as possible to complete our survey which can be accessed on the link below:

<https://www.surveygizmo.eu/s3/90159381/SWFRA>

Please see attached for information and circulation a copy of the press release issued by the Fire Authority together with comments from the PCC.

The key issues now are:

1/ Shropshire money should be spent by Shropshire elected people keeping Shropshire communities safe.

2/ The business case of the PCC is flawed. It was poor to start with and even CIPFA- the Home Offices own advisors, stated" there was no overwhelming case for change"

3/ Finally, the world has moved on; the business case was predicated on structures which no longer exist, savings proposed relied on a partnership which has collapse and suggested could only be realised through collaboration with Police. This has been proven wrong through an effective Strategic Alliance between Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority and Rescue and Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority

If Parish Councils feel able to write to the Home Secretary and PCC supporting these three issues that would be really helpful in making the case for a Shropshire based Fire Authority – governed by Councillors from Shropshire ! The Fire Authority has also taken the opportunity to review its own membership and structures as a result of which it has reduced its size to 15 and has streamlined its committees to be more efficient and focused to support the work of the Strategic Alliance.

It is also worth pointing out that in May 2020, elections for the role of PCC are due to be held. Potentially a new PCC might take a different view so with the election less than 12 months away it would be appropriate for no change to be made to the governance arrangements at this stage.

Best Wishes

Chris Mellings

Vice Chair – Shropshire & Wrekin Fire Authority

Floreat Salopia !

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