Police and Crime Commissioners

A threat to our professional humanitarian service

FIRE BRIGADES UNION

On 11 September 2015 the Home Office, DCLG and the Department of Health launched a joint consultation on 'Enabling closer working between the emergency services'.

The consultation sets out plans to enable Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to take over the fire service.

Other proposals include allowing PCCs to merge backroom staff and abolishing the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority, giving total power to the Mayor. The consultation also proposes allowing PCCs to sit on fire authorities in areas where they do not take full responsibility.

The FBU are opposed to our service being absorbed into the remit of PCCs.

Firefighters provide a humanitarian service, they are not agents of the state nor are they law enforcers. We affirm that firefighters should play an impartial role in our communities.

The neutrality of firefighters has assisted in reaching out to sections of the community and has helped to decrease crime and anti-social behaviour. This is because it was performed with public safety at its core, not law enforcement.

Attacks on firefighters have reduced by 50% over the past six years, however there were still 700 last year. The FBU believes the reduction is a result of firefighters working with communities to keep people safe.

These proposals would also rip up national conditions for firefighters and undermine the largely positive negotiating role the NJC plays in the fire service. No doubt government see fragmentation as the first step to a wider agenda of privatisation – we oppose any attempts to fragment the fire service.

The consultation makes it clear that government is happy to dissolve elected fire authorities to allow their plans to go ahead. It cites London and Manchester as examples, with power going to the Mayor's office and the unelected boards they select.

The FBU refutes merging with police is a way to enhance democracy. PCCs were elected with the lowest turnouts in any election in British peacetime history (15.1%). They are unlikely to have any experience in management of the fire service.

The FBU does also not support imposing the failed PCC model on the fire service, especially when there are more democratic, devolved models being discussed.

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