

Press Release -

Outcome of Judicial Review into the takeover of Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service by West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner, John Campion

The decision from Mr Justice Garnham on whether the Home Secretary, Amber Rudd, was right to grant governance of Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service to John Campion, the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia, will be/has been delivered in the Royal Courts of Justice today.

Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority, along with fire authorities from Hereford & Worcester and Cambridgeshire raised the judicial review because they didn't feel that the Home Secretary had paid adequate attention to public safety and didn't consider efficiency, effectiveness and economy as separate, equally important, factors in arriving at her decision to dissolve the existing Fire and Rescue Authorities in favour of PCC control.

Mr Justice Garnham found that he believed the Home Secretary had taken adequate consideration of public safety but she had not followed the proper 'tests' in arriving at her decision. However it was the view of the Judge that had Ms Rudd followed the correct test she would most likely have arrived at the same decision – as such the claim of the Fire authorities has failed.

Cllr Eric Carter, Chair of Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority said "I think I can safely speak for my whole Authority in saying how disappointed we are with this ruling; we still firmly believe the best way of governing a fire service is by locally elected representatives who really know their communities." Cllr Carter continued "I believe there is more at stake here than just saving money and the recent report of the Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabularies and the Fire and Rescue Service backs this up by awarding Shropshire a "Good " rating across the board. This says we are good at delivering efficiency, effectiveness and looking after people. I am not sure what a change in governance would do, but I am sure Mr Campion's business plan would put all that in danger."

Cllr Carter said "the judicial review has helped to clear up some technical and legal issues but the fact remains that Mr Campion's business case is flawed. It said savings would be made through using a joint support service centre, which even the police have now pulled away from. It also said that we would only collaborate if he was in charge – which clearly isn't true because we already share a number of our stations with the police and we have a really strong alliance with Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority. It just doesn't stack up."

Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority are considering whether to appeal the finding of the judicial review and have already asked the current Home Secretary to look at the business case afresh. They believe it is in the public interest to keep governance as it is, with Shropshire money being spent by Shropshire people, in Shropshire, to keep our communities safe.

Cllr Chris Mellings, Vice Chair of the Authority said "As an Authority we still believe in the strength of leadership and governance we have given Shropshire Fire Service for 22 years but we need to know what the public think. In order to do this we have set up a survey on our website for our communities to give their views – it's never too late. We have only ever wished to act in the best interests of the people we serve and your views are important to us!"

The survey can be accessed by the following link and the Fire Authority hope enough people use it to enable them to get a clear view and maybe send a strong message to the Home Secretary to listen to local people before they decide to put the change in action.

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