



# Avon FBU

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Brigade Secretary – Gary Spindler  
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Dear Members of Avon Fire Authority,

On behalf of Avon Fire Brigades Union (FBU) I would like to bring to members attention the serious concerns the FBU has with the potential Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) involvement with Avon Fire Authority.

The role of Firefighters is one that is built on trust, not only between ourselves when at incidents, but also between ourselves and the communities that we serve.

We are seen as and pride ourselves as being impartial and largely non-judgmental, allowing us to openly discuss many issues with our communities - with them knowing our primary focus is on safety, whether that be for them, their neighbours or our environment.

We do not as a matter of course receive hostility or resilience on the door step or at incidents, with communities generally giving us information and access freely without any other considerations as to why, this is because we are trusted in our role and respected as Firefighters.

Continual collaboration with different agencies is of course something we can and should all look to build upon, however this must be done appropriately with open eyes as to any unintended consequences or indeed balanced against known possible conflicting interests.

Clearly Firefighters and the Police have completely different roles within society, we must ensure that the public are in no doubt as to who does what, because if there is a continued narrowing of separation between the two services it's certain that the downside will be a perceived removal of some of our impartiality in place of law enforcement - whether that is a fact or not - the perception will be there for the public.

The issue with that blurring of roles will we believe increase the risk not only to our members but also to our communities themselves.

We believe:

- There will be a more guarded response on the doorstep, even with members of the public and our vulnerable groups denying access because of the association with the Police.
- There may well be a reluctance to discuss Fire safety issues either at home or at work because of the perceived possible Police involvement.
- There may well be an increase in anti-social activity towards Firefighters whilst out in the communities both in peace time and also at times of social tensions both locally and nationally.
- It may become more difficult to recruit from certain underrepresented communities if there is a perceived increase Police association with Fire Service - something that we are really trying to improve upon.

This list goes on and is clearly non-exhaustive, however we are struggling to find benefits that would in turn balance these out.

In summary, the FBU therefore urge the Fire Authority to carefully consider and indeed debate the implications of the PCC sitting on the Fire Authority and ensure that a decision is made that will truly be a benefit to communities and staff alike.

Yours Sincerely

**Gary Spindler**

Avon FBU

Brigade Secretary