

Report to	Audit Committee
Date	15 September 2025
Lead Officer	Dawn Docx, Chief Fire Officer
Contact Officer	Dawn Docx
Subject	Welsh Government Consultation regarding the Governance Arrangements for Fire and Rescue Services in Wales



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To bring to Members' attention the publication of a public consultation around future Governance Arrangements for Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) in Wales.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2 It is recommended that Members:
 - i) **Note the contents of the consultation; and**
 - ii) **Agree to attend a workshop to scrutinise the proposals and submit a response drafted on behalf of the Authority, setting out Members' views regarding the proposals.**

BACKGROUND

- 3 The existing governance arrangements for FRS in Wales were established through the three Combination Orders in 1996. These established the current Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRA) and the pooled funding mechanism via a levy from each constituent Local Authorities.
- 4 In 2018 Welsh Government (WG) published a white paper entitled "Reform of Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales" Some Members will recall that after a period of consultation it was decided to progress only the proposals around funding, but these did not come to fruition due to the pandemic in 2020.
- 5 In 2024 WG intervened in South Wales Fire and Rescue Service (SWFRS) and replaced the FRA with Commissioners. In that same year Audit Wales undertook a review into governance arrangements of the FRS in Wales. In response to these two events WG has been considering options for change and have recently published some new proposals around FRS governance in Wales.

INFORMATION

- 6 The 12-week consultation was planned to be carried out over the summer, but with a delayed publication date this period will now extend into the Autumn.
- 7 The Cabinet Secretary for Housing, Local Government and Planning has engaged with the Chairs, Chief Fire Officers (CFOs) and Trade Unions by means of the Social Partnership Forum (SPF) where, as one might expect, there were a variety of opinions about the proposals. The Cabinet Secretary reminded members that the proposals in the paper covered changes that could be introduced now, within this Senedd term, rather than options that would require primary legislation in the next Senedd term.
- 8 The proposals are set out around three themes:
 - a) The Membership of FRAs or Boards.
 - b) Funding
 - c) Inspection of FRSs
- 9 The consultation started on the 29 August 2025, and it was shared with all public bodies in Wales - [Reform of fire and rescue authorities in Wales 2025 | GOV.WALES](#)
- 10 It is proposed that a workshop should be held with Members to determine their views and to formulate their response to the consultation.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	This paper presents proposals which seek to improve governance arrangements around FRSs in Wales.
Budget	The mechanisms for agreeing the budget for FRSs may cause a reduction in funding.
Legal	These proposals can be actioned within the current combination orders and do not require primary legislation.
Staffing	Any budget reductions could have staffing implications.
Equalities/Human Rights/Welsh Language	N/A
Risks	The reduction of members appointed by local authorities could reduce the local scrutiny of FRSs.