

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	18 March 2019
Lead Officer	Chief Fire Officer
Contact Officer	Chief Fire Officer (01745) 535253
Subject	Finance and Governance Arrangements for Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To update Members on the Welsh Government's proposals to change the finance and governance arrangements for fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) in Wales.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 Following the publication of the Welsh Government's White Paper in November, the consultation period came to an end on 5 February 2019. It is understood that, following analysis of the consultation responses, Welsh Government will bring forward its own response in due course. Welsh Government officials have advised that, due to the high number of responses, the analysis may take longer than would usually be expected.

RECOMMENDATION

- 3 That Members note the report and receive a further report in due course once the Welsh Government has published its response to the consultation exercise.

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE EXECUTIVE PANEL/AUDIT COMMITTEE

- 4 This update has not been considered by either the Executive Panel or Audit Committee.

BACKGROUND/INFORMATION

- 5 Members will recall a number of previous reports which advised them of the Welsh Government's signalled intention to make changes to the financial and governance arrangements of Welsh FRAs.

- 6 A report to the Authority's meeting of 17 December 2018 advised Members of the publication of the Welsh Government's White Paper "Reform of Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales" on 13 November 2018. In addition, Members accepted a recommendation to convene a workshop in January 2019 to give consideration to the Authority's response to the White Paper.
- 7 On 15 January 2019, 14 Members attended the Workshop. Subsequently, a formal response to the White Paper was drafted, approved by the Chair of the Authority and submitted by the 5 February 2019 deadline. A copy of the Authority's response is attached at Appendix 1.
- 8 On 20 February 2019 the Chair of the Authority, together with the Chief Fire Officer, attended a meeting with Hannah Blythyn, Welsh Government's Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government. Also present were the Chairs and Chief Fire Officers from the other two Welsh FRAs, a representative from the Welsh Local Government Association and Welsh Government officials. Attendees were advised that the White Paper consultation had generated a significant number of responses (over 60) and that, as a result, analysis may take longer than is usually the case. Following the analysis, there will then be a published response by Welsh Government. There then followed a discussion around early indications from the consultation.
- 9 The Chair of the Authority and the Chief Fire Officer will give a further, verbal, update on that discussion at today's meeting.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	None at this time.
Budget	Change to the Authority's finance and governance arrangements has the potential to affect the Authority's budget position in the future. Any legal advice that may be sought is not budgeted for at this time.
Legal	There are potential legal issues around amendments to, or repeal of, The North Wales Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1995. Legal advice may need to be sought at a future date.
Staffing	None at this time.
Equalities/Human Rights/Welsh Language	None at this time.
Risks	There is the potential for any change to the Authority's finance and governance arrangements to affect its ability to deliver appropriate services to the North Wales community, particularly if the budget position is negatively affected.