

Report to	Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	18 June 2018
Lead Officer	Chief Fire Officer
Contact Officer	Chief Fire Officer (01745) 535253
Subject	Governance and finance arrangements for FRAs in Wales



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To update Members on the latest position in respect of proposed changes to the finance and governance arrangements of fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) in Wales.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 This report details the latest developments following the Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services' (the Cabinet Secretary) correspondence with FRAs

RECOMMENDATION

- 3 That Members note the updated information.

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE EXECUTIVE PANEL/AUDIT COMMITTEE

- 4 There are no observations from the Executive Panel which received a report on this matter at its meeting on 14 May 2018.
- 5 This matter has not been considered by the Audit Committee.

BACKGROUND/INFORMATION

- 6 Since the March 2018 meeting of the Authority, there has been a number of developments with regard to the Cabinet Secretary's plans to change the finance and governance arrangements of FRAs in Wales.
- 7 Members will recall that the Cabinet Secretary set out his key issues in a letter dated 21 February 2018. A collective response to this letter was sent on behalf of all three FRAs on 13 April 2018. Copies of both are attached as Appendix 1 and 2.
- 8 Following this exchange of correspondence, the three Chairs met with the Cabinet Secretary on 30 April 2018 for further discussions.

- 9 One tangible outcome of this meeting was an offer by the Cabinet Secretary to ask two independent academics, with particular specialisms in governance issues, to meet with representatives of the FRAs to explore the relevant issues in greater depth. This would then be fed back to Welsh Government to assist in refining proposals for change.
- 10 Accordingly, representatives of the Authority met with Professor Catherine Farrell of the University of South Wales and Professor Rachel Ashworth of Cardiff University on 4 June 2018. The Authority was represented by the Chair, Deputy Chair, Chief Fire Officer, Treasurer and Deputy Clerk.
- 11 The Authority representatives felt that the meeting was constructive and balanced. Professor Farrell and Professor Ashworth will now meet with the other FRAs in due course following which they are required to produce advice for the Cabinet Secretary.
- 12 Members will be kept informed of future developments.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	None at this time.
Budget	Change to the Authority's financial 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 governance and financial arrangements to affect its ability to deliver appropriate services to the North Wales community, particularly if the budget position is negatively affected.