

Report To: County Council

Date of Meeting: 29th January 2019

Lead Member / Officer: Hugh Evans, Leader

Report Author: Gary Williams, Head of legal, HR and Democratic Services

Title: **Welsh Government White Paper – Reform of Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales**

1. What is the report about?

The report is about the Welsh Government White Paper – Reform of Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales

2. What is the reason for making this report?

To seek Members' views on the White Paper – Reform of Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales published by Welsh Government in order that a Council response be drafted to the consultation regarding proposals for the reform of Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales

3. What are the Recommendations?

That Council considers and comments upon the contents of the White Paper – Reform of Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales, and authorises the Leader to approve in consultation with Group Leaders a response on behalf of the Council.

4. Report details

The Welsh Government has published a White Paper titled Reform of Fire and Rescue Services in Wales (the White Paper) with a consultation deadline of 5th February 2019. Whilst recognising that the three fire and rescue authorities in Wales perform highly in their operations, the White Paper proposes changes to the governance and membership of fire and rescue authorities, and to their relationship with their constituent local authorities in budget-setting. A copy of the White Paper is attached as Appendix 1.

The White Paper does not propose to change the number of fire and rescue authorities, nor does it propose any changes to their boundaries.

The Government is keen to point out that all involved in the service should be proud of what they have achieved and that the case for change does not imply any shortcomings on the part of the staff, managers or members of FRAs.

The White Paper suggests that any reform should create clear and effective leadership of, and accountability for, the development and delivery of fire and rescue services.

The White Paper makes proposals to change the number and type of members that are appointed to fire and rescue authorities, changes to the way that they are funded and the way in which they are required to manage performance.

There are five chapters contained within the White Paper:

Chapter 1 – The case for change

Chapter 2 – Designing a new system

Chapter 3 – Proposals for change (1): Governance and membership

Chapter 4 – Proposals for change (2): Funding

Chapter 5 – Proposals for change (3): Performance Management

Of most relevance to the Council would be chapters 1-4.

Members will receive a short presentation at the meeting about the issues upon which the Council's views are sought.

It is suggested that from these views a consultation response will be drafted to be approved by the Leader in consultation with Group Leaders.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

The consultation exercise does not itself contribute to Corporate Priorities.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

The response to the consultation paper will not of itself have any direct costs.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

A Well-Being Impact Assessment is not required for this report.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

This is a consultation exercise being conducted by Welsh Government. There has been no direct consultation with Scrutiny.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

The consultation refers to possible future sources of funding for fire and rescue authorities (FRAs). In the short term, the Welsh government's preference highlighted in the paper is to modify the current funding system to require FRAs to agree the level of funding each year with their constituent local authorities, with Welsh ministers having the power to arbitrate if agreement cannot be reached. Other options covered include direct grant funding from Welsh Government and the introduction of a precept. The consultation sets out some of the potential implications of the various proposals, including potential implications to council funding. These should be considered when making a formal response.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

There are no particular risks associated with this report.

11. Power to make the Decision

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