



My Ref: RRE/MT

13 April 2018

Alun Davies AM  
Cabinet Secretary for Local Government & Public Services  
Welsh Government  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

Dear Cabinet Secretary

Thank you for your letter of 21 February 2018. We have spent some considerable time giving due consideration to its contents and have responded jointly as Chairs of the three Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs).

We would state, at the outset, that we found the meeting on 15 February 2018 to be productive and conducted in the kind of atmosphere that we believe best promotes co-operation and mutual understanding, a position we would wish to maintain. It is clear to us that your analysis of the issues affecting FRAs, as outlined in the first four paragraphs of your letter, is one on which we are unlikely ever to agree. We do not support your view that the current accountability levels are inadequate although it goes without saying that any proposals which appear to us to strengthen accountability will always have our support.

Across the UK and indeed internationally there are many different and varying forms of governance structures and funding arrangements established for the Fire and Rescue Services, and it would at this early stage be extremely useful to know what your officials have considered and what you have discounted as not being appropriate for Wales. We would be interested to understand how you see direct accountability to the Welsh Government/Assembly working as there seem to us to be significant issues of local accountability that would need to be addressed. Although not specifically mentioned in your letter we have assumed that direct accountability to the Welsh Government would de facto mean direct

funding from Cardiff, a situation that we suggest no-one, including Welsh Government, would want. Likewise, we would be interested to understand how you see “direct accountability to the electorate” working in Wales.

We are very clear concerning any governance arrangements involving the Police and Crime Commissioners. We think that the introduction of this model in England is a mistake and would vigorously oppose any proposal to replicate this in Wales. We agree that each FRA must be driven by local needs and priorities whilst maintaining UK-wide professional and operational standards, a position that exists at present. The three Welsh FRAS have been instrumental in driving many of the diversification issues you mention across Wales. We feel very strongly that, if we are to fully realise our emerging role in respect of supporting the NHS, then it may not be solely the FRAs who must undergo reform. If Welsh Government is serious about innovation to meet the severe pressures on the NHS then we will need full commitment across all the relevant areas of the NHS, including the political leaders. We see little evidence of this at the moment and are pleased to note that you appear to recognise this too, with particular regard to funding, and support your suggestion that you discuss the matter with your colleagues.

Regarding funding we maintain that the current arrangements have not resulted in any misuse and that FRAs have made appropriate contributions to the austerity agenda. As a general principle, we suggest that a funding model can only be realistically discussed once it is clear what the governance arrangements are. We will not support any arrangements that we perceive to be designed to take funding out of FRAs and/or to worsen their future ability to generate the required levels of resource to support the Services in delivering prevention, protection, education and operational services, whilst also maintaining a focus on other statutory duties like keeping our employees safe.

We note your comments on the final key question of FRA membership and whilst we do not agree with the analysis we do note the suggestion that any additional members of FRAs should have a non-executive role, but that must be dealt with appropriately.

We note the recent publication of the Green Paper consultation document “Strengthening Local Government: Delivering for People” and would be interested to know how, in your view, the proposals in this document impact on the issues of FRA reform raised in your letter.

Whilst we as Chairs may not share your concerns, we believe it is far more productive to work in collaboration with you and your officials to ensure any changes in governance model ensures an improved and strengthened governance structure, and not just change for change sake.

The above represents our initial thoughts in response to your correspondence and we look forward to discussing this with you at our meeting on 30 April 2018.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Rowland Rees-Evans  
Chair of Mid and West Wales Fire & Rescue Authority



Councillor Meirick Lloyd Davies  
Chair of North Wales Fire & Rescue Authority



Councillor D Tudor Davies  
Chair of South Wales Fire & Rescue Authority

*Please can you direct your reply to the following address  
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