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*Dyddiad/Dote:* 3 January 2020



Dear Sir/ Madam

Please see below the Mid and West Wales Fire & Rescue Service's response to the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill:-

### Background

Matters pertaining to FRA governance and funding have been discussed and debated between Welsh Government and strategic leaders from Welsh FRA's and FRS's over the past few years. These issues formed the basis for the WG's 2018 White Paper 'Reform of Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales' and were either dismissed out of hand or attracted little support from responders. When considered against the backdrop of the previous White Paper it would appear that the provisions outlined in the draft Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill lack both a reliable evidence base and public support.

### Section 162

Section 162 proposes changes to the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 in order to remove the requirement for a public enquiry in certain circumstances. The 2018 White Paper made specific reference of the need to ensure that democratic accountability and transparency sit at the heart of public sector governance in Wales. The amendments proposed within the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill would negate the need for a public enquiry except where the Combination Order were to be revoked or changes to FRA boundaries. It is difficult to see how this will lead to clearer or more accountable leadership or more sustainable funding for FRA's as claimed within the accompanying Explanatory Memorandum. It appears that these statements are neither accurate nor evidence-based and thus do little to further the debate that the proposed changes will result in improvements to FRA governance or funding arrangements and thus benefit the communities they serve.

Prif Swyddog Tan  
Chief Fire Officer  
Chris Davies ofSM MBA

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We welcome correspondance in Welsh  
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We welcome calls in Welsh and English.

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## Section 163

The proposal to move away from the current performance management arrangements under the 2009 Measure are broadly supported although there is little detail contained within the Bill. The current arrangements are unsuited to a FRA context, a view that was reinforced by responders to the 2018 White Paper. Thus, there is support for a new performance management system which is grounded in the National Framework for FRS's. The new performance management system should however reflect and acknowledge the differences in risk within communities and the regional approaches to holistic prevention strategies.

## Summary

The 2018 White Paper also made reference to the high performing nature of the FRA's in Wales and it is clear that all Welsh FRA's have played their part in reducing costs over the past decade. Similarly, the FRA's have fully embraced public sector change which can be evidenced through the adoption of a statutory duty for flood and water rescue incidents, National Resilience, Fire Medical Response, Public Service Boards and a comprehensive prevention and education programme. From a budgetary perspective funding for FRA's accounts for c.1% of public sector spending in Wales and thus there are limited opportunities to realise genuine efficiencies. There is significant scope however to impact negatively on a vital and trusted public service which has led the way on community safety and prevention initiatives.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Davies', written in a cursive style.

Chris Davies QFSM MBA  
Chief Fire Officer