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Welsh Government

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Welsh Government
Consultation – summary of responses

Reform of Governance and Funding Arrangements for Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales 2025

March 2026

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg hefyd / This document is also available in Welsh
Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg / We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh

Overview

This document is a summary of stakeholders views on the consultation on the reform of governance, funding, performance management, and inspection arrangements for Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) in Wales in 2025.

Action Required

This document is for information only.

Further information and related documents

Large print, Braille and alternative language versions of this document are available on request.

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Additional copies

This summary of response and copies of all the consultation documentation are published in electronic form only and can be accessed on the Welsh Government's website.

Link to the consultation documentation: [Reform of fire and rescue authorities in Wales 2025 | GOV.WALES](#)

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Consultation Process

1. In 2025 the Welsh Government consulted on proposals to change the governance and funding arrangements of Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs). The consultation was prompted by a series of inspections and independent cultural reviews which highlighted significant shortcomings in leadership, governance, operational performance and accountability across Wales's three Fire and Rescue Services. The consultation sought feedback from stakeholders across Wales to inform the development of a more effective, accountable and forward-looking governance model.
2. An 8-week consultation began on 29 August and was open for responses until 24 October 2025. The consultation focussed on what could be delivered without primary legislation in this Senedd term. Options were aimed at improving FRA leadership and decision-making, introducing transparency in budget setting, and a more robust approach to inspection. The consultation contained 16 questions, with options to respond to those questions by completion of an online form or by e-mail. The consultation document was available on the Welsh Government website.
3. The Welsh Government received 42 responses to the consultation. Those 42 responses came from the following:
 - 8 from local authorities or local authority bodies
 - 2 from Fire and Rescue Authorities
 - 1 from the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service Commissioners,
 - 2 from Fire and Rescue Services
 - 2 from trade unions and other organisations representing firefighters,
 - 2 from other public bodies
 - 3 from other organisations or committees
 - 22 from individuals
4. A full list of respondents is available at Annex 1.
5. The Welsh Government welcomes the responses to the consultation and would like to thank those who responded.
6. The Welsh Government published its [Integrated Impact Assessment summary](#) alongside the consultation document. The overall policy position set out in the consultation document remains the same, and the form of change to be implemented by Order remains consistent with the options for change that were included in the document itself. Therefore, no changes have been made to the Integrated Impact Assessment as originally published. During the consultation process, a member of the public requested sight of the full Integrated Impact Assessment and this was provided on 21 October 2025.
7. The consultation document incorrectly stated that a proposal regarding the role of Fire and Rescue Authority Chairs and Vice Chairs had originated from the Senedd's Equality and Social Justice Committee. The Welsh Government has apologised to the Committee for this error.

Summary of consultation responses

8. The Welsh Government has considered the responses to the consultation. This document provides a summary of the responses received to each of the specific questions and the Welsh Government's response to them. The Welsh Government's response is provided as a collective position on a number of grouped questions on which consultees views were sought around a particular theme i.e. reform objectives, membership, budget setting, national framework, inspection, Welsh language and other issues.

- Reform Objectives

Q1. Do you agree the objectives for reform are appropriate and important?

9. 29 respondents agreed that the objectives for reform set out in the consultation were appropriate and important. 10 respondents agreed with the objectives but expressed some reservations or conditions. One respondent explicitly disagreed, suggesting that aspirations for value for money, transparency, and responsiveness are already met. Two respondents indicated uncertainty or no opinion.

10. Three respondents noted that the options focussed primarily on what could be delivered through secondary legislation in the current Senedd term, and that the opportunity for further reform through primary legislation was being missed. Two respondents indicated that they felt that FRAs should be funded via a precepting model. Other issues raised included:

- that current arrangements were outdated and had not been adequately addressed previously. The need for urgent reform to ensure the FRS was safe, inclusive, and fit for purpose was emphasised.
- that reforms should respect operational independence and the unique nature of emergency services.
- that objectives should include the need for sustainable investment, stronger democratic oversight, and engagement with the workforce and trade unions.
- concern about external influence potentially affecting the balance of decision-making.
- that value for money should not become a lever to reduce front line services.
- concern about disruption during transition and the impact on frontline services.

Q2. Are there other objectives that the reform programme should pursue?

11. 28 respondents indicated that there were other objectives that should be included in the reform programme. These included strengthening local democratic accountability, safeguarding fair representation, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and enhancing collaboration with other emergency services and public bodies.

12. Eight respondents felt the objectives were already wide-ranging and cautioned against complicating the programme further, highlighting concerns about clarity for stakeholders and taxpayers. Six respondents did not express a particular view on this question.
13. Eight respondents raised the importance of meaningful partnership working to improve efficiency and effectiveness, especially in rural areas and on-call sustainability, and recognising the potential for a broader role for the service.
14. Five respondents suggested that there should be one fire and rescue service in Wales. Reasons included economies of scale, and a standardised approach to governance, policy and service delivery.
15. Three respondents felt that there should be strengthened focus on embedding equality, diversity and inclusion, and culture transformation.
16. Three respondents suggested local democratic oversight should be strengthened and community-level representation protected.
17. Other issues raised included:
- operational independence for Chief Fire Officers and/or a clearer distinction between professional and political decision-making akin to other public bodies.
 - advocacy for national standards against which FRSs can be judged, including minimum crewing standards for Wales.
 - bilingual service commitments and recognition of Welsh language requirements for some members.
 - support for multi-year funding and assurance that funding and inspection arrangements should not undermine the ability of FRAs to meet local needs.

Welsh Government response:

18. We acknowledge that current arrangements are outdated and need urgent reform and that is why our initial focus has been to introduce change swiftly through secondary legislation. We note calls from some respondents for more radical change such as one FRS, CFO operational independence and FRA precepting powers. However, such changes would likely require primary legislation, which could not be delivered in this Senedd term. It will be a matter for the next Senedd to consider, and we expect an evaluation of the impact of the changes made as a result of this consultation to feed into that process.

19. The consultation document referred to complementary work underway to develop a comprehensive training and development programme for FRA members. We want to reassure respondents that this work includes clarifying the roles and responsibilities of FRA members and that job roles will specifically include a focus on embedding good organisational culture, equality diversity and inclusion (including the

FRA's statutory duties in this regard), and workforce engagement. This work will also clarify the different roles and responsibilities of FRA members and officers.

20. We note comments made about funding arrangements, value for money and inspection not undermining public safety and the FRA's ability to manage risk in communities and we agree. The consultation clearly set out that funding mechanisms should be fair, transparent and yield value for money but also recognise the particular resource needs of an emergency service and our plans to strengthen the current FRA budget setting process reflect that position. This is covered further in our response to question 10. Further details on member diversity is covered in our response to questions 3-9 and comments relating to the Welsh language are covered in our response to questions 14-15.

21. We note the comments raised regarding the importance of partnership working to improve efficiency and effectiveness, and in respect of rural areas and on-call sustainability. The Welsh Government has established a Retained Duty System /On-Call Firefighter Working Group under its Social Partnership Forum for Fire and Rescue Services to consider these key issues and that Group is due to report later in 2026. However, these are service delivery matters which should not be included in formal and statutory changes to the governance arrangements in the sector.

22. We appreciate the need to strengthen FRA accountability to their constituent local authorities. We believe that our decision to require constituent local authority members to be appointed from each constituent local authorities executive or Cabinet will support that strengthened relationship (see our response to questions 3-9).

- **Fire and Rescue Authority Membership**

23. FRAs currently have between 24 and 28 members, nominated by their constituent authorities. The options in the consultation included reducing the number of members to one per local authority, appointing from local authority cabinets, appointing independent members with the suggestion that there be two thirds local authority appointments and one third appointed by the Welsh Ministers. We also asked who should appoint independent members, what their role should be, and whether there should be independent chairs. A summary of feedback received on membership questions (questions 3 – 9) is set out at paragraphs 24 to 47 below with the Welsh Government's response to all feedback on membership set out at paragraphs 48 to 57.

Q3. Do you think that membership of FRAs should be reduced to provide for a more streamlined, efficient and effective decision-making process?

24. 20 respondents agreed that FRA membership should be reduced with a further five agreeing with some qualification. Comments supporting the proposal included that the quality of members was a more important factor than quantity, a smaller membership would provide more focussed, accountable and effective

decision making, and that it would provide greater agility and focus and improve communications with local authorities. These included six local authorities, one FRA and one FRS, and the SW Commissioners. Qualifying comments included that local authority membership should still comprise the majority of FRA membership to ensure local connection remained, there needed to be sufficient members for effective scrutiny, political balance and proportional representation, and the need to ensure member diversity.

25. Eight respondents did not agree that membership should be reduced. Issues raised were not fully consistent. They included:

- that the current system provided fair local authority representation.
- that reducing members risked limiting diversity.
- that there was no evidence of poor performance.
- Acknowledgement that there were challenges with the current system.
- that an alternative approach would be to amend the FRAs constitutions instead to further clarify the role and remit of members.
- that reform should prioritise training, awareness and stakeholder engagement.
- Concern with appointing local authority Cabinet members including concern about capacity issues.
- That a smaller group of members would be more easily influenced.

26. Nine respondents either did not offer a view, or their response did not reflect a preferred approach.

27. Other comments made included:

- More radical change is favoured in the longer term.
- Remuneration should reflect increased responsibility if numbers are reduced.
- The importance of member skills, knowledge, and training (including around equality duties).
- There were benefits to a smaller membership including removing delays in decision making.
- Both Scotland and Northern Ireland have smaller boards with directly appointed members.
- Members sometimes made politically motivated decisions rather than decisions in the best interest of the service – skills rather than party affiliation was important.

Q4. Do you think that local authorities should nominate one FRA member each?

28. 16 respondents supported, or supported with some qualification, nominating one member per local authority. Three of those responses indicated that members should come from local authority Cabinets (although their capacity and remuneration needed to be considered) and two respondents indicated that members should be mandated to act in the best interest of the whole FRA area.

29. 19 respondents did not think that local authorities should nominate one member each. Nine respondents felt that membership should reflect local authority population size and budget contribution, seven respondents raised concerns about political balance, four respondents raised concerns about member capacity and pressure, two of whom raised concerns about cabinet member representation for those reasons. Three respondents raised concerns about the impact on member diversity. Three respondents were concerned that FRAs would be too small to be effective. Two alternative models were offered; one referencing the membership of the North Wales Police and Crime Panel, and one suggesting that in South Wales FRA the largest two local authorities should have two members or there should be weighted voting.

30. Six respondents had no view or did not identify a particular preference.

Q5. Do you think that FRAs should also have independently appointed members?

31. 30 respondents supported the appointment of independent members, 10 of whom identified some qualification. Seven respondents did not support the appointment of independent members, and five respondents did not provide a comment or did not indicate a preferred approach.

32. Supporting views included:

- The opportunity to add diversity to overall FRA membership.
- The potential for independent members to bring independent skills, knowledge and experience, thereby enhancing scrutiny and challenge.
- Independent members would broaden perspectives beyond the political and improve impartiality.
- The value of bringing in expertise from finance, governance, audit, risk, transformation, and community engagement.
- That similar models elsewhere in the public sector improve corporate governance.
- That they would lessen the burden on local authority members.

33. Safeguards proposed included the need for clear, fair and open recruitment processes, clearly defined roles and full training, and limiting the proportion of independent members. Comments referred to the need to compliment and strengthened democratic accountability and that members responsible for decision making should be accountable to council taxpayers.

34. Concerns focussed on the perceived lack of democratic accountability and challenges experienced in other public bodies.

Q6. Do you think that independent members of FRAs should be appointed by Welsh Ministers?

35. 11 respondents thought that independent members should be appointed by Welsh Ministers, 19 did not (nine of whom were local authorities or FRAs) and six respondents did not have a view or did not clearly reflect a preference. Six respondents proposed an alternative hybrid approach.

36. Support for Welsh Minister appointments included that they add credibility, can be used to address under-representation, and introduce disrupters to the established order.

37. Concerns raised included the risk of politicising the process and weakening local governance. Of the 19 respondents that disagreed, nine thought the constituent local authorities, FRAs themselves, or a combination of both, should undertake the appointment process. Three of these respondents suggested that Welsh Government should still be involved. An oversight or consultative capacity was suggested.

38. Six respondents suggested that the Welsh Government make the appointments but with stakeholders fully involved in the recruitment and selection process. Suggested stakeholders included the WLGA, local authorities, FRAs and Unions.

Q7. Do you agree that independent members should make up one third of an FRAs overall membership?

39. 18 respondents agreed that independent members should make up one third of FRA membership (including five local authorities and one FRA and the SW Commissioners). A further four respondents agreed with some qualification. Issues raised were:

- There should be a minimum of half but a third was a good compromise at this time.
- There should be up to one third but with an element of local choice aligned to wider approaches to co-option.
- Decision making should reflect proportional representation or weighted voting.
- Independent members should not have any political affiliation.

40. 13 respondents did not support a one third proportion. Three respondents felt this was too many, whilst one respondent did not think it was high enough. Alternative suggestions include capping independent members with full voting rights at 25% or setting the proportion at 20%.

41. Seven respondents had no views or did not express a preferred position.

Q8. Do you think that independent members should be appointed to act as full members of the FRA?

42. 27 respondents agreed that independent members should be appointed as full members of the FRA (including four local authorities, two FRAs and the South Wales Commissioners). 10 respondents did not agree (four of these were local authorities) and five respondents did not provide an answer, or their response did not reflect a favoured position.

43. Supporting comments included that this approach would ensure diverse perspectives were genuinely considered. Responses also reflected that full membership was essential for the legitimacy and impact of independent members.

44. Comments from those that disagreed included concerns that giving independent members voting powers could impact on local accountability.

Q9. Do you believe that FRAs should have independent Chairs, and if so who should appoint them?

45. 14 respondents believed that FRAs should have independent chairs, of those seven believed they should be appointed by Welsh Ministers.

46. 20 respondents did not believe that FRAs should have independent Chairs. 11 of these respondents clarified that they felt Chairs should be appointed by FRAs from within their own membership. There were mixed views on whether independent members should be included, five respondents felt that the appointment of chairs and vice chairs should come from local authority elected members only, and four respondents indicated that all members should be eligible.

47. Eight respondents did not have a view or did not reflect a preference.

Welsh Government response:

48. The Welsh Government has considered all of the comments made by respondents in respect of the membership questions raised in the consultation. Taking these comments into consideration the Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government made a written statement to the Senedd Cymru on 17 December (<https://www.gov.wales/written-statement-governance-fire-and-rescue-services>) setting out the Welsh Government's intention to implement the following changes to FRA membership:

- Reduction in the number of FRA members to one per constituent local authority, from each constituent local authorities executive or Cabinet with the aim of streamlining and strengthening strategic decision making and accountability.
- Appointment of additional members to make up a third of overall FRA membership, bringing specialist expertise and independent insight and

challenge. Independent members will be appointed by Welsh Ministers but with the full involvement of constituent local authorities and FRAs.

- Chairs and Vice-chairs to be elected from within the overall FRA membership (both constituent local authority and independent members) by the FRAs, consulting with the Welsh Ministers, and engaging with constituent local authorities and with the workforce in the spirit of Social Partnership.

49. Over half of respondents supported reducing the number of FRA members supporting the aim of more effective and efficient decision making. We note that the option of reducing local authority membership to one per constituent local authority was less well supported with concerns being raised regarding the loss of political balance, and proportional representation based on local authority population and resultant financial contribution. However, FRAs are executive bodies, not deliberative or representative ones. Councillor members must act in the best interest of the FRA as a whole and not their local authority area. Whilst that is the case, we appreciate the need to strengthen the relationship and accountability between FRAs and their constituent local authorities. The Welsh Government's decision to appoint constituent local authority members from each council's executive supports that strengthened relationship.

50. We note concerns raised regarding the capacity of local authority cabinet members to undertake the role of being the FRA nominated member for their constituent local authority. The Welsh Government acknowledged that issue in the consultation document itself. The appointment of independent members to make up a third of membership will therefore provide additional support and resource as well as bringing fresh perspectives, knowledge and skills. The Welsh Government will also monitor the impact of FRA membership on constituent local authority cabinet members. The outcome of that monitoring will be an important consideration in any future review of more radical governance reform. The need for more radical reform raised by a number of respondents (such as fully independent appointed boards, one FRS for Wales, or Chief Fire Officers being given sole corporate status) have not been ruled out but they are a matter for the next Senedd term.

51. We acknowledge issues raised regarding the impact of a reduction of constituent local authority members on equality and diversity and will ask the constituent local authorities to consider the diversity of their nominated members collectively when they make decisions about membership. We would also though expect constituent local authorities to want to nominate cabinet members whose skills and/or portfolios best compliment the work of FRAs and so we fully appreciate that diverse representation may be extremely difficult to achieve. The Welsh Government will therefore also build equality, diversity and inclusion considerations into the recruitment process for independent members as proposed by a number of respondents.

52. We note the comments that have been made regarding member remuneration and will raise these in discussions with the Democratic Boundary Commission Cymru (DBCC). The DBCC is responsible for setting the remuneration rates for local authority councillors, including FRA members. We will share the work that we are undertaking with the WLGA on member job descriptions and associated knowledge and skills requirements with the DBCC to support their deliberations.

53. Although the consultation initially used the term 'independent members', we have opted to replace this terminology with 'additional members'. This change aims to prevent any confusion with councillors elected as independents and to emphasise that these roles are appointed based on merit and specialist expertise, with involvement from both local authorities and the Welsh Ministers. In legislation additional members are referred to as Welsh Minister appointed members.

54. We welcome support for the appointment of additional members, noting that there were mixed views on whether they should make up a third of overall membership, some respondents suggesting there should be less and others suggesting there should be more. More than half of respondents did however support this option and the Cabinet Secretary's announcement on 17 December confirmed the Welsh Government intention to implement this approach. Additional members will be appointed to act as full members of the FRA as supported by the majority of respondents.

55. We note that the majority of respondents did not support additional members being appointed by Welsh Ministers with suggestions that these appointments should be made by FRAs or local authorities. We agree that local input is an important factor in the appointment and we have therefore considered the alternative proposals from some respondents who suggested a hybrid model instead. The Welsh Ministers will therefore appoint independent members through a full, fair and open public appointments process but with the full involvement of FRAs, local authorities and Unions in the process. We will develop the recruitment process in collaboration with key stakeholders, and involve FRAs, local authorities and Unions in the selection process too. As set out in paragraph 51 above we will take equality, diversity and inclusion into consideration as part of the process.

56. We recognise that the majority of respondents also did not support the appointment of Chairs and Vice-chairs by Welsh Ministers and accept that there is a legitimate case for these to be appointed from within the overall membership of each FRA and by the FRA. We do however believe that these roles should not be restricted to constituent local authority members. We have already set out that independent members will be appointed as full members of the FRA through a rigorous recruitment process, and with the required skills and knowledge, and there is a clear and justified case for their inclusion in the Chair and Vice chair nomination process. The Cabinet Secretary has therefore announced that Chair and Vice Chairs are to be appointed from within the overall FRA membership (both constituent local authority and independent members) by the FRAs, consulting with the Welsh Ministers, and engaging with constituent local authorities and with the workforce as part of the process.

57. Member knowledge and skills, training and support was a key feature in the responses received. As set out in the consultation document itself, the Welsh Government has commissioned the WLGA to undertake work to clearly set out the roles and responsibilities of members, the knowledge and skills required to undertake the role effectively, and to develop a comprehensive training and support package for members based on these. The Welsh Government continues to work with the WLGA to ensure that this work encompasses the plans for change that the

Cabinet Secretary has announced. We have already indicated the importance of this work forming the basis of both the local authority nomination process, and the additional appointment process.

- **FRA Budget Setting**

58. The consultation document referred to three options to strengthen FRA budget setting: direct funding from the Welsh Government, a council tax precept (which would likely only be delivered through primary legislation), or strengthening the current arrangement so that FRAs must consult their constituent local authorities with a view to reaching agreement on their budget for the coming year, but noted that the only viable short-term option was to strengthen current local budget setting arrangements.

Q10. Do you agree that FRAs should be required to formally consult with a view to reaching agreement with local authorities on the level of FRA funding each year?

59. 22 respondents agreed or agreed with some qualification. That included 13 individual respondents, four local authorities/local authority representative bodies. Issues raised included the need for clarity regarding dispute resolution, that any system still needed to ensure the service was sufficiently funded to deliver, and the need for budget setting deadlines to be met. Other issues included the need for a funding formula for agreeing contributions and multi-year funding frameworks.

60. Nine respondents disagreed and 10 respondents neither agreed or disagreed. Four respondents indicated that consultation already takes place. Other issues raised included concerns about a focus on value for money and potential to underfund the service, and reassurance was sought that local authorities would not have a budget veto power.

61. The issue most raised was the need for a precepting model to be explored in the longer term. 10 respondents raised this issue overall, including six local authorities and the WLGA.

Welsh Government response:

62. The Welsh Government has considered respondents' views and remains convinced that change in this area is necessary. The current arrangements are unbalanced and lacking in accountability. They create at least the potential for fire and rescue services to be given undue funding priority over other equally vital local authority services. Therefore, we intend to amend FRA Combination Orders to introduce a statutory requirement for FRAs to consult constituent local authorities before setting their budget, with a view to reaching agreement. This requirement will include expectations that FRAs provide a statement to the constituent authorities on

how its net expenses estimate will best promote the economic, efficient and effective discharge of its functions.

63. We note the concerns raised by respondents regarding deadlines for setting a budget and dispute resolution where no agreement is reached. The duty to consult “with a view to reaching agreement” will not create an absolute duty to agree; rather it will require FRAs and constituent local authorities to engage meaningfully and constructively with the intention of seeking agreement. The legislation will not prescribe pre-conditions (such as the publication of the draft Welsh Government budget) before consultation can commence. This will allow FRAs to plan their processes and ensure they meet their statutory deadline to set a budget by 15 February each year.

64. The Welsh Government also notes the widespread interest in exploring a precepting model over the longer term and, subject to the views of the incoming Government, will consider this further as part of wider work on FRA governance and funding arrangements.

- The Fire and Rescue National Framework

65. The consultation document noted that the Welsh Ministers now had powers to introduce performance reporting requirements for FRAs that could be specifically linked to the Welsh Ministers priorities for Fire and Rescue Authorities set out in the Fire and Rescue National Framework. It indicated that a revised Fire and Rescue National Framework was being developed and would be consulted on shortly, and that new performance arrangements would be developed following its introduction with detailed proposal being consulted on in due course. The proposals for introducing a revised Framework and supporting performance management arrangements were referred to in the consultation to provide a clearer picture of how all the various elements of reform will work together. Nevertheless, early views were welcomed from consultees on these performance management arrangements.

Q11. Do you have any views on how and to whom reporting against the National Framework should take place?

66. 31 respondents provided views. Emerging themes included:

- the current National Framework was out of date and required updating.
- the importance of transparency, public accessibility, and local accountability,
- support for regular reporting (annual),
- support for regular independent audit and inspection,
- Mixed views on who FRAs should report performance to. Reporting to the FRA, to local authorities and to the Welsh Government, or a combination of these were all suggested.
- the need for union consultation on performance and for reports to express minority views.

Welsh Government response:

67. We are grateful for all of the feedback received from respondents. A separate consultation on the content of a revised National Framework took place from 22 October to 17 December 2025. Responses to that consultation have been analysed and the revised Framework will be published in March; the Welsh Government's response to that consultation is available here: [Draft National Framework for Fire and Rescue Services | GOV.WALES](#). This consultation sought views to feed into performance arrangements relating to the delivery of the priorities set out in that Framework that we said would be developed in detail and consulted on in due course. The views of respondents will be considered at that formative stage prior to consultation on full performance management proposals.

- FRA Inspection

68. Responsibility for the inspection of FRAs lies with the appointed Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor and Inspector as part of their Inspector role, who undertakes the role alone without any routine support. The consultation document set out what the Welsh Government believes an enhanced inspection function should include; a published medium term inspection plan and standard inspection material, a programme covering all of an FRAs duties and functions (encompassing people and culture, equality and diversity duties, governance, strategic direction and community risk management, efficiency and effectiveness value for money and operation delivery), published findings that can be understood by the public and other stakeholders and that also provide for comparison across Wales and potentially elsewhere, and which form an integral element of FRA performance management and performance reporting mechanisms.

Q12. Do you agree with the principles and requirements for an inspection programme for Wales as set out in the consultation document?

69. 31 respondents agreed, or agreed with some qualification, the principles and requirements for an inspection programme set out in the consultation. Only three respondents disagreed with the principles, and eight respondents did not provide a clear opinion.

70. Some of the issues raised by respondents were:

- the need for Unions/staff consultation as part of the inspection process,
- the need for inspection, including inspection outcomes to be adequately funded,
- the need for inspections to focus on community outcomes not just process,
- the importance of including leadership, governance, culture, and equality and human rights law and duties,
- the absence of national standards,

- the importance of operational autonomy being maintained, with FRAs able to implement recommendations taking into account local risk and circumstances, capacity and funding implications,
- the potential for learning from other inspection processes.

Q13. Do you agree that there is a need for a different approach to be taken to FRS inspection in Wales. If so, what aspects of the options in this paper should be progressed?

71. 28 respondents agreed that there needed to be a different approach, four did not agree, and 10 did not provide a clear position. The key issues and proposals provided were mixed and there was only limited consistency of views:

- Five respondents suggested a model similar to His Majesty's inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services,
- Six respondents referred to the need for the process to be adequately funded.

72. Other issues raised included not supporting a single inspector model, the separation of inspection and advisory functions of the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser and Inspector role, a distinct Welsh model grounded in Social Partnership, a preference for a risk based inspection programme focussed on outcomes, the need for a clear distinction between audit and inspection, clarity on how proposals relate to the Well-being of Future Generations duties and the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, and inspection being complimented by regular peer assessment such as the Performance Panel Assessments used by local authorities. Three respondents indicated that more detail was required.

Welsh Government response:

73. We welcome respondents' support for an enhanced inspection model for Wales and the principles for such a model. We will now pursue an enhanced independent, comprehensive, inspection model for Wales, under the appointed Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser and Inspector for Wales and with strong links to the other inspectorates across the UK. The role and title of the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor and Inspector will formally change to more clearly reflect a focus on inspection and to emphasise the independence of the function. This approach has the full support of the current postholder. Additional resources are being made available for the inspection function. New broader inspection criteria, inspection programmes and reporting mechanisms, will be developed by the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser and Inspector in consultation with FRAs and Unions and other stakeholders. The issues raised by respondents in response to question 12 will be shared with the Chief Inspector to feed into the development process, but it is worth noting that some of the issues identified were already acknowledged as requirements of a new system in the consultation document itself which noted that an inspection programme would need to cover all FRA duties and functions, and should encompass people and culture, equality and diversity duties, governance, strategic direction and community risk management as well as efficiency and effectiveness, value for money and operational delivery.

- Welsh Language

Q14. We would like to know your views on the effects that the policy proposals would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English. What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

74. 12 respondents thought that the changes could have a positive effect on opportunities to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language as favourably as English. Three respondents felt that there may be negative impacts if the reduction in membership resulted in a consequential reduction in Welsh speaking members. 27 respondents did not provide a view or did not indicate a clear view on whether change would have a positive or negative impact.

75. Some of the issues raised across the range of responses included:

- That FRAs remained subject to the Welsh Language Act, and any associated regulations and guidelines for public sector bodies.
- That there were opportunities to create positive impacts for the Welsh Language through governance, training and wider FRA engagement processes. Suggestions included ensuring official documents, meetings and communications were bilingual, considering Welsh language requirements in the appointment process for additional members, and ensuring that Welsh training was available for members and staff.

Q15. Please also explain how you believe the policy proposals could be formulated or changed so as to have positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language, and no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

76. 16 respondents suggested ways in which the policy proposals could be formulated to have a positive effect on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language. Proposals included standards for bilingual reporting, Welsh language requirements for leadership roles, including for FRA members, monitoring and reporting Welsh language use in FRAs including in service delivery and including Welsh language compliance in inspection processes.

Welsh Government response:

77. We welcome respondents' views on the potential impacts on the Welsh language, including suggestions to strengthen bilingual governance, communication and training. We also acknowledge concerns that changes to FRA membership could reduce the number of Welsh-speaking members. However, there is no reason

why it would necessarily reduce the proportion of Welsh-speaking members. As covered in our response to Questions 3-9, the Welsh Government will build equality, diversity and inclusion considerations into the recruitment process for independent members.

78. Fire and Rescue Authorities will continue to be bound by the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and their Welsh Language Standards, which require them to treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English and to provide bilingual services across their functions. These obligations remain unaffected by the proposed changes.

79. We welcome suggestions for improving opportunities to use Welsh, such as providing Welsh-medium training. However, these are management matters for individual FRAs, and not something that could be included in legislation about governance structures. Nonetheless, we encourage FRAs to consider such opportunities as part of their ongoing commitment to supporting the language.

80. The final Order will be published in both Welsh and English.

- **Related Issues**

Q16. We have asked a number of specific questions about FRA governance, finance, performance management and inspection. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them.

81. 26 respondents raised related issues:

- Seven respondents raised issues relating to operational delivery. One respondent indicated that governance reform should avoid changes to front line operations and resources. A number of other respondents however suggested operational areas that should be covered by the reform programme including on-call sustainability in rural areas, climate-driven demand pressures, the impact of tourism, lithium battery storage, windfarms, rural water hydrant infrastructure, and prioritising firefighter safety, training equipment and community engagement rather than structural change.
- Six respondents raised issues relating to budget setting, three of whom referred to precepting or a longer term model through primary legislation, one suggested precepting would risk funding for essential services and recommended external audit of budget proposals instead, one sought sustained investment in FRAs and one suggested that funding reform should follow membership changes rather than being undertaken at the same time.
- Four respondents suggested that more radical reform should be considered including one Fire and Rescue Service for Wales.

- Four respondents raised the need for more robust performance management of FRAs. Proposals included a national performance framework and standards, with regular reporting and benchmarking, and a consistent approach across Wales when performance issues are identified.

82. Other issues included:

- closer engagement and scrutiny by local authorities,
- compulsory induction and ongoing training for FRA members,
- different appointment terms for independent members to provide continuity,
- the importance of consulting fully with stakeholders and ensuring all unions have a fair say.
- concerns about the standard of leadership, and the need to reset relationships between officers and FRA members with clarity on roles and responsibilities,
- the importance of culture reform and workforce wellbeing.

Welsh Government response:

83. We welcome the feedback provided by consultees on additional areas that should be considered as part of this consultation.

84. Issues relating to operational delivery are highly important but are matters that FRAs need to ensure form part of their community risk management plans. Most of these issues are reflected in the revised National Framework for Fire and Rescue Services that was consulted on at the end of 2025, and which will be published in its final form in March. We will also ensure that they are separately brought to the attention of FRAs.

Next Steps

85. The Welsh Government would like to thank all those that responded to the consultation. The Welsh Government will now proceed with the necessary subordinate legislation to implement changes to FRA membership and funding. Our intention is for this Order to be made and laid before Senedd Cymru in March 2026.

Annex 1 – List of Respondents

- Audit Wales
- Bridgend County Borough Council
- Caerphilly County Borough Council
- Cardiff Council
- Cyngor Gwynedd
- Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Equality and Social Justice Committee, Senedd Cymru
- Fire and Rescue Services Association
- Fire Brigades Union
- Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
- Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service
- Neath Port Talbot County Council
- North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
- Nottingham Business School
- Section 151 Officers (Isle of Anglesey County Council, Conwy County Borough Council, Denbighshire County Council, Flintshire County Council, Wrexham County Borough Council)
- South Wales Fire and Rescue Service Commissioners
- Welsh Local Government Association
- Wales Safer Communities Network
- 22 Individual Responses
- 2 replies from public bodies that requested anonymity