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18 March 2024

Dear Commissioners,

## South Wales Fire and Rescue Service

We have been clear from the outset that our inquiry into the governance of fire and rescue services must not detract from your important work to reform the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service (SWFRS). We wish you every success in that endeavour and were grateful for the opportunity to emphasise this when we met last week. To enable an open and frank conversation, we took the decision to hold that initial meeting in private. However, we recognise that there are several public interest matters arising from our work that need to be pursued more formally and in writing. These are set out below.

### **Appointment of Stuart Millington as Interim Chief Fire Officer**

We would like to request more information regarding the appointment of Stuart Millington as Interim Chief Fire Officer at SWFRS. In particular we would be grateful if you could provide a response to each of the following questions:

1. Why was it necessary to appoint an Interim Chief Fire Officer and what is the anticipated duration of the appointment?
2. Who made the decision to recommend the appointment of Stuart Millington as Interim Chief Fire Officer? What involvement, if any, did the following have in the appointment process (in each instance please specify the nature of the involvement):
  - a. Welsh Government officials;
  - b. the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser and Inspector for Wales, Dan Stephens;
  - c. the Chief Fire Officers of North Wales, and Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Services;
  - d. the responsible Welsh Government Minister (either that the Deputy Minister for Social Partnership or the Minister for Social Justice)?



3. During our evidence sessions with trade unions, both the Fire Brigades Union and the Fire and Rescue Services Association expressed concerns regarding the appointment. In particular Tristan Ashby told us: *"we were surprised that somebody without any proven track record and somebody who wasn't a chief, but was an assistant chief, was chosen,"* adding that they did not understand how the appointment was made or what due diligence was undertaken.<sup>1</sup> How would you respond to these concerns?

## **Appointment of a permanent successor as Chief Fire Officer**

4. What are the anticipated timescales for the appointment of a permanent successor as Chief Fire Officer for South Wales? What is the target start date? Do you have a target start date?
5. Who will be responsible for deciding the recruitment criteria for the permanent successor as Chief Fire Officer?
6. How would you involve staff and stakeholders in the appointment process?
7. How do you intend to ensure a diverse field of candidates for the position of Chief Fire Officer? Will for example, might you consider appointing a candidate from a different professional field or background?

## **Resources for undertaking your work**

8. How will costs incurred as a result of your work be paid for? Will they be met from the Welsh Government budget or the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service budget?
9. What dedicated resources have been made available for your use within the South Wales Fire and Rescue Service?
10. What dedicated resources have been made available for your use within the Welsh Government?

## **Working together**

11. How will you ensure effective communication between all four commissioners? Given the nature of your other commitments, you are likely to be working from different locations across the country how will you ensure that this does not become a barrier to collaboration?
12. What arrangements will you put in place for regular reporting on progress?

I would be grateful for a response at your earliest convenience and no later than April 5th 2024. I am copying this letter to the Deputy Minister for Social Partnership.

Yours sincerely,



Jenny Rathbone MS  
Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee

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<sup>1</sup> Equality Social Justice Committee, Record of Proceedings, [paragraph 237](#), 4 March 2024