

Welsh Government Evidence Paper on Fire and Rescue Authority Governance for the Senedd Equality and Social Justice Committee

April 2024

Introduction

1. The three Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) in Wales were established in 1995 as part of the reorganisation of local government which took place then. Before that, fire and rescue services were the responsibility of the eight county councils. The 1995 reforms created three FRAs for areas which were combinations of the new unitary local authority areas. Each was created by a so-called combination order (under the Fire Services Act 1947), and those orders also set out the governance arrangements for each FRA – which are substantially identical to each other, and which have not changed since.
2. In outline, those arrangements provide that:
 - a. FRAs are legal entities in their own right, distinct from their constituent local authorities and with their own functions, budgets, assets and staff
 - b. An FRA is a single entity. Sometimes a distinction is made between the FRA and the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS), the latter meaning the uniformed personnel and their assets. However, that distinction does not formally exist. The Chief Fire Officer and other staff are merely employees of the FRA, with only such functions as the FRA chooses to delegate to them. There is not the separation that exists in policing between a Police and Crime Commissioner (who sets the strategic direction and budget) and the Chief Constable and other warranted officers (who are office-holders in their own right, with their own operational powers and duties).
 - c. The members of each FRA are nominated by its constituent local authorities from among each authority's membership, in broad proportion to each local authority's population (such that, for instance, Swansea Council nominates seven members of Mid and West Wales FRA, and Ceredigion nominates two).
 - d. FRAs also have the power to co-opt members who are not councillors (but none has done so in recent years, other than to their standards committees).
 - e. FRAs derive their funding from levying contributions on their constituent local authorities, at rates which each FRA alone decides. There is no right for local authorities or the Welsh Government to cap or consent to such levies.
3. The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 comprehensively overhauled the functions of the Service, but preserved the combination orders which existed then. That Act also devolved responsibility for fire matters to the Assembly (as it then was) for the first time.
4. There are several possible issues with these arrangements:
 - a. FRAs are not clearly accountable to any outside body. While their members are councillors, they are bound to act for the whole FRA area, not as delegates answerable to their home local authority. Equally, accountability to the Welsh Government is limited to having regard to the National Framework for Fire and Rescue Services, published under the 2004 Act.

- b. FRAs are not meaningfully answerable to the electorate either. Only around 6% of councillors are FRA members, all of whom are nominated after their election to the council (and who are generally “backbench” councillors rather than executive members or scrutiny chairs). So candidates in local authority elections generally do not campaign on matters relating to the FRA.
- c. There is no proper separation between executive and scrutiny functions within an FRA, nor could there be. In local authorities, an executive is of course formed by the ruling group or coalition on the basis of its electoral mandate, with scrutiny committees holding the executive to account. As noted, there is no such mandate among FRA members, and there is thus no executive or scrutiny committees similar to those in every local authority.
- d. The need to nominate members in proportion to local authority population creates a relatively large and unwieldy membership. FRAs have between 24 and 28 members, which is more than a typical Local Health Board and not much less than our smaller local authorities, despite their remits and budgets being much smaller. This is distinct to Wales: West Midlands FRA, for instance, serves a population which is slightly less than that of the whole of Wales, yet has a membership of 15 councillors from its seven constituent councils and three co-optees. North Wales FRA, by contrast, has 28 members from six councils and serves a population of less than a quarter of that of the West Midlands.
- e. FRA business is often unavoidably focused and technical in nature, being concerned with the management of a uniformed emergency service. FRA members do not necessarily have any expertise in such matters; and issues of particular local concern, on which councillors would expect to add value, arise only occasionally. There is therefore an imbalance between the expertise of senior officers and the capacity of those charged with leading them and holding them to account.
- f. The financial arrangements effectively allow the FRA to set its budget and to require local authorities to fund it. This has caused increasing tension between FRAs and local authorities in recent years.

5. As the Committee’s terms of reference note, these concerns have been articulated several times in recent years, most notably in a Welsh Government White Paper in 2018. It would be fair to say that all FRAs in Wales have strongly resisted all proposals for governance change on the basis that they believe the current arrangements work well. However, we believe that developments since then, principally but not only in South Wales FRA, demonstrate the consequences of defective governance and poor accountability.

6. Our evidence on each strand of the Committee’s terms of reference is as follows.

Governance failings in SWFRA

7. The Committee’s terms of reference ask about the extent to which poor governance contributed to the failings identified in the South Wales FRS culture review. This was an issue which Ms Morris KC partly addressed in her report, where she noted that the FRA had adequate powers to lead and manage the service.

8. That is true in the sense that SWFRA is a single entity which, in formal terms, has full control over the services it provides and the staff it employs. However, governance is concerned with more than the existence of statutory powers. While it is impossible to be certain, there appear to be several ways in which the weaknesses of the current governance arrangements may have contributed to the identified failings.
9. At the simplest level, those charged with the governance of any organisation – whether members, councillors, directors or trustees have a degree of responsibility when failings on the scale of those identified by Ms Morris KC emerge. It would not be fair to expect members to be aware of every detail of management practice or to blame them for individual acts of misconduct. However it does raise questions as to whether such complex and fundamental failures could arise or persist for so long if the FRA had been discharging its role of leading the organisation and holding management to account.
10. The situation in SWFRA suggests that this was the case for a period of some years. That may in particular have reflected the imbalance between officers and members noted above. In South Wales and elsewhere, it is common for senior officers to manage the agenda for FRA business, and for the FRA to endorse proposals put to it. In the case of South Wales this included both the rejection of the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor's (CFRA) recommendations, and the approval of a substantial pay increase for senior officers, during 2023. Contested votes are unusual and rejection of proposals even more so. This may not have been an environment which was conducive to holding management effectively to account and identifying and addressing shortcomings within the organisation .
11. This shortcoming may have been compounded by the lack of internal challenge within the FRA. The lack of any meaningful local or party-political dimension to most FRA business, and the absence of any genuine separation between executive and scrutiny roles, may have led to a loss of creative tension and stimulus for debate. There may, in short, have been an inadequate sense of anyone holding anyone else to account – whether as between groups of members or between members and officers.

Capacity for change

12. The Committee's terms of reference ask about the capacity and capability of FRAs to change cultures and management practices. This is a question which is probably better put to the FRAs; but our observations on it are as follows.
13. Firstly, it was clear that SWFRA did not have anything approaching the requisite capacity and capability. Ms Morris KC's report clearly states that SWFRA's management team, up to and including the highest level, was heavily implicated in failure. While the report did not fully consider the role of the FRA, it is clear that the FRA had not taken action to address, or even identify, such failure over a period of at least 8 years. That was among the main reasons for appointing Commissioners.
14. More generally, one would expect the more egregious failures identified by Ms Morris KC to be self-evidently unacceptable to the point that any competent

management team would prevent them from arising, or would deal swiftly with them if they did. Promotion arrangements that are tainted with favouritism or disciplinary procedures that are insufficiently robust, for instance, are plainly and always wrong.

15. However, the above weaknesses of governance and accountability are not confined to South Wales. In particular, the internal and external pressure for change is no greater elsewhere; while the other two FRAs have taken a broadly more positive approach to the CFRA's recommendations, for instance, progress remains slow. So we cannot have complete assurance about this matter.
16. In the meantime, there is probably more that the other FRAs can do. While Ms Morris KC's recommendations were addressed to SWFRA and its specific management structures and procedures, they can and should be applied in principle elsewhere, and the Welsh Government has urged MWWFRA and NWFRA to do so. They have now agreed to establish their own independent reviews to assess and provide assurance about their current cultures and management practices, building on what they have already done in response to Ms Morris KC's report and wider concerns within the Sector.
17. There may well also be scope to better equip FRA members to discharge their roles, for instance through providing training in fire matters. We note that councillors may only be members of local authority planning committees if they have undertaken specialised training in planning procedures and planning law. FRAs could take a similar approach in respect of their members, perhaps with the WLGA's and Welsh Government's support.

Previous attempts at reform

18. The Committee's terms of reference ask about the failure to implement previous proposals for reform, in particular those from the Commission on Public Service Governance (the "Williams Commission"), which reported in early 2014.
19. The Williams Commission's proposals as a whole were never formally adopted as Welsh Government policy. That included its proposals on FRAs, which would have seen the governance of the Service reconstituted on broadly similar lines to the police. Chief Fire Officers would have become statutory office-holders similar to Chief Constables, with powers in their own right to manage staff and service delivery; FRAs would have assumed a scrutiny role over the Service akin to that which police authorities used to discharge before the introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners. All three FRAs strongly opposed those proposals, and those in a more detailed piece of Welsh Government work which would have underpinned them.
20. The Williams Commission's proposals were aimed at creating a clear mechanism by which the Service could be held to account; and they reflected the Commission's scepticism that FRAs as constituted could provide either leadership or scrutiny¹. However, the proposals would not have addressed the imbalance between members and officers noted above, nor would they have created any

¹ Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery 2014 *Final Report*, para 2.61.

accountability to another tier of government, to the Senedd or to the electorate. Furthermore, many of the problems which Ms Morris KC identified appear to stem from senior management acting in a closed and autocratic way. The Commission's proposals could actually have made that worse by creating a space in which the Chief Fire Officer alone had authority to act.

The 2018 White Paper

21. In November 2018, the then Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services published a White Paper proposing reform of FRA governance and finance. The Committee's terms of reference ask about action in consequence of that.
22. The White Paper proposed in outline that:
 - a. There would continue to be three FRAs with a substantial local dimension to their governance and funding.
 - b. FRA membership would be reduced to one nominee from each local authority, drawn from their Cabinets, plus non-executive members appointed through a full public appointments process to provide independent challenge and expertise.
 - c. FRAs would be required to agree their budgets with their constituent local authorities, with the Welsh Government having a reserve power to determine the budget if no agreement could be reached.
 - d. In the longer term and subject to primary legislation, FRAs would be funded by means of a council tax precept (as Police and Crime Commissioners are).
23. The aim was to correct the shortcomings of governance noted earlier, in particular by adding non-executive expertise and challenge, strengthening the connections with local authority governance arrangements and introducing a more balanced funding model. The proposals were, though, very strongly opposed by all three FRAs, largely on the principled grounds that the current arrangements worked well and did not need reform. There was particular hostility to the proposals on funding, which FRAs saw as ending what they believed was the necessary freedom for FRAs to set budgets at appropriate levels, whatever the wider funding pressures on local authority services. However, FRAs did generally support the long-term proposals for funding via a council tax precept.
24. Other stakeholders, including the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), the WLGA and some, but not all local authorities, also opposed the White Paper's proposals; although local government respondents tended to support the need for finance reform, at least in principle.
25. In light of that, it was decided not to implement the White Paper proposals for two broad reasons. Firstly, the strength of FRA and FBU opposition meant that change would have to be imposed and forced through. That would have increased the time and resources required, and the risks of failing to embed sustainable change and of disrupting services while change was under way. Secondly, it had become clear that there was significant potential for the Service to take on a broader role, in particular to support the NHS, and that doing so would both improve health outcomes and realise significant savings. It was decided that issues of governance and funding would be revisited in light of the development of such a broader role, on

a “form follows function” basis. For instance, if the Service were heavily involved in supporting the NHS, it would not be right for it to continue to receive the great majority of its funding from local government, nor for the FRAs’ membership to be drawn solely from their constituent local authorities.

26. The specification for such a broader role was agreed between the then Deputy Minister and the then Minister for Health, who made a joint statement in March 2020. It was then developed in collaboration with FRA and NHS senior managers from 2020 to 2021, as the pressures of the pandemic permitted. It encompassed three elements: responding to medical emergencies where a swift response was both critical to survival and within firefighters’ capabilities (such as cardiac arrest); responding to people who have fallen and were uninjured but could not self-recover (which are not a high priority for WAST but which can lead to hospitalisation if the patient does not receive prompt assistance); and reducing the risk of falls and other accidents in the home, by expanding the Service’s domestic fire safety programme.
27. The Service’s detailed capacity to take on such a role was then the subject of a CFRA thematic review in late 2021. This confirmed – on the basis of analysis of FRA and WAST data – that such capacity did exist, but that it could only safely be realised by changes to Service working practices. In particular, the CFRA recommended changes to the current shift patterns which permit wholetime firefighters to sleep at fire stations for seven hours of a 15-hour night shift if there are no emergency calls. That is essentially unused capacity; if shifts were reorganised so that on-station training and equipment maintenance took place at night, there would be adequate capacity to respond to medical incidents during the day (when most of them occur). However, the recommendations in that report were rejected unanimously by SWFRA in a meeting in March of last year; implementing them is now among the Commissioners’ terms of reference. The other two FRAs have been less resistant but progress remains slow.

Inspection and audit

28. The Committee’s terms of reference ask whether changes are needed to strengthen the current arrangements for inspection and audit of FRAs.
29. Inspection of FRAs in Wales falls to the CFRA, who was appointed by the Queen in 2019 and has full powers as a statutory inspector under s28 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. The current CFRA has used those powers to conduct three thematic reviews since his appointment in 2019: on the lessons of the Grenfell Tower fire, on the capacity of the Service to take on a broader role, and on the adequacy of firefighter training. All these reviews have covered all three Welsh FRAs, as well as drawing on evidence from other fire services and on the results of academic and industry-led research. These have yielded fully-evidenced and important recommendations aimed at improving the quality and efficiency of the Service, and at ensuring firefighter and public safety. Some of these are noted above.
30. The CFRA’s equivalent role in England is discharged by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS). Its remit

covers all police forces in England and Wales, and all FRAs in England; it thus has far greater resources than the CFRA. Its focus has, though, been largely on producing graded judgements of each FRA based on a cycle of standard inspections. These yield grades on a 5-point scale (from “inadequate” to “outstanding”) across 11 domains, with a supporting narrative. HMICFRS generally does not conduct thematic reviews in the fire sector, although it did so (at the request of the UK Government) in early 2023 in response to media reports about dysfunctional cultures within the Service.

31. Whether inspection of FRAs in Wales would improve if the CFRA were to adopt the approach of HMICFRS is not clear. Published graded judgements, such as HMICFRS produces, allow for ready comparison between organisations, and critical ones may create a powerful stimulus for improvement. On the other hand, there is arguably less need for comparison between only three Welsh FRAs as distinct from over 40 in England; and positive graded judgements may create complacency, especially if they mask underlying weaknesses. For instance, Dorset and Wiltshire FRA received a “good” grade for people management in its last inspection, but serious allegations about firefighter misconduct and poor workplace culture have since come to light there.
32. Audit of FRAs in Wales falls to the Auditor General and Audit Wales, and includes both the audit of accounts and the conduct of value for money studies. It would not be appropriate for the Welsh Government to comment on the Auditor General’s work, save only to note that Audit Wales is itself currently conducting a review of FRA governance which the Committee may wish to take into account.
33. However, any system of inspection and audit will be necessarily limited in the extent to which it can identify cultural weaknesses. Workplace culture is unavoidably subtle and fluid, and experienced primarily by employees in the ordinary course of their work. An inspector or auditor is only ever going to acquire partial and secondary evidence about it, at best. A dedicated review, such as that led by Ms Morris KC, can of course do so – but that took nearly a year, cost SWFRA around £0.5 million and did not consider the quality or efficiency of SWFRA’s services. That is well beyond the scope of any practical inspection and audit regime.

CFRA reviews

34. The Committee’s terms of reference ask about the processes for disseminating the CFRA’s findings and ensuring they are acted upon; and the arrangements for sharing learning between the CFRA and his counterparts elsewhere in the UK.
35. It is a strength of small-country governance that it is easily possible to engage all stakeholders in work such as this – especially in a field like fire where there are only three service delivery organisations. All of the CFRA’s reviews have thus involved very extensive dialogue with the three FRAs, as well as interviews with frontline firefighters and detailed analysis of FRA operational data where relevant. His findings have likewise been the subject of extensive and continual discussion, which has in particular allowed FRAs to gain a fuller understanding of the CFRA’s

recommendations and the possible means for implementing them.

36. Neither the CFRA nor the Welsh Government has any routine power to compel FRAs to implement recommendations. We therefore seek to support and persuade FRAs to act. However, where a failure to do so raises serious wider concerns about service effectiveness or firefighter and public safety, our intervention powers are available. The terms of reference for the South Wales Commissioners thus include full implementation of the CFRA's recent recommendations.
37. As noted above, HMICFRS (and, to a lesser extent, HM Chief Inspector in Scotland) operate on a different basis from the CFRA, with much less focus on thematic reviews. Many of the CFRA's recommendations are thus unparalleled in the work of the other inspectorates; and many of the findings of those inspectorates are not directly relevant here, as they consist of graded judgements on individual FRAs rather than good practice based on analysis and research. Nonetheless, the CFRA meets his counterparts in England and Scotland regularly to share findings and discuss issues of common interest.

Hannah Blythyn AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Partneriaeth Gymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Social Partnership



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref MA HB 1059 23

Dawn Docx
Chief Fire Officer
North Wales Fire and Rescue Service
Ffordd Salesbury
St Asaph
LL16 0JJ

dawn.docx@northwalesfire.gov.wales

2 May 2023

Dear Dawn,

You will already be familiar with the report which HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services published on 30 March, about cultures and values in FRSs in England. I am sure you agree that the problems of bullying, harassment and discrimination that it identifies have no place in the Fire and Rescue Service or any other workplace. We need consistent action to sustain inclusivity and to deal firmly with cases of misconduct that arise. This reflects wider concerns about workplace cultures, about which we had a very useful discussion at the recent Social Partnership Forum.

While the HMICFRS report was concerned only with England, we have to assume that similar problems may exist here, and that a similar response by the Service and by government is justified. The information about recent gross misconduct cases you have already provided to the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor gives us some assurance, and I am grateful for that. But there is no room for complacency. Overall, I would expect to see measures in Wales which are at least as robust as those recommended by HMICFRS in England. For ease of reference, I have attached a list of its recommendations.

In particular, I would urge you to adopt all of the recommendations in the report which were addressed to Chief Fire Officers, to the extent that these are not already reflected in your current working practices. Where those recommendations call for Chief Fire Officers to report matters to HMICFRS, you should of course instead do so to the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor. I would also expect reports of gross misconduct cases under recommendation 17 to include all such cases involving alleged discrimination, bullying or harassment on the basis of a protected characteristic.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Hannah.Blythyn@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Hannah.Blythyn@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Some recommendations are addressed to the sector as a whole, in particular to the Fire Standards Board, and aim to ensure a consistent approach to matters such as DBS checks. As that Board has no remit here, I propose instead to develop an addendum to the current National Framework setting out our expectations. My officials will also discuss with colleagues in the Home Office and the other devolved administrations the possibility of developing shared approaches across the UK. This will clearly be essential for matters such as the proposed “barred list” of firefighters who have been dismissed for gross misconduct.

These issues are plainly of great concern, and are likely to attract scrutiny by the Senedd and in the media. By 5 May, I would therefore be grateful for:

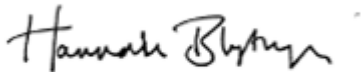
- Confirmation from you that you accept each of the HMICFRS recommendations addressed to Chief Fire Officers (or, if you do not, why not); and
- Details of the action you propose to take to implement each recommendation, along with a timeline for doing so – which in each case should be no later than the deadline recommended by HMICFRS.

The Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor and my other officials will monitor progress on these issues, and will update me regularly. They are, of course, also available to support and advise you as necessary.

I look forward to your continuing support in tackling these issues and in sustaining a Service which is open and inclusive to all.

I am copying this letter to Cllr Dylan Rees, and writing in similar terms to Huw Jakeway and Roger Thomas.

Yours sincerely,



Hannah Blythyn AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Partneriaeth Gymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Social Partnership

HMICFRS recommendations

Recommendation	Responsibility
1. By 1 October 2023, chief fire officers should make sure their services provide a confidential way for staff to raise concerns and that staff are aware of whistleblowing processes	CFOs
2. By 1 October 2023, National Employers, the Local Government Association and the National Fire Chiefs Council should review any current independent arrangements whereby staff can raise concerns outside their FRS. They should then ensure that all FRS staff have access to an independent reporting line that can be used as a confidential way to raise concerns outside their own FRS.	LGA/NFCC
3. By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should review the support available for those who have raised concerns and take any action needed to make sure these provisions are suitable	CFOs
4. By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should assure themselves that updates on how concerns are being handled are shared with those who have raised them. The updates should be given in an accessible way that encourages trust and confidence in the service response. Consideration should be given to creating a professional standards function to handle conduct concerns in service (or from an external service) to have oversight of cases, to make sure they are conducted in a fair and transparent way and to act as a point of contact for all staff involved	CFOs
5. By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should make sure they provide accessible information for all staff and members of the public on how they can raise concerns and access confidential support (including through external agencies). Chief fire officers should also make sure accessible information is provided on how concerns and allegations will be investigated in a way that ensures confidentiality and is independent of the alleged perpetrator.	CFOs
6. By 1 January 2024, the Home Office, working with the Ministry of Justice, should make sure that the Government incorporates fire and rescue authority employees within the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 so that they are eligible for the appropriate DBS checks.	HO/MOJ
7. By 1 May 2024, the Home Office, working with the fire and rescue sector, should make sure that the Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) Regulations 2002, or a similar appropriate legislatively enabled solution, makes detailed provisions for fire and rescue services.	HO
8. By 1 December 2023, the Fire Standards Board, in liaison with the National Fire Chiefs Council, should review the existing relevant standard(s) and underpinning guidance. It should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clearly state the requirements for background checks undertaken by services; • clarify the minimum requirements (including levels of DBS checks) for all roles, particularly roles where staff have access to vulnerable members of the public; • define the standards required to embed a culture across fire and rescue services that empowers all members of staff and local communities to report concerns; and • be subject to review following any legislative change 	FSB/NFCC
9. By 1 January 2024, chief fire officers should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • immediately review their current background checks arrangements, and make sure that suitable and sufficient background checks are in place to safeguard their staff and 	CFOs

Recommendation	Responsibility
<p>communities they serve; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make sure that appropriate DBS check requests have been submitted for all existing, new staff, and volunteers, according to their roles as identified by the Fire Standards Board 	
<p>10. By 1 September 2023, chief constables should make sure they are appropriately using their Common Law Police Disclosure powers in circumstances involving employees of fire and rescue services.</p>	Police
<p>11. By 1 December 2023, the Fire Standards Board, in liaison with the National Fire Chiefs Council, should review the existing relevant standard(s) and supporting guidance to clearly state how services should handle staff disclosures, complaints and grievances</p>	FSB/NFCC
<p>12. By 1 March 2024, chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that they have implemented the standard on staff disclosure, complaint and grievance handling</p>	CFOs
<p>13. By 1 December 2023, the Fire Standards Board, in liaison with the National Fire Chiefs Council, should review the existing relevant standard(s) and supporting guidance to clearly state how services should handle misconduct and safeguarding-related allegations and outcomes. These should include requirements to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conduct and complete investigations, whether or not the staff member under investigation leaves; • consider whether the incident requires immediate dismissal; • provide training for staff who are carrying out investigations; and • ensure the diversity/neutrality of the investigation panel/person. 	FSB/NFCC
<p>14. By 1 March 2024, chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that they have implemented the standard on misconduct allegations and outcomes handling.</p>	CFOs
<p>15. By 1 October 2023, the Home Office should work with the National Fire Chiefs Council and fire and rescue service employers to make sure there is a process to handle misconduct allegations against chief fire officers. The Home Office should immediately notify HMICFRS of any allegations and outcomes that it is aware of.</p>	HO/NFCC
<p>16. By 1 October 2023, the National Fire Chiefs Council should develop and manage a national barred list that holds details of staff who have been dismissed for gross misconduct (including staff who have already left services). It should ensure that this list is referred to in all appointment processes to prevent those who are barred from rejoining another service. After the College of Fire and Rescue has been established (see recommendation 25), it should take responsibility for managing the list</p>	NFCC
<p>17. With immediate effect, chief fire officers should notify HMICFRS of any allegations that have the potential to constitute staff gross misconduct that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • involve allegations of a criminal nature that have the potential to affect public confidence in FRSs; • are of a serious nature; or • relate to assistant chief fire officers or those at equivalent or higher grades. 	CFOs
<p>18. By 1 August 2023, chief fire officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that all parties are supported in relation to ongoing investigations.</p>	CFOs
<p>19. By 1 July 2023, the Home Office should examine whether any appeal processes for fire and rescue misconduct cases are appropriate.</p>	HO
<p>20. By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should have plans in place to ensure they meet the Fire Standards Board's leading the service standard and its leading and developing people standard.</p>	CFOs

Recommendation	Responsibility
21. By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should make sure there is a full, 360-degree feedback process in place for all senior leaders and managers (assistant chief fire officer equivalent and above) in service.	CFOs
22. By 1 September 2023, chief fire officers should make sure there is a full, 360-degree feedback process in place for all other leaders and managers in service. The process should include gathering feedback from a wide range of sources including colleagues and direct reports	CFOs
23. By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should seek regular feedback from staff about values, culture, fairness and diversity, with due regard to the leading and developing people standard. They should show how they act on this feedback.	CFOs
24. By 1 October 2023, chief fire officers should put plans in place to monitor, including through the gathering and analysis of staff feedback, watch and team cultures and provide prompt remedial action for any issues they identify.	CFOs
25. By 1 January 2025, the Government should establish a College of Fire and Rescue, as proposed by the White Paper Reforming our Fire and Rescue Service. There should be no further delay to its implementation.	HO
26. By 1 October 2023, as a precursor to the development of the College of Fire and Rescue, chief fire officers and the National Fire Chiefs Council should work with the Home Office to consider how they can improve the training and support they offer to staff in management and leadership development. This should include authority members in respect of their assurance leadership roles and should ensure that opportunities are offered fairly across all staff groups.	CFOs/NFCC/HO
27. By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should make sure their equality impact assessments are fit for purpose and, as a minimum, meet the requirements of the National Fire Chiefs Council equality impact assessment toolkit	CFOs
28. By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should review how they gather and use equality and diversity data to improve their understanding of their staff demographics, including applying and meeting the requirements of the National Fire Chiefs Council equality, diversity and inclusion data toolkit.	CFOs
29. By 1 December 2023, the Home Office should publish greater detail on the protected characteristic data it collects about FRS staff, including joiners and leavers, by rank and role.	HO
30. By 30 December 2024, the Home Office should align the data it collects on protected characteristics with the Office for National Statistics harmonised standard and publish this data.	HO
31. By 1 December 2024, the Home Office should collect and publish experimental statistics on public complaints and conduct matters in relation to FRS staff, similar to that which it currently publishes on police forces in England and Wales.	HO
32. By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should, as a priority, specify in succession plans how they intend to improve diversity across all levels of the service. This should include offering increased direct-entry opportunities.	CFOs
33. By 1 August 2023, chief fire officers should develop plans to promote progression paths for existing staff in non-operational roles and put plans in place to reduce any inequalities of opportunity	CFOs
34. With immediate effect, chief fire officers should review their implementation of the Core Code of Ethics and make sure it is being applied across their services.	CFOs

Recommendation	Responsibility
35. By the end of this Parliament, the Government should consider the findings and recommendations in this report when refreshing the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England	HO



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Fire and Rescue Service

HMICFRS REVIEW REPORT – NWFRS GAP ANALYSIS (HR DEPARTMENT)

On Thursday 30 March 2023 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published 'Values and culture in fire and rescue services'. The report focuses on the values and culture of all 44 fire and rescue services (FRSs) in England and draws on the evidence collected through their inspections of FRSs since 2018. Contained within the report are 9 themes supported by 35 recommendations and all Fire and Rescue Services alongside, the government and national fire bodies were encouraged to implement them as a matter of urgency.

Of the 35 recommendations, 19 are owned by the Chief Fire Officer. Work has already started on a number of these recommendations and progress can be found below. Through a gap analysis, we can identify areas where the Service can improve on our culture, enhance employee engagement, and better align our values and expectations with those of the communities we serve. By taking a proactive approach to understand where we stand in relation to our peers, we can strategically prioritise initiatives that will help us attract and retain top talent and foster a positive and productive work environment, positioning us for long term success, growth and sustainability.

Also, following the NFCC's Culture and Inclusion Conference on 27 and 28 March 2023 (and the above report), the NFCC has developed a draft Culture Action Plan for the next 18 months to address culture and inclusion within the fire and rescue sector. This will address recommendations made in the 2022 white paper 'Reforming our fire and rescue services' and realise the ambitions of Fit for the Future and the NFCC Member Strategy, in addition to the suite of existing NFCC products developed for fire and rescue services.

NWFRS is working in collaboration with the NFCC, with regard to the Culture Action Plan, to meet their renewed call to action to improve culture and end misogyny, racism, bullying and harassment across UK fire and rescue services. Working together we can and must change our culture for the better. The Service is also launching the next Fire Family staff survey in October 2023 and is currently undertaking a benchmarking exercise, by the EDI Officer, using the recommendations arising from the LFB Culture Review.



REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS	EXISTING SITUATION	OUR FUTURE VISION	REQUIRED MEASURES	TIMESCALES
<p>Theme: Raising concern</p> <p>Recommendation 1 – By 1 Oct 2023 Chief Fire Officers should make sure their services provide a confidential way for staff to raise concerns and that staff are aware of Whistleblowing processes.</p> <p>Recommendation 2 - By 1 Oct 2023, National Employers, the Local Government Association and the NFCC should review any current independent arrangements whereby staff can raise concerns outside their FRS. They should then ensure that all FRS staff have access to an independent reporting line that can be used to raise confidential concerns outside their FRS.</p> <p>(Recommendation 1 and 2 grouped together due to similar nature)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SafeCall to be introduced to the Service. This is a confidential, independent service which allows employees to report any concerns/wrongdoings. This can be anonymous if the employee so wishes and the complainant will be continually updated with any outcomes. SafeCall supports both employers and employees in addressing issues in the workplace. - Each Service area and department have its own dedicated HR Specialist, who is available to provide support and guidance with any concerns in the workplace. HR Specialists visiting 3 stations each per month to improve visibility and undertaking training (i.e. a total of 15 station visits per month). One of these visits is a 'Siop Siarad' (Culture Café) allowing for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased awareness regarding where to take a concern about issues in the workplace. - Employees feel able to report any concerns either anonymously through SafeCall or via their Line Manager/HR Specialist. - Employees feel confident that their concerns are dealt with in an appropriate and timely manner. - Employees need to feel psychological safe at work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update the Whistleblowing, Discipline, Grievance policies etc to include information about SafeCall. - Regular advertising of SafeCall across the Service with active promotion of what it provides through Workplace and the Weekly Brief. - Update induction pack for new staff with section on SafeCall. - Collaborate with training team to review HR induction process to promote SafeCall/Whistleblowing at induction. Also update HR Overview training that is delivered at Station Visits (5 visits a month mostly during evening drill nights when staff are on duty). 	<p>June 2023</p> <p>June 2023</p> <p>June 2023</p> <p>June 2023</p>



	<p>increased opportunity to raise concerns/issues informally. These initiatives encourage engagement with HR and improve accessibility for staff to discuss any issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HR policies in place, which outlines the responsibilities of each employee to report any wrongdoings, as well as the relevant protections and procedures (i.e. Whistleblowing and Bribery, Grievance, Discipline and Anti Sexual Harassment). 			
<p>Recommendation 3 – By 1 June 2023 Chief Fire Officers should review the support available for those who have raised concerns and take any action needed to make sure these provisions are suitable.</p> <p>Recommendation 18 – By 1 August 2023 Chief Fire Officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that all parties are</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HR Specialists provide a number of Line Manager training sessions to improve knowledge on how to effectively manage conflict management including grievances and handling difficult conversations. - Service has an Employee Assistance Programme and the ability to refer staff for support to Occupational Health for those who require more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Line Managers have sufficient skills, knowledge and confidence to support staff through difficult issues/conflict management. - Increased awareness of the support provisions available to employees in NWFRS who raise a concern. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The NWFRS Fire Family Staff Survey conducted during 2021 highlighted that staff were unaware of what support schemes the Service offer. Requirement to proactively promote our support schemes through Workplace and the Weekly Brief. Produce infographics that can be put up in Stations. - Improve contact by Liaison Officers and Investigation Officers to be undertaken every two weeks rather than the current monthly contact to update individual more regularly. Form completed and sent to HR for records. 	<p>In progress</p> <p>Completed</p>



<p>supported in relation to ongoing investigations.</p> <p>(Recommendations grouped together due to similar nature)</p>	<p>formal professional support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Further support is available through a number of external agencies, there is a vast amount of resources on the intranet that employees could be signposted to. - Members of the HR Team have undertaken various mental health training (e.g. Blue Light Champions, Mental Health First Aid, ACAS Mediation) to provide in house support to employees when required. - For those who are under investigation, the Service provides support through dedicated Liaison Officers, and the Investigation Officer provides regular updates. All staff involved are sent an email listing internal and external support/signposting. 			
<p>Recommendation 4 – By 1 June 2023 Chief Fire Officers should assure themselves that updates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As per Recommendations 1 and 2, SafeCall to be implemented. SafeCall is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transparent, positive, accountable and inclusive culture where employees feel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to provide appropriate training to Line Managers. 	<p>In progress</p>



<p>on how concerns are being handled are shared with those that have raised them. The updates should be given in an accessible way that encourages trust and confidence in the Service response. Consideration should be given to creating a professional standards function to handle conduct concerns in Service (or from an external service) to have oversight of cases, to make sure they are conducted in a fair and transparent way and to act as a point of contact for all staff involved.</p>	<p>a confidential, independent service which allow employees to report any concerns. SafeCall allows the complainant to be continually updated through an online portal with regards to the issue and any outcomes following investigation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Whistleblowing Policy and Grievance Policy outlines the expected timescales and the contact that the complainant will receive.- As part of the Line Manager training sessions provided by HR Specialists, advice is given regarding the importance of updating complainants of the progress of any issues.- The Service has arrangements in place for cases that are risk assessed as having the potential to be complex or sensitive in nature, to be investigated by an independent external	<p>comfortable to raise concerns as they know they will be properly addressed, and they will be kept informed throughout the duration of the process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Line Managers have the skills and knowledge of procedures and awareness of the importance to keep complainants informed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Liaison Officers/Investigating Officers to ask for feedback from employees if contact and information provided is sufficient.- Specialist training session for FDS members of staff and above on managing serious conduct and grievance issues.	<p>Completed</p> <p>September 2023</p>
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	<p>provider. This policy enables a fair and transparent investigation to be undertaken.</p>			
<p>Recommendation 5 – By 1 June 2023 Chief Fire Officers should make sure they provide accessible information for all staff and members of the public on how they can raise concerns and access confidential support (including through external agencies). Chief Fire Officers' should also make sure accessible information is provided on how concerns and allegations will be investigated in a way that ensures confidentiality and is independent of the alleged perpetrator.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grievance, Discipline and Whistleblowing policies are available to all staff on the intranet. - With the introduction of SafeCall, information will be posted on Intranet, the Weekly Brief and infographics put up in stations to reach as many employees as possible. Reminders sent every 6 months of SafeCall service. - The external website has a dedicated page which outlines to the public how they can lodge any concerns, and how they will be dealt with confidentially. - Service offers internal and external support services i.e. (Employee Assistance Programme) and signposting to professional organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All staff and members of the public are aware of how to raise concerns and expectations are managed in relation to contact and outcomes. - Line manager training enables them to act confidently regarding HR policies and procedures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update relevant HR policies to include information on how to access SafeCall. - Update the Induction Booklet to contain information on SafeCall and other services available. - Proactively promote SafeCall service across NWFRS through the Weekly Brief, Workplace and Infographics, continually review the infographics to ensure they are kept relevant and easily accessible. 	<p>June 2023</p> <p>June 2023</p> <p>June 2023</p>



<p>Theme: Background checks</p> <p>Recommendation 6 – By 1 Jan 2024, the Home Office, working with the Ministry of Justice, should make sure that the Government incorporates Fire and Rescue authority employees within the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 so that they are eligible for the appropriate DBS Checks.</p> <p>Recommendation 9 – By 1 Jan 2024, Chief Fire Officers' should: 1) immediately review their current background arrangements, and make sure that suitable and sufficient background checks are in place to safeguard their staff and the communities they serve; and 2) Make sure that appropriate DBS check requests have been submitted for all existing, new staff and volunteers, according to their roles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All employees undertake a DBS check when they join NWFRS, and depending on the nature of the role, they may be required to undertake an Enhanced DBS check, or in some cases (e.g. Control Room and ICT staff) NPPV Vetting through North Wales Police. - Implemented a more robust DBS check procedure, with renewals taking place every 3 years of employment from the 1st of May 2023. Amnesty introduced for non-disclosure, during month of April for all staff. - Project underway at present to update the Service's DBS records of all those with over three years of Service. This is due to be completed by the 1st January 2024 and Management Information System will be updated with the relevant information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employee are fully aware of their obligations to declare any involvement with the Police during the course of their employment. - Robust processes in place managing information held in terms of background checks. - Identify members of staff in a timely manner who may have been subject to a criminal conviction whilst employed, which they did not declare as per Service policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure DBS Renewal Strategy (introduction of 3 yearly DBS Checks) is actioned and relevant data place in the Management Information System. - Review Security Clearance procedure and ensure it is managed and renewed correctly. - Review Volunteers policy and procedure, and ensure any volunteers are managed correctly. - Refresher training for HR Staff on how to process DBS checks and deal with any highlighted issues. 	<p>In progress</p> <p>1st January 2024</p> <p>1st January 2024</p> <p>Completed</p>
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<p>as identified by the Fire Standards Board.</p> <p>(Recommendations grouped together due to similar nature).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All contracts and offer letters have been updated to outline the expectations for all employees in terms of disclosures. - Induction Booklet has been updated to include a section on disclosures and employee obligations. T&D to update the Grey Book version in line with this. - Recruitment policy has been updated to include information on the three yearly renewal period for DBS and NPPV. Also outlines the obligations for employees to declare any involvement with the Police during the course of their employment. 			
<p>Theme: Misconduct handling</p> <p>Recommendation 12 – By 1st March 2024, Chief Fire Officers should provide assurances to the HMICFRS / CFRA that they have implemented the standard on staff disclosure, complaint and grievance handling.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Service will await what expectations are required for the recommendations once the standards have been developed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Example of current standards are the Code of Ethics, Communication and Engagement and Leading the Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Service will undertake required actions for standards to be implemented accordingly. 	<p>1st March 2024</p>



<p>(linked to recommendation 11 - By 1 December 2023, the Fire Standards Board, in liaison with the National Fire Chiefs Council, should review the existing relevant standard(s) and supporting guidance to clearly state how services should handle staff disclosures, complaints and grievances).</p> <p>Recommendation 14 – By 1st March 2024, Chief Fire Officers should provide assurances to the HMICFRS / CFRA that they have implemented the standard on misconduct allegations and outcomes handling. (linked to recommendation 13 - By 1 December 2023, the Fire Standards Board, in liaison with the National Fire Chiefs Council, should review the existing relevant standard(s) and supporting guidance to clearly state how services should handle misconduct and safeguarding-related allegations and outcomes.</p> <p>(Recommendations grouped together due to similar nature)</p>		<p>- These should include requirements to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conduct and complete investigations, whether or not the staff member under investigation leaves; • consider whether the incident requires immediate dismissal; • provide training for staff who are carrying out investigations; and • ensure the diversity/neutrality of the investigation panel/person. 		
<p>Recommendation 17 – With immediate effect, Chief Fire Officers should notify HMICFRS of any allegations that have the</p>	<p>- This information was provided to the Deputy Minister and the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser and</p>	<p>- The information outlined concerns and/or allegations where the alleged behaviours of</p>	<p>- The information was to provide sufficient information for the briefing to Ministers in advance of the release of the HMICFRS Culture and Values spotlight report.</p>	<p>Completed</p>



<p>potential to constitute staff gross misconduct that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • involve allegations of a criminal nature that have the potential to affect public confidence in FRSs; • are of a serious nature; <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relate to assistant chief fire officers or those at equivalent or higher grades. 	<p>Inspector for Wales on 10 March 2023.</p>	<p>employees may call into question the culture and values of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service.</p>		
<p>Theme: Leadership Recommendation 20 - By 1 June 2023, Chief Fire Officers should have plans in place to ensure they meet the Fire Standards Board's leading the service standard and its leading and developing people standard.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Service Leadership Team (SLT) have reviewed standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transparent, positive, accountable and inclusive culture where employees feel comfortable to raise concerns. - Principal Officer Team to continue having a direct positive influence on the Service Culture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SLT continue to work to towards the 13 requirements listed for Leading the Service and the 22 requirements for Leading and Developing people standards via Organisation Learning Committee. 	<p>In progress</p>
<p>Recommendation 21- By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should make sure there is a full, 360-degree feedback process in place for all senior leaders and managers (assistant chief fire officer equivalent and above) in service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recent update from NFCC = we will speak to suppliers who express an interest in this part of the programme. It is a great opportunity to gather further information from them (not only on delivering 360 for middle leaders, but for all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have a full 360-degree feedback programme in place for all leaders in the Service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Service will await further information/guidance from NFCC and implement accordingly. 	<p>In progress</p>



	leaders) and provide this to services in a briefing report. Obviously, this will depend on suppliers coming forward in the early market engagement phase			
Recommendation 22 - By 1 September 2023, chief fire officers should make sure there is a full, 360-degree feedback process in place for all other leaders and managers in service. The process should include gathering feedback from a wide range of sources including colleagues and direct reports.	- Update from NFCC = we will speak to suppliers who express an interest in this part of the programme. It is a great opportunity to gather further information from them (not only on delivering 360 for middle leaders, but for all leaders) and provide this to services in a briefing report. Obviously, this will depend on suppliers coming forward in the early market engagement phase.	- Have a full 360-degree feedback programme in place for all leaders in the Service.	- The Service will await further information/guidance from NFCC and implement accordingly. - Early Market engagement is underway until 12 May 2023 - Speak to interested suppliers during this period and gather feedback on their deliverable models and costs - Provide a briefing paper to Fire services by the end of May 2023.	1st September 2023
Recommendation 23 - By 1 June 2023, Chief Fire Officers should seek regular feedback from staff about values, culture, fairness and diversity, with due regard to the leading and developing people standard. They should show how they act on this feedback.	- A cultural review (Fire Family Staff Survey) was undertaken in October 2021 which addressed the topics outlined within this recommendation. The feedback collated from staff was then utilised to adapt Service strategy and structure going forward. Employees were	- Transparent, positive, accountable and inclusive culture within the Service, that employees are proud to be a part of.	- Further Fire Family Staff Survey to be undertaken towards the end of 2023. Analysis of the data required to identify improvements, or retrogressions from the previous review. The survey will also include revised questions from People Insight which will take into consideration the current landscape which has adjusted since the previous survey, as well as adjustments in relation to culture and inclusion questions.	In progress



<p>Recommendation 24 - By 1 October 2023, chief fire officers should put plans in place to monitor, including through the gathering and analysis of staff feedback, <u>watch</u> and team cultures and provide prompt remedial action for any issues they identify.</p> <p>(Recommendations grouped together due to similar nature)</p>	<p>continually updated with the progress with specific feedback given as to the actions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An EDI benchmarking exercise was conducted using the NFCC EDI Maturity Model which addressed the topics outlined within this recommendation. The feedback collated from staff networks was used to create the Service's new EDI strategy and identify key priorities going forward. Employees were continually updated with the progress with specific feedback given as to the actions taken in response. - The Service EDI Steering Committee (Chaired by the DCFO) includes a wide range of staff representation, including the Chairs of the Staff Networks currently in place. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key priorities and actions from the EDI Benchmarking Exercise will be included in the service's EDI Strategy and associated Action Plan which will measure on going progression and performance through the Service EDI Steering Committee. 	
<p>Theme: Diversity data Recommendation 27 - By 1 June 2023, Chief Fire</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Service modernised their Equality Impact Assessment template in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To create a user-friendly template that enable staff and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The new template has been developed against the criteria of the NFCC Equality Impact 	<p>New template created in October 2022.</p>



<p>Officers should make sure their equality impact assessments are fit for purpose and, as a minimum, meet the requirements of the National Fire Chiefs Council equality impact assessment toolkit.</p>	<p>October 2022. New sections include Welsh language, socio-economic status, geography and potential impacts on on-call staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The delivery of Equality Impact Assessment training sessions started in November 2022 and this enables staff to maximise outcomes from the process. 	<p>managers to capture risk of discrimination and document narrative which provide sources of evidence and action where mitigation has occurred.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To enable all staff involved in the EqIA process to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to complete meaningful equality analysis that helps identify risk and take any necessary measures that mitigate risk(s). 	<p>Assessment Toolkit plus the introduction of additional themes specific to Welsh regulations and language. This approach has helped measure impact effectively and document intervention used to mitigate risk which can be evaluated and quality assured annually.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The impact of this leaning and development opportunity can be measured through staff feedback. The quality assurance process can also identify the standard of Equality Impact Assessments being completed in the Service. Monitor the number of staff completing this training and manage refresher training within a 3-year cycle. 	<p>Training delivery started in November 2022. Ongoing delivery.</p>
<p>Recommendation 28 - By 1 June 2023, Chief Fire Officers should review how they gather and use equality and diversity data to improve their understanding of their staff demographics, including applying and meeting the requirements of the National Fire Chiefs Council equality, diversity and inclusion data toolkit.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In line with our legal duty (i.e. Equality Act 2010) to collate and monitor data relating to protected characteristics, our Service captures this information and it is reviewed on a quarterly basis via the EDI Steering Committee. - HR provide statistics to Welsh Government on a monthly basis detailing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Effectively collate and use data to provide intelligence and insight that identify priority areas of work. - To promote openness and transparency. Also, use to compare and contrast against other public agencies in Wales. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collate equality monitoring data against protected characteristics and other relevant indicators (i.e. Welsh language). - Submit relevant data via reports. These reports can be quantified. - Positive action activities are developed against under-represented groups of people in the Service. 	<p>Monitored on a quarterly and annual basis.</p> <p>Data submitted monthly.</p>



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	<p>the demographics of our staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demographic data of the Service is also reviewed in the Organisational Resourcing Committee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To use data to identify gaps and opportunities which add value to recruitment and retention interventions. - 		<p>Positive action activities are monitored quarterly.</p>
<p>Theme: Improving Diversity Recommendation 32 - By 1 June 2023, chief fire officers should, as a priority, specify in succession plans how they intend to improve diversity across all levels of the service. This should include offering increased direct-entry opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Service is an early adopter of the NFCC Direct Entry Scheme and is currently out to advert for Station Manager position. - NWFRS have previously undertaken direct entry recruitment to roles at Strategic, middle and supervisory manager levels. Whilst following fair recruitment processes for these roles, this resulted in the appointment of 3 female Principal Officers (DCFO, ACFO and ACO), 3 females at middle manager level (Station Manager) and 1 female to Supervisory manager (Watch Manager) level. The Service continues to review the suitability of direct entry to all operational management roles prior to recruitment and have 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To continue using the NFCC Direct Entry Scheme and continue to review the suitability of operational management roles for direct entry opportunities prior to recruitment. - To have a successful positive action scheme in place that promotes the Fire Service as an employer across all sections of the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruitment team collaborating with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer to create positive action scheme for prospective employees to continue to increase diversity within the Service. - Service committees continue to present strategies and action plans to SLT for increased diversity for review and approval. - The number of positive action events is monitored via the EDI Steering Committee and Organisational Resource Committee. - The impact of positive action is captured via feedback and case studies. 	<p>June 2023</p> <p>In progress</p> <p>In progress</p> <p>In progress</p>



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	<p>recently completed a recruitment process for an Area Manager role, which is part of the Senior Leadership team and offered this as a direct entry route. Following a fair and open selection process with a mixture of candidates from both operational and non-operational backgrounds, a non-operational female candidate was offered the role but later declined the position. The role was subsequently offered to the next candidate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Service's Organisational Resourcing Committee's agenda includes succession planning and diversity.- Service's EDI committee also reviews diversity within the organisation.- The Service has a proactive positive action programme which aligns with EDI campaigns and			
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	<p>existing career events across North Wales.</p>			
<p>Recommendation 33 - By 1 August 2023, Chief Fire Officers should develop plans to promote progression paths for existing staff in non-operational roles and put plans in place to reduce any inequalities of opportunity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All vacant non-operational roles are advertised internally and externally. In exceptional circumstance for these roles there may be a requirement to appoint to roles without advertising the opportunity. Examples include: Niche or technical roles. - To encourage development of existing staff within the Service, some roles are advertised internally only such as the ICT Support Manager role and the Risk, Safety and Claims (Development Pathway) role. - A robust job evaluation process ensure pay grades reflects skills and qualifications. Checks are made to ensure pay is competitive against 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear progression pathways for support staff. - Employees are confident in the recruitment process and its transparency, and feel they have been given the skills and knowledge to be successful at interview. - NFCC Supervisory Leadership Development Programme (SLDP) is being developed for introduction into NWFRS. With this programme being open equally to both operational and non-operational roles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consider providing non-operational employees with interview skills training to improve prospects for promotion and other recruitment opportunities. - Monitor the number of staff engaging in different EDI campaigns which can aid personal development and enhance performance in the interview process. 	<p>1st August 2023</p> <p>Monitored on a quarterly basis.</p>



	<p>other public sectors roles in the area.</p>			
<p>Theme: The core Code of Ethics Recommendation 34 – With immediate effect Chief Fire Officers should review their implementation of the Core Code of Ethics and make sure it is being applied across the Service.</p> <p><i>NWFRS is awaiting guidance from Welsh Government in relation to whether Welsh FRs are to adopt the English Core Code of Ethics.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NWFRS has an established set of core values for all staff. - All interviews for both new and existing employees across all Service levels include PQA questions that are directly related to our core values. - Core values are referenced in Service policies and throughout Service strategies maintaining a continual link. - Induction booklet has section on the core values and this is provided to all new members of staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Core Values to be continually embedded in the Service and at the forefront of what we do. - Implementation of draft Code of Conduct guidance, once approved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continued promotion of the Core Values for employees and its successful integration. - Embedding and adherence of NWFRS Code of Conduct. 	<p>In progress</p> <p>In progress</p>



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Other Recommendations of HMICFRS report

Recommendation 7: By 1st of May 2024, the Home Office, working with the fire and rescue sector, should make sure that the Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) Regulations 2002, or a similar appropriate legislatively enabled solution, makes detailed provisions for the fire and rescue services.

Comments: -

Home Office / NFCC would be responsible for this recommendation.

Recommendation 8: By 1 December 2023, the Fire Standards Board in liaison with the National Fire Chiefs Council, should review the existing legislation standard(s) and underpinning guidance. It should:

- Clearly state the requirement for background checks undertaken by the Services;
- Clarify the minimum requirements (including levels of DBS checks) for all roles, particularly roles where staff have access to vulnerable members of the public;
- Define the standards required to embed a culture across fire and rescue services that empowers all members of staff and local communities to report concerns; and
- Be subject to review following any legislative changes.

Comments: -

Review by Fire Standards Board and the NFCC.

Recommendation 10: By 1 September 2023, Chief Constables should make sure they are appropriately using their Common Law Police Disclosure powers in circumstances involving employees of fire and rescue services.

Comments: -

This recommendation does not currently apply to NWP/NWFRS. Action is required to be completed by Chief Constables. Under the Common Law Police Disclosure powers, it ensures that where there is a public protection risk, the Police will pass information to the employer or regulatory body in order to allow them to act swiftly to mitigate any danger.

Recommendation 11: By 1 December 2023, the Fire Standards Board, in liaison with the National Fire Chiefs Council, should review the existing relevant standard(s) and supporting guidance to clearly state how services should handle staff disclosures, complaints and grievances.

Comments: -

Requires action by the Fire Standards Board and the NFCC. The Fire Standards Board Leading and Developing people standards currently states that people know they



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can safely raise concerns and challenge behaviour, especially where the behaviour is not aligned to the Core Code of Ethics, its own service values or codes of conduct

Recommendation 13: By 1 December 2023, the Fire Standards Board, in liaison with the National Fire Chiefs Council, should review the existing relevant standard(s) and supporting guidance to clearly state how services should handle misconduct and safeguarding-related allegations and outcomes. These should include requirements to;

- Conduct and complete investigations, whether or not the staff member under investigation leaves;
- Consider whether the incident requires immediate dismissal;
- Provide training for staff who are carrying out the investigations; and
- Ensure the diversity / neutrality of the investigation panel / person.

Comments: -

Requires action by the Fire Standards Board and the NFCC. The Fire Standards Board Leading and Developing people standards currently states that 'it actively promotes the safeguarding of those in its community and its employees, volunteers and stakeholders'.

Recommendation 15: By 1 October 2023, the Home Office should work with the National Fire Chiefs Council and fire and rescue service employers to make sure there is a process to handle misconduct allegations against Chief Fire Officers. The Home Office should immediately notify HMICFRS of any allegations and outcomes that it is aware of.

HR Comments: -

This recommendation applies to the Home Office and NFCC. At present should disciplinary action be necessary in respect of a Principal Officer, the NWFRS Disciplinary Handbook will be applied.

Recommendation 16: By 1 October 2023, the National Fire Chiefs Council should develop and manage a national barred list that holds details of staff who have been dismissed for gross misconduct (including staff who have already left services.). It should ensure that this list is referred to in all appointment processes to prevent those who are barred from re-joining another service. After the College of Fire and Rescue has been established (see Recommendation 25), it should take responsibility for managing the list.

HR Comments: -

This recommendation applies to the NFCC. Once this recommendation is in place, NWFRS will implement it into our recruitment processes.

Recommendation 19: By 1 July 2023, the Home Office should examine whether any appeal processes for fire and rescue service misconduct cases are appropriate.

Comments: -



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This recommendation applies to the Home Office at present. We will monitor the outcome and implement any recommendations (if applicable to Welsh FRs).

Recommendation 21: By 1 June 2023, Chief Fire Officers should make sure there is a full, 360-degree feedback process in place for all senior leaders and managers (Assistant Chief Fire Officer equivalent and above) in Service.

Comments: -

Applies to English FRs. This recommendation would need to be reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team. We recently received the below update from Jane Cork at the NFCC:-

'We wanted to let you know we will speak to suppliers who express an interest in this part of the programme. It is a great opportunity to gather further information from them (not only on delivering 360 for middle leaders, but for all leaders) and provide this to services in a briefing report. Obviously, this will depend on suppliers coming forward in the early market engagement phase.

If this may be of interest to you, here are the [timescales/process](#) (though we know you may already be speaking to suppliers due to the HMICFRS timescales):

- Early Market engagement is underway until 12 May 2023*
- Speak to interested suppliers during this period and gather feedback on their deliverable models and costs*
- Provide a briefing paper to services by the end of May 2023.'*

Recommendation 22: By 1 September 2023, Chief Fire Officers should make sure there is a full, 360-degree feedback process in place for all other leaders and managers in Service. The process should include gathering feedback from a wide range of sources including colleagues and direct reports.

Comments: -

Applies to English FRs. This recommendation would need to be reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team. We recently received the below update from Jane Cork at the NFCC:-

'We wanted to let you know we will speak to suppliers who express an interest in this part of the programme. It is a great opportunity to gather further information from them (not only on delivering 360 for middle leaders, but for all leaders) and provide this to services in a briefing report. Obviously, this will depend on suppliers coming forward in the early market engagement phase.

If this may be of interest to you, here are the [timescales/process](#) (though we know you may already be speaking to suppliers due to the HMICFRS timescales):

- Early Market engagement is underway until 12 May 2023*
- Speak to interested suppliers during this period and gather feedback on their deliverable models and costs*



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Fire and Rescue Service

- *Provide a briefing paper to services by the end of May 2023.'*

Recommendation 25: By 1 January 2025, the Government should establish a College of Fire and Rescue, as proposed by the White Paper Reforming our Fire and Rescue Service. There should be no further delay to its implementation.

Comments: -

This recommendation would need to be reviewed by the Welsh Government.

Recommendation 26: By 1 October 2023, as a precursor to the development of the College of Fire and Rescue, Chief Fire Officers and the National Fire Chief Council should work with the Home Office to consider how they can improve the training and support they offer to staff in management and leadership development. This should include authority members in respect of their assurance leadership roles and should ensure that opportunities are offered fairly across all staff groups.

Comments: -

This recommendation would need to be reviewed by Training & Development Department and / or the Senior Leadership Team.

Recommendation 29: By 1 December 2023, the Home Office should publish greater detail on the protected characteristics data it collects about FRS staff, including joiners and leavers, by rank and role.

Comments: -

This recommendation would need to be reviewed by the Home Office. However, NWFRS do currently review, collate and provide this information to both the Organisational Resourcing Committee and Welsh Government.

Recommendation 30: By 30 December 2024, the Home Office should align the data it collects on protected characteristics with the Office for National Statistics harmonised standard and publish this data.

Comments: -

This recommendation would need to be reviewed by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer.

Recommendation 31: By 1 December 2024, the Home Office should collect and publish experimental statistics on public complaints and conduct matters in relation to FRS staff, similar to that which it currently publishes on Police Forces in England and Wales.

HR Comments: -

This recommendation would need to be reviewed by the Home Office.



Recommendation 35: By the end of this Parliament, the Government should consider the findings and recommendations in this report when refreshing the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.

HR Comments: -

This recommendation would need to be reviewed by Welsh Government.



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Canolbarth a Gorllewin Cymru

Mid and West Wales
Fire and Rescue Service

Prif Swyddog Tân | Chief Fire Officer

Roger Thomas BA(Hons), MSc

tancgc.gov.uk
mawwfire.gov.uk

Gofynner am /
Please ask for: CFO Roger Thomas
Rhif Est / Extn. No. 0370 6060 699
E-bost / E-mail:
Fy Nghyf / My Ref: RT/TDH/MA HB 1059 23
Dyddiad / Date: 31 May 2023

Dear Deputy Minister,

RE: HMICFRS Spotlight Report – Values and Culture in Fire and Rescue Services

Thank you for your letter of 2nd May 2023 relating to the above matter.

As requested, I attach a response which sets out Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service's position against each of the 35 recommendations arising from the HMICFRS Spotlight report for which, as Chief Fire Officer, I accept and will progress in their entirety.

Your comments relating to Recommendation 17 are noted and the Service has already commenced the reporting of gross misconduct cases, which include alleged discrimination, bullying or harassment on the basis of a protected characteristic, to the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor Wales (CFRAW) following your request in March 2023 and I will continue with this update as required.

On matters of developing shared approaches across the UK to establish 'barred lists', this arrangement is welcomed and you have my utmost support in progressing this where required.

In closing, I would wish to provide my personal assurance that we will continue to work closely with your officials to eradicate any behaviours which are unbecoming of a modern, progressive and inclusive Fire and Rescue Service or any other workplace.

Yours Sincerely

Roger Thomas
Chief Fire Officer

Enc.

HMICFRS Spotlight Report – Values and Culture in Fire and Rescue Services

Response to the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor for Wales

by

Mid and West Wales Fire & Rescue Service

31st May 2023

No.	Recommendation	Owner	Due Date	Status	May 2023 Update
Raising concerns					
1	By 1 October 2023, Chief Fire Officers should make sure their services provide a confidential way for staff to raise concerns and that staff are aware of whistleblowing processes.	MWWFRS	01-Oct-23	In Progress – On Track	<p>Mid & West Wales Fire & Rescue Service (MWWFRS) has in place a Whistleblowing / Protected Disclosures procedure set out within Article 34 of its Constitution. The procedure clearly defines the actions a MWWFRS employee can take in the event that they have identified any activities which they believe to be illegal, improper, unethical or otherwise inconsistent.</p> <p>MWWFRS recognises that it needs to provide every opportunity for staff to speak up and for them to be confident that their voice will be heard. As a result, MWWFRS is in the process of identifying an Independent Reporting Line (IRL) system from several providers in order to provide an independent, confidential and anonymous staff reporting system that will complement existing staff reporting arrangements for such matters. It is anticipated that a system will be in place for all staff by the 1st August 2023.</p>
2	By 1 October 2023, National Employers, the Local Government Association and the National Fire Chiefs Council should review any current independent arrangements whereby staff can raise concerns outside their FRS. They should then ensure that all FRS staff have access to an independent reporting line that can be used as a confidential way to raise concerns outside their own FRS.	National Employers, LGA, NFCC	01-Oct-23	Not owned by MWWFRS	MWWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation as it applies in Wales.
3	By 1 June 2023, Chief Fire Officers should review the support available for those who have raised concerns and take any action needed to make sure these provisions are suitable.	MWWFRS	01-Jun-23	In Progress – On Track	<p>MWWFRS has a range of support systems in place for any staff that raise concerns including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appointing Welfare Officers to staff where required ▪ Occupational Health referrals ▪ Employee Assistance Programme ▪ Safeguarding Training ▪ Allocating a point of contact that's not part of the investigation ▪ Widening of communication from the Ff Charity, MIND Blue Light, etc via the staff communication channels consisting of internal intranet, staff e-mails, staff notices, webinars and staff engagement events. ▪ Trade Union Representatives and Mngt/Trade Union meetings ▪ Regular reports on Complaints received by the Service and actions taken. <p>MWWFRS will continue to review what provisions are made available to all staff to ensure they are publicised and effective when utilised.</p>
4	By 1 June 2023, Chief Fire Officers should assure themselves that updates on how concerns are being handled are shared with those who have raised them. The updates should be given in an accessible way that encourages trust and confidence in the Service response. Consideration should be given to creating a professional standards function to handle conduct concerns in Service (or from an external service) to have oversight of cases, to make sure they are conducted in a fair and transparent way and to act as a point of contact for all staff involved.	MWWFRS	01-Jun-23	In Progress – On Track	<p>MWWFRS have in place a dedicated group chaired by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer which reviews all matters relating to Complaints, Grievances and Discipline cases on a regular basis. This group ensures that all matters are addressed in accordance with Service procedures in a consistent manner providing the necessary strategic oversight and autonomy to expedite any matters quickly to safeguard staff safety as required.</p> <p>MWWFRS has recently appointed a new Professional Standards & Resolution Officer whose primary role will be to further develop the Service's continuous improvement journey on matters of professional standards to include staff conduct within the Service and the reporting of such updates to Senior Management.</p>

No.	Recommendation	Owner	Due Date	Status	May 2023 Update
5	By 1 June 2023, Chief Fire Officers should make sure they provide accessible information for all staff and members of the public on how they can raise concerns and access confidential support (including through external agencies). Chief Fire Officers should also make sure accessible information is provided on how concerns and allegations will be investigated in a way that ensures confidentiality and is independent of the alleged perpetrator.	MWWFRS	01-Jun-23	In Progress - On Track	<p>As captured in Point 1, MWWFRS has a whistleblowing procedure in place and MWWFRS will review its procedures to ensure they are written in an accessible way which is easy for the staff and public to understand.</p> <p>The public can raise concerns via a number of channels all of which are documented on the MWWFRS website.</p> <p>MWWFRS has a complaints procedure in place which has been referred to within this report. Both compliments and complaints are part of MWWFRS's performance measures that are reported annually to the Standards Committee and Fire Authority (FA).</p> <p>These actions will support recommendation 31.</p>

Background checks					
6	By 1 January 2024, the Home Office, working with the Ministry of Justice, should make sure that the Government incorporates fire and rescue authority employees within the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 so that they are eligible for the appropriate DBS checks.	Home Office	01-Jan-24	Not owned by MWWFRS	MWWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation as it applies in Wales.
7	By 1 May 2024, the Home Office, working with the fire and rescue sector, should make sure that the Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) Regulations 2002, or a similar appropriate legislatively enabled solution, makes detailed provisions for fire and rescue services.	Home Office	01-May-24	Not owned by MWWFRS	MWWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation as it applies in Wales.
8	By 1 December 2023, the Fire Standards Board, in liaison with the National Fire Chiefs Council, should review the existing relevant standard(s) and underpinning guidance. It should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> clearly state the requirements for background checks undertaken by services; clarify the minimum requirements (including levels of DBS checks) for all roles, particularly roles where staff have access to vulnerable members of the public; define the standards required to embed a culture across fire and rescue services that empowers all members of staff and local communities to report concerns; and be subject to review following any legislative change 	Fire Standards Board	01-Dec-23	Not owned by MWWFRS	MWWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation as it applies in Wales.

No.	Recommendation	Owner	Due Date	Status	May 2023 Update
9	By 1 January 2024, Chief Fire Officers should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> immediately review their current background checks arrangements, and make sure that suitable and sufficient background checks are in place to safeguard their staff and communities they serve; and make sure that appropriate DBS check requests have been submitted for all existing, new staff, and volunteers, according to their roles as identified by the Fire Standards Board. 	MWWFRS	01-Jan-24	In Progress – On Track	<p>MWWFRS has in place a dedicated Safeguarding procedure and pre-employment screening process that sets out its arrangements for DBS check requirements.</p> <p>MWWFRS completes basic DBS checks for all new entrants who do not undertake regulated activities and enhanced DBS checks for all new entrants and employees deemed to be undertaking regulated activities. The Service is reviewing the level of checks undertaken in line with guidance from the NFCC and also reviewing the frequency of such checks to ensure background information relating to employees is regularly reviewed.</p> <p>MWWFRS also undertakes other background and vetting checks including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Right to work in the UK References <p>Some roles require external agencies to carry out further security clearance checks, for example, NILO and National Security Vetting as examples.</p>
10	By 1 September 2023, Chief Constables should make sure they are appropriately using their Common Law Police Disclosure powers in circumstances involving employees of fire and rescue services.	Police	01-Sep-23	Not owned by MWWFRS	MWWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation as it applies in Wales.

Misconduct handling					
11	By 1 December 2023, the Fire Standards Board, in liaison with the National Fire Chiefs Council, should review the existing relevant standard(s) and supporting guidance to clearly state how services should handle staff disclosures, complaints and grievances	Fire Standards Board	01-Dec-23	Not owned by MWWFRS	MWWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation as it applies in Wales.
12	By 1 March 2024, Chief Fire Officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that they have implemented the standard on staff disclosure, complaint, and grievance handling.	MWWFRS	01-Mar-24	Not started	MWWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation as it applies in Wales
13	By 1 December 2023, the Fire Standards Board, in liaison with the National Fire Chiefs Council, should review the existing relevant standard(s) and supporting guidance to clearly state how services should handle misconduct and safeguarding-related allegations and outcomes. These should include requirements to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> conduct and complete investigations, whether or not the staff member under investigation leaves; consider whether the incident requires immediate dismissal; provide training for staff who are carrying out investigations; and ensure the diversity/neutrality of the investigation panel/person. 	Fire Standards Board	01-Dec-23	Not owned by MWWFRS	MWWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation as it applies in Wales.
14	By 1 March 2024, Chief Fire Officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that they have implemented the standard on misconduct allegations and outcomes handling.	MWWFRS	01-Mar-24	In Progress – On Track	Awaiting standard to be released, MWWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation as it applies in Wales.

No.	Recommendation	Owner	Due Date	Status	May 2023 Update
15	By 1 October 2023, the Home Office should work with the National Fire Chiefs Council and fire and rescue service employers to make sure there is a process to handle misconduct allegations against Chief Fire Officers. The Home Office should immediately notify HMICFRS of any allegations and outcomes that it is aware of	Home Office	01-Oct-23	Not owned by MWWFRS	MWWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation as it applies in Wales.
16	By 1 October 2023, the National Fire Chiefs Council should develop and manage a national barred list that holds details of staff who have been dismissed for gross misconduct (including staff who have already left services). It should ensure that this list is referred to in all appointment processes to prevent those who are barred from re-joining another service. After the College of Fire and Rescue has been established (see recommendation 25), it should take responsibility for managing the list.	NFCC	01-Oct-23	Not owned by MWWFRS	MWWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation as it applies in Wales.
17	With immediate effect, Chief Fire Officers should notify HMICFRS of any allegations that have the potential to constitute staff gross misconduct that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> involve allegations of a criminal nature that have the potential to affect public confidence in FRSs; are of a serious nature; or relate to Assistant Chief Fire Officers or those at equivalent or higher grades. 	MWWFRS	Immediate	In Progress – On Track	In accordance with the letter to the Chief Fire Officer from the Deputy Minister dated 02 May 2023, MWWFRS will report such matters to the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor (CFRA) for Wales.
18	By 1 August 2023, Chief Fire Officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that all parties are supported in relation to ongoing investigations.	MWWFRS	01-Aug-23	In Progress – On Track	MWWFRS have a range of support in place for those that raise concerns including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welfare Officer Occupational Health Employee Assistance Programme Allocating a point of contact that's not part of the investigation Trade Union support for Members MWWFRS will continue to review what its staff have available to them and ensure they are effective. Our processes will be shared with the CFRA Wales.
19	By 1 July 2023, the Home Office should examine whether any appeal processes for fire and rescue misconduct cases are appropriate.	Home Office	01-Jul-23	Not owned by MWWFRS	MWWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation as it applies in Wales.

Leadership					
20	By 1 June 2023, Chief Fire Officers should have plans in place to ensure they meet the Fire Standards Board's leading the service standard and its leading and developing people standard.	MWWFRS	01-Jun-23	In Progress – On Track	A GAP analysis is currently being undertaken utilising the Fire Standards Board's compliance tool. MWWFRS will then work with the newly appointed professional standards and compliance officer to capture and measure progress within an action plan against any areas of non-compliance
21	By 1 June 2023, Chief Fire Officers should make sure there is a full, 360-degree feedback process in place for all senior leaders and managers (Assistant Chief Fire Officer equivalent and above) in Service.	MWWFRS	01-Jun-23	In Progress – On Track	A contract is currently in place with an external professional facilitator "Compass 360". 360-degree appraisal is mandatory within the Middle Manager development process (first 6 months in post) and can be requested by all Managers within their pathway or through nominations by their Line Managers. This provision will be extended to all Executive Leadership Team members (Area Managers and above) going forward.

No.	Recommendation	Owner	Due Date	Status	May 2023 Update
22	By 1 September 2023, Chief Fire Officers should make sure there is a full, 360-degree feedback process in place for all other leaders and managers in Service. The process should include gathering feedback from a wide range of sources including colleagues and direct reports	MWWFRS	01-Sep-23	In Progress – On Track	MWWFRS will consider making this mandatory within the pathway from development to competent process for Middle Managerial roles. For Supervisory Managers, MWWFRS will consider including an element of 360 appraisal within the new line manger endorsement process to be introduced in Quarter 3 of 2023/24.
23	By 1 June 2023, Chief Fire Officers should seek regular feedback from staff about values, culture, fairness and diversity, with due regard to the leading and developing people standard. They should show how they act on this feedback.	MWWFRS	01-Jun-23	In Progress – On Track	MWWFRS undertook a Staff Culture Survey in March/April 2023 and a report on its findings has recently been received by the Service which is currently being reviewed. An Action plan is being prepared and the findings will be presented to all Staff and reported to Fire Authority in due course.
24	By 1 October 2023, Chief Fire Officers should put plans in place to monitor, including through the gathering and analysis of staff feedback, watch and team cultures and provide prompt remedial action for any issues they identify.	MWWFRS	01-Oct-23	In Progress – On Track	MWWFRS has in place processes for monitoring complaints, etc and will review this further following a debrief of the Staff Culture Survey findings which is currently underway. MWWFRS are in the process of introducing an Independent Reporting Line system within the Service and this will further enhance the ability of all staff to report matters of concern which will be supported by a dedicated monitoring process.

Management and leadership training and development

25	By 1 January 2025, the Government should establish a College of Fire and Rescue, as proposed by the White Paper Reforming our Fire and Rescue Service. There should be no further delay to its implementation.	Government	01-Jan-25	Not owned by MWWFRS	MWWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation as it applies in Wales.
26	By 1 October 2023, as a precursor to the development of the College of Fire and Rescue, Chief Fire Officers and the National Fire Chiefs Council should work with the Home Office to consider how they can improve the training and support they offer to staff in management and leadership development. This should include authority members in respect of their assurance leadership roles and should ensure that opportunities are offered fairly across all staff groups.	NFCC	01-Oct-23	Not owned by MWWFRS	MWWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation as it applies in Wales.

Diversity Data

27	By 1 June 2023, Chief Fire Officers should make sure their equality impact assessments are fit for purpose and, as a minimum, meet the requirements of the National Fire Chiefs Council equality impact assessment toolkit.	MWWFRS	01-Jun-23	In Progress – On Track	The Welsh Fire & Rescue Services has recently established an All Wales Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Group (E,D&I). The purpose of the group is to provide a platform for the Welsh FRS to review and collaborate on matters of organisation culture and inclusion. Initial focus has consisted of comparing each respective Welsh FRS equality impact assessment process to both benchmark and identify best practice. Outcomes from this focus will lead to greater standardisation of EIA's and consistency in staff awareness and training across the three Welsh FRS's.
28	By 1 June 2023, Chief Fire Officers should review how they gather and use equality and diversity data to improve their understanding of their staff demographics, including applying and meeting the requirements of the National Fire Chiefs Council equality, diversity and inclusion data toolkit.	MWWFRS	01-Jun-23	In Progress – On Track	MWWFRS have always been able to capture equality and diversity data in its systems. Equality and diversity data is captured on all MWWFRS staff from point of entry employment and continues throughout their Service career. MWWFRS report on its Workforce EDI data annually to the Fire Authority through its annual Equality Report which is published on the MWWFRS website.

No.	Recommendation	Owner	Due Date	Status	May 2023 Update
29	By 1 December 2023, the Home Office should publish greater detail on the protected characteristic data it collects about FRS staff, including joiners and leavers, by rank and role.	Home Office	01-Dec-23	Not owned by MWWFRS	MWWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation as it applies in Wales.
30	By 30 December 2024, the Home Office should align the data it collects on protected characteristics with the Office for National Statistics harmonised standard and publish this data.	Home Office	30-Dec-24	Not owned by MWWFRS	MWWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation as it applies in Wales.
31	By 1 December 2024, the Home Office should collect and publish experimental statistics on public complaints and conduct matters in relation to FRS staff, similar to that which it currently publishes on police forces in England and Wales.	Home Office	01-Dec-24	Not owned by MWWFRS	MWWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation as it applies in Wales.

Improving Diversity					
32	By 1 June 2023, Chief Fire Officers should, as a priority, specify in succession plans how they intend to improve diversity across all levels of the service. This should include offering increased direct-entry opportunities.	MWWFRS	01-Jun-23	Not Started	Discussions remain ongoing within MWWFRS on both its existing and future arrangements for staff succession planning.
33	By 1 August 2023, Chief Fire Officers should develop plans to promote progression paths for existing staff in non-operational roles and put plans in place to reduce any inequalities of opportunity	MWWFRS	01-Aug-23	In Progress – On Track	Progression pathways are embedded across all roles within the organisation. A new appraisals process aligned to the NFCC Leadership framework will be launched on the 1st of June, completion will be mandatory for all roles. Work has commenced on a new line manager endorsement process to support progression and development which will be captured within a new Procedural Guidance Document during quarter 3.

The Core Code of Ethics					
34	With immediate effect, Chief Fire Officers should review their implementation of the Core Code of Ethics (CCoE) and make sure it is being applied across their services.	MWWFRS	Immediate	In Progress – On Track	While the NFCC CCoE 2021 applies to FRS's in England, it complements and supports MWWFRS existing vision, mission and values although further review of the standard will be undertaken alongside the development of the Staff Culture Review action plan.

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England					
35	By the end of this Parliament, the Government should consider the findings and recommendations in this report when refreshing the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England	Government	End of this parliament	Not owned by MWWFRS	MWWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation as it applies in Wales.



Hannah Blythyn AS/MS
Deputy Minister for Social Partnership
Welsh Government
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Email: Kate.Bacon@gov.wales

Our Ref: HJ/PMB
Your Ref: MA HB 1059 23

Date: 31 May 2023

Contact: Huw Jakeway
Tel: 01443 232307

Dear Deputy Minister

Thank you for your correspondence dated 2nd May regarding the Service's progress against His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published spotlight report 'values and culture in fire and rescue services'.

Following the publication of this report I immediately commissioned a gap analysis to identify actions needed against each of the recommendations. This work continues alongside the work the Service has done following the commission of the independent culture review.

I recognise HMICFRS reports are published for English Fire and Rescue Services, however, as Chief Fire Officer for South Wales Fire and Rescue Service I fully accept all the recommendations made within the HMICFRS spotlight report. As such I have ensured actions are in place to progress all of those allocated to the CFO and the Service.

Attached is the Service's action plan which details our response, actions, current position and indication of progress against each of the recommendations made within the HMICFRS spotlight report. In summary, of the nineteen recommendations made to the CFO – thirteen are green (completed and continuing to be monitored), four are amber (action in progress) and two are white (action for others/continuing to review).

As you stated within your correspondence the Service has already provided your Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor with information about gross misconduct cases, including information regarding grievances and complaints. We will provide your Fire Advisor with a further update on all cases following the next meeting of our interim oversight group which meets on the 6th June 2023. This update will include information of cases involving alleged discrimination, bullying or harassment on the basis of a protected characteristic.

I will continue to engage with your Fire Advisor to ensure future returns are provided on a frequency and in a format to assist them in providing the information they require.

Pencadlys Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub De Cymru,
Parc Busnes Forest View, Llantrisant, Pont-y-clun, CF72 8LX.

Ffôn 01443 232000 • Ffacs 01443 232180
www.decymru-tan.gov.uk

Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn y gymraeg a'r saesneg - byddwn yn ymateb yn gyfartal i'r ddau ac yn ateb yn eich dewis iaith heb oedi.

CODI YMWHYBYDDIAETH - LLEIHAU PERYGL

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters,
Forest View Business Park, Llantrisant, Pontyclun, CF72 8LX.

Telephone 01443 232000 • Fax 01443 232180
www.southwales-fire.gov.uk

We welcome correspondence in Welsh and English - we will respond equally to both and will reply in your language of choice without delay.

RAISING AWARENESS - REDUCING RISK

The action plan attached shows there are four of the nineteen recommendations assigned to the CFO which are currently indicated as amber, action in progress.

Recommendation 9

In relation to background checks recommendation 9 linked to DBS checks, the Service has been and continues to actively support the NFCC to amend the legislation of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 to ensure fire and rescue personnel are eligible for more rigorous background checks. Since 2017 the Service have undertaken Basic DBS checks for all new entrants to the Service; operational, corporate and volunteers. Personnel working at Joint Fire Control are also police vetted. Community safety practitioners are also vetted to Enhanced DBS standard.

Recommendations 21 and 22

In relation to leadership recommendations 21 and 22 linked to 360° feedback for leaders, the Service has recently launched its second annual cycle of a re-designed Personal Reviews. The intention is for the Service to consider and trial how we can incorporate 360° feedback or similar reflective practices for leaders in our future Personal Reviews.

Recommendation 32

In relation to the improving diversity recommendation 32 linked to succession planning and direct entry, the Service is committed to improving diversity within the workplace. The Service has published our Strategic Equality Plan, developed an Inclusion Action Plan and continue to utilise positive action recruitment days. The Service continues to work with the Equality and Human Rights Commission and Race Equality First to explore opportunities to enhance for direct community engagement. The Service is committed to the One Welsh Service Approach to anti-racism which seeks to deliver the Welsh Government priority of 'An Anti-racist Wales'. The Service continues to monitor NFCC ongoing trials and pilots of direct-entry opportunity schemes to inform how this may assist with improving diversity across all levels of the Service.

As outlined within your correspondence and following our discussions at the Social Partnership Forum there are a number of recommendations for others, such as Home Office, NFCC and Police. I am committed to all the recommendations highlighted within the HMICFRS spotlight report and welcome ongoing discussions with yourself and your officials on how we can work together in supporting the recommendations assigned to others, such as DBS checks (including rights of employees and impact of GDPR), Fire Standards and College of Fire.

As an example of my continued commitment to workforce engagement with colleagues across the Service we regularly hold middle leader engagement events in support of organisational learning. To have a better understanding of the HMICFRS spotlight report I invited the author of the report Chief Inspector Roy Wilsher to join us at our recent engagement event on 24th May. Mr Wilsher provided a honest and unique insight and perspective into his report and its recommendations. The question-and-answer session following his presentation provided our leaders with an opportunity to have an open discussion with Mr Wilsher on his report and his extensive experiences of working in the fire and rescue services. I know this will assist all those present in embracing their leadership role.

I wish to reassure you I will continue to strive for excellence across the Service, I am committed to ensuring the Service embraces equality, diversity and inclusion and ensure the workplace is safe and free from any form of harassment.

Yours sincerely



Huw Jakeway QFSM
Chief Fire Officer

SWFRS Action Plan

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Raising Concerns

Raising Concerns

Recommendation	Service Response	Organisation	Actions	Current Position	RAG
1. By 1 October 2023, Chief Fire Officers should make sure their Services provide a confidential way for staff to raise concerns and that staff are aware of whistleblowing processes	Confirm procedures for raising concerns and whistleblowing.	SWFRS		Ongoing	GREEN
			Whistle blowing Policy in place	Issued	GREEN
			Crime Stoppers process in place	Launched 05 April 2023 - active	GREEN
			Communicate above via usual internal channels.	Whistleblowing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Procedure OP-05.003 ○ A Message from Chief Fire Officer Huw Jakeway QFSM – 19 Dec 2022 ○ RN 19 Dec 2022 ○ RN 06 Feb 2022 FRS Speak UP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ FRS Speak Up ○ RN 24 April 2023 ○ April 2023 Shout 	GREEN
2. By 1 October 2023, National Employers, the Local Government Association and the National Fire Chiefs Council should review any current independent arrangements whereby staff can raise concerns outside their FRS. They should then ensure that all FRS staff have access to an independent reporting line that can be used as a confidential way to raise concerns outside their own FRS.	Keep up to date of ongoing discussions between LGA and NFCC	National Employers, WLGA, NFCC	Respond once guidance issued	SWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation	WHITE
3. By 1 June 2023, Chief Fire Officers should review the support available for those who have raised concerns and take any action needed to make sure these provisions are suitable.	Review support currently being provided to those who have raised concerns. Confirm any additional actions required	SWFRS		Ongoing	GREEN
			Interim oversight group established December 2022 to review disciplines, grievances and complaints to ensure standards and levels of consistency, appropriate record keeping, reporting performance, audit and scrutiny.	Maintain Interim oversight group that was established December 2022 Group consists of 2 Directors, 3 Heads of Service and HR Manager.	GREEN
			Through the interim oversight group established in Dec 2022 we will ensure regular contact and feedback provided to all those involved, fair timely	Regular programmed oversight meetings ongoing.	GREEN

WHITE - NOT SWFRS ACTION / AWAITING GUIDANCE	RED - ACTION NOT STARTED	AMBER - ACTION IN PROGRESS	GREEN - ACTION COMPLETE & CONTINUE TO MONITOR
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Raising Concerns

Recommendation	Service Response	Organisation	Actions	Current Position	RAG
			processes and clear feedback on outcomes is provided. With a view to formalise the professional standards Group into BAU by 31 st October 2024.	Establish and monitor feedback mechanisms to those raising concerns.	
			Complaints process reviewed – review provision and update / republish	Process reviewed likely completion 01 June 2023.	GREEN
4. By 1 June 2023, Chief Fire Officers should assure themselves that updates on how concerns are being handled are shared with those who have raised them. The updates should be given in an accessible way that encourages trust and confidence in the Service response. Consideration should be given to creating a professional standards function to handle conduct concerns in Service (or from an external Service) to have oversight of cases, to make sure they are conducted in a fair and transparent way and to act as a point of contact for all staff involved.	Review how feedback is provided to those raising concerns.	SWFRS		Ongoing Maintain the interim oversight group prior to establishing the professional standards function.	GREEN
			Interim oversight group established December 2022 to review disciplines, grievances and complaints to ensure standards and levels of consistency, appropriate record keeping, reporting performance, audit and scrutiny.	Maintain Interim group established in December 2022 to look at ongoing cases and will inform how the Service progresses review of disciplines, grievances and complaints.	GREEN
			Review interim Oversight group to inform creation of Professional standards Group in Service – to be formalised by 31 st October 2023.	Interim group set up working towards draft terms of reference to look at ongoing cases and will inform how the Service progresses review disciplines, grievances and complaints.	GREEN
5. By 1 June 2023, Chief Fire Officers should make sure they provide accessible information for all staff and members of the public on how they can raise concerns and access confidential support (including through external agencies). Chief Fire Officers should also make sure accessible information is provided on how concerns and allegations will be investigated in a way that ensures confidentiality and is independent of the alleged perpetrator.	Review and confirm arrangements for raising concerns are in place.	SWFRS		Ongoing	GREEN
			Internet – Website Reviewed existing Provision	Public can access information in various formats: Website “ Contact Us ” page	GREEN
			Intranet Reviewed existing Provision	See evidence in recommendation 1.	GREEN

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Raising Concerns

Recommendation	Service Response	Organisation	Actions	Current Position	RAG
			FRS Speak Up launched April 2023.		
			Telephone	Public can contact the Service by Telephone	GREEN
			Face to face	Public can contact the Service by approaching staff face to face who will provide them with appropriate contact details for the Service.	GREEN

WHITE - NOT SWFRS ACTION / AWAITING GUIDANCE	RED - ACTION NOT STARTED	AMBER - ACTION IN PROGRESS	GREEN - ACTION COMPLETE & CONTINUE TO MONITOR
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Background Checks

Background checks

Recommendation	Service Response	Organisation	Actions	Current Position	RAG
6. By 1 January 2024, the Home Office, working with the Ministry of Justice, should make sure that the Government incorporates fire and rescue authority employees within the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 so that they are eligible for the appropriate DBS checks.	Keep up to date of ongoing discussions and recommended revisions by Home Office and others.	WG HO MOJ	Respond once guidance issued	SWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation	WHITE
7. By 1 May 2024, the Home Office, working with the fire and rescue sector, should make sure that the Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) Regulations 2002, or a similar appropriate legislatively enabled solution, makes detailed provisions for fire and rescue Services	Keep up to date of ongoing discussions and recommended revisions by Home Office and others.	WG HO	Respond once guidance issued	SWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation	WHITE
8. By 1 December 2023, the Fire Standards Board, in liaison with the National Fire Chiefs Council, should review the existing relevant standard(s) and underpinning guidance. It should: • clearly state the requirements for background checks undertaken by Services; • clarify the minimum requirements (including levels of DBS checks) for all roles, particularly roles where staff have access to vulnerable members of the public; • define the standards required to embed a culture across fire and rescue Services that empowers all members of staff and local communities to report concerns; and • be subject to review following any legislative change.	Keep up to date of ongoing discussions and recommended revisions by Fire Standards Board and NFCC and others.	FSB NFCC	Respond once guidance issued	SWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation	WHITE
9. By 1 January 2024, Chief Fire Officers should: • immediately review their current background checks arrangements, and make sure that suitable and sufficient background checks are in place to safeguard their staff and communities they serve; and • make sure that appropriate DBS check requests have been submitted for all existing, new staff, and volunteers, according to their roles as identified by the Fire Standards Board.	Review how Service conducts background checks to ensure suitable and sufficient inc, DBS checks	SWFRS		Ongoing	AMBER
			Basic DBS checks were commenced in Service from date 2017 for all new starters. Basic DBS Checks in place for Operational Roles DBS and Police vetting checks in place for Control Firefighter Roles	WT & On call FF receive DBS checks on entry. Key & Sensitive roles receive enhanced	GREEN

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Background Checks

Recommendation	Service Response	Organisation	Actions	Current Position	RAG
			Enhanced DBS checks for specific roles in Service particularly those that deal with the most vulnerable in our communities.		
			DBS Checks in place – Corporate Roles Enhanced DBS checks for specific roles in Service particularly those that deal with the most vulnerable in our communities.	All corporate staff receive DBS checks on entry. Key & Sensitive roles eg volunteers receive enhanced. Agency workers are checked via external provider.	GREEN
			Service will review the level of background checks for all roles, to ensure that they are appropriate moving forward from January 2024, or when the legislation is changed.		AMBER
10. By 1 September 2023, chief constables should make sure they are appropriately using their Common Law Police Disclosure powers in circumstances involving employees of fire and rescue Services.	Keep up to date of ongoing discussions and recommended actions of Chief Constables.	Police		SWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation	WHITE

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Misconduct handling

Recommendation	Service Response	Organisation	Actions	Current Position	RAG
11. By 1 December 2023, the Fire Standards Board, in liaison with the National Fire Chiefs Council, should review the existing relevant standard(s) and supporting guidance to clearly state how Services should handle staff disclosures, complaints and grievances	Keep up to date of ongoing discussions and recommended revisions by Home Office.	FSB NFCC		SWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation	WHITE
12. By 1 March 2024, Chief Fire Officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that they have implemented the standard on staff disclosure, complaint and grievance handling	Review Service procedures linked to staff disclosure, complaints and grievances against revised standards.	SWFRS		SWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation	WHITE
			Whistleblowing	Watching Brief awaiting guidance	WHITE
			Complaints	Watching Brief awaiting guidance	WHITE
			Grievances	Watching Brief awaiting guidance	WHITE
13. By 1 December 2023, the Fire Standards Board, in liaison with the National Fire Chiefs Council, should review the existing relevant standard(s) and supporting guidance to clearly state how Services should handle misconduct and safeguarding-related allegations and outcomes. These should include requirements to: • conduct and complete investigations, whether or not the staff member under investigation leaves; • consider whether the incident requires immediate dismissal; • provide training for staff who are carrying out investigations; and • ensure the diversity/neutrality of the investigation panel/person.	Keep up to date of ongoing discussions and recommended revisions Fire Standards	FSB NFCC		SWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation	WHITE
			Safeguarding - ME	Watching Brief awaiting guidance	WHITE
			Investigations	Watching Brief awaiting guidance	WHITE
			Immediate dismissal	Watching Brief awaiting guidance	WHITE
			Panels	Watching Brief awaiting guidance	WHITE
14. By 1 March 2024, Chief Fire Officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that they have implemented the standard on misconduct allegations and outcomes handling.	Review Service position	SWFRS	Watching Brief	SWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation	WHITE
15. By 1 October 2023, the Home Office should work with the National Fire Chiefs Council and fire and rescue Service employers to make sure there is a process to handle misconduct allegations against Chief Fire Officers. The Home	Keep up to date of ongoing discussions and recommendations.	WG HO NFCC	Watching Brief	SWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation	WHITE

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Misconduct Handling

Recommendation	Service Response	Organisation	Actions	Current Position	RAG
Office should immediately notify HMICFRS of any allegations and outcomes that it is aware of.					
16. By 1 October 2023, the National Fire Chiefs Council should develop and manage a national barred list that holds details of staff who have been dismissed for gross misconduct (including staff who have already left Services). It should ensure that this list is referred to in all appointment processes to prevent those who are barred from rejoining another Service. After the College of Fire and Rescue has been established (see recommendation 25), it should take responsibility for managing the list.	Keep up to date of ongoing discussions and recommendations made by NFCC	NFCC	Watching Brief	SWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation	WHITE
17. With immediate effect, Chief Fire Officers should notify HMICFRS of any allegations that have the potential to constitute staff gross misconduct that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> involve allegations of a criminal nature that have the potential to affect public confidence in FRSs; are of a serious nature; or relate to assistant Chief Fire Officers or those at equivalent or higher grades. WG Amendment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> include all such cases involving alleged discrimination, bullying or harassment on the basis of a protected characteristic 	Confirm a completed return has been sent to WG	SWFRS	Respond to WG Request for information. Awaiting further information on timing and format from Welsh Government for additional or ongoing returns	Ongoing One off return to WG Fire Advisor completed on 9 th March 2023 Link to letter	GREEN
18. By 1 August 2023, Chief Fire Officers should provide assurances to HMICFRS that all parties are supported in relation to ongoing investigations.	Review and provide report to SMT Business meeting	SWFRS		Ongoing	GREEN
				Communication with all parties – contact officers – suspended employees / aggressors. Victims Witnesses – resolution officers	Green
			The interim oversight group have reviewed the mechanism of support.	A welfare and contact officer is appointed to maintain the welfare and well being if those involved in a discipline, grievance or complaint.	GREEN
19. By 1 July 2023, the Home Office should examine whether any appeal processes for fire and rescue misconduct cases are appropriate.	Keep up to date of ongoing discussions and recommended revisions by Home Office.	WG HO		SWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation	WHITE

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Leadership

Recommendation	Service Response	Organisation	Actions	Current Position	RAG
20. By 1 June 2023, Chief Fire Officers should have plans in place to ensure they meet the Fire Standards Board's leading the Service standard and its leading and developing people standard.	Review FSB Leading the Service Standard and Leading and developing standard and identify any gaps.	SWFRS		Ongoing	GREEN
			Fire Standards relate to English FRSSs, however, the Service commenced a review of the standards and completed gap analysis.	Fire Standards are undergoing gap analysis with associated action plans to meet the standards.	GREEN
			SWFRS Personal Review Process embedded	Personal Review architecture based on the NFCC Leadership framework.	GREEN
			Service has launched supervisory pathways.	Supervisory pathways based on NFCC Leadership framework and Fire Standards.	GREEN
21. By 1 June 2023, Chief Fire Officers should make sure there is a full, 360-degree feedback process in place for all senior leaders and managers (assistant Chief Fire Officer equivalent and above) in Service.	Consider and implement plans for a meaningful 360- degree feedback process. Initially for leaders/managers at ACFO/ACO and above.	SWFRS	Implement Senior Leader Process. A current 360-degree feedback form was created within last year between L&D and SP&C and is ready to be trialled.	SWFRS has launched and commenced the 2023 personal review cycle for the Service. For ACO and equivalent and above the Service intends trialling 360 feedback or similar evaluation tools in 2023 for roll out across the Service for the 2024 personal review cycle.	AMBER
22. By 1 September 2023, Chief Fire Officers should make sure there is a full, 360-degree feedback process in place for all other leaders and managers in Service. The process should include gathering feedback from a wide range of sources including colleagues and direct reports.	Consider and implement plans for a meaningful 360- degree feedback process to all leaders/managers.	SWFRS	Implement Middle and Supervisory Leader Process A current 360 degree feedback form was created within last year between L&D and SP&C and is ready to roll out when required.	SWFRS has launched and commenced the 2023 personal review cycle for the organisation. For all other leaders Service intends rolling out 360 feedback or similar evaluation tools in the 2024 personal review cycle.	AMBER
23. By 1 June 2023, Chief Fire Officers should seek regular feedback from staff about values, culture, fairness and diversity, with due regard to the leading and developing people standard. They should show how they act on this feedback.	Have measures in place to gain and record feedback on values, fairness and diversity.	SWFRS		Ongoing	GREEN
			Continue with the established assessment of Service culture through IIP, the ongoing culture review, White Ribbon reaccreditation and EDI temperature checks.	Feedback from staff on the values culture and diversity regarding leadership is being undertaken as part of the Independent Culture review.	GREEN
			Maintain direct staff engagement and communication.	Direct staff engagement e.g: Middle leader engagement days,	GREEN

Leadership

Recommendation	Service Response	Organisation	Actions	Current Position	RAG
				Principle Officer visits, Shout forum (Staff Engagement mechanism), and all monthly Senior Middle Leader sessions will continue as normal business. Regular engagement – informal and formal with all Staff representative bodies.	
24. By 1 October 2023, Chief Fire Officers should put plans in place to monitor, including through the gathering and analysis of staff feedback, watch and team cultures and provide prompt remedial action for any issues they identify.	Have plans in place to monitor and analyse feedback on culture and remedy the situation.	SWFRS	Continue with the established assessment of Service culture through IIP, the ongoing culture review, White Ribbon reaccreditation and EDI temperature checks.	The ongoing Independent Culture Review is expected to provide feedback from staff and information on watch and team cultures. The Service has plans in place to address any issues identified by the review team. Business as usual includes: •Principle Officer Visits •Formal and informal meetings with Rep Bodies •Inclusive Workforce Group Consultation and •Engagement Group •Shout Forum •Middle leader •Engagement Days •Management Structures •Whistleblowing, Grievance and Complaints procedures •Personal Reviews – including wellbeing •Staff Support Network •FRS Speak Up •Care First •Occupational Health The Service have plans to complete the IIP actions already identified.	GREEN

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Management and leadership Training and Development

Recommendation	Service Response	Organisation	Actions	Current Position	RAG
25. By 1 January 2025, the Government should establish a College of Fire and Rescue, as proposed by the White Paper Reforming our Fire and Rescue Service. There should be no further delay to its implementation.	Keep up to date of ongoing discussions and development of proposals for a College of Fire and Rescue.	WG HO		SWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation	WHITE
26. By 1 October 2023, as a precursor to the development of the College of Fire and Rescue, Chief Fire Officers and the National Fire Chiefs Council should work with the Home Office to consider how they can improve the training and support they offer to staff in management and leadership development. This should include authority members in respect of their assurance leadership roles and should ensure that opportunities are offered fairly across all staff groups.	Support discussions by working alongside Services, NFCC, HO and others in developing concept of College of Fire Service.	SWFRS NFCC WG HO		SWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation	WHITE

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Diversity data

Recommendation	Service Response	Organisation	Actions	Current Position	RAG
27. By 1 June 2023, Chief Fire Officers should make sure their equality impact assessments are fit for purpose and, as a minimum, meet the requirements of the National Fire Chiefs Council equality impact assessment toolkit.	Ensure EIA process is inline with NFCC EIA toolkit and report to SMT Business Meeting	SWFRS		Ongoing	GREEN
			Report to SMT agreed	SMT received comprehensive assessment and recommendations from the new EDI Lead for the Service. The existing EQIA was revised with a new ERA developed for pilot.	GREEN
			EQIA have been reviewed and amended with a view to launch after approval in SMT in May 2023	Road map has been proposed that is being trialled through consultation before being implemented Service wide	GREEN
28. By 1 June 2023, Chief Fire Officers should review how they gather and use equality and diversity data to improve their understanding of their staff demographics, including applying and meeting the requirements of the National Fire Chiefs Council equality, diversity and inclusion data toolkit.	Review how Service gathers and uses equality data and report findings to SMT Business Meeting	SWFRS	Review how Service gathers and uses equality data.	A review of ED&I data has commenced. A collection against revised data sets is being implemented to ensure consistent reporting across the Service. It will also be aligned to NFCC EDI data toolkit.	GREEN
29. By 1 December 2023, the Home Office should publish greater detail on the protected characteristic data it collects about FRS staff, including joiners and leavers, by rank and role	Keep up to date of ongoing discussions on data collection of protected groups.	WG HO	Progress currently underway with L&D/EDI and SP&C to reformat EDI data due to recent requirements for reporting	SWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation	WHITE
30. By 30 December 2024, the Home Office should align the data it collects on protected characteristics with the Office for National Statistics harmonised standard and publish this data.	Keep up to date of ongoing discussions on data collection of protected groups.	WG HO	Progress currently underway with L&D/EDI and SP&C to reformat EDI data due to recent requirements for reporting	SWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation	WHITE
31. By 1 December 2024, the Home Office should collect and publish experimental statistics on public complaints and conduct matters in relation to FRS staff, similar to that which it currently publishes on police forces in England and Wales.	Keep up to date of ongoing discussions on data collection of protected groups.	WG HO		SWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation	WHITE

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Improving Diversity

Recommendation	Service Response	Organisation	Actions	Current Position	RAG
32. By 1 June 2023, Chief Fire Officers should, as a priority, specify in succession plans how they intend to improve diversity across all levels of the Service. This should include offering increased direct-entry opportunities.	Consider current and future diversity strategies, inc. direct-entry requirements.	SWFRS		Ongoing	AMBER
			A new Inclusive action plan created by EDI lead within Service will address any barriers to progression internal to organisation.	Review and amend as necessary recruitment and succession planning strategies from the actions identified in the Strategic Equality plan. Working with the Equality and Human rights commission to develop further actions. Implementing action arising from the Wales antiracism plan. The Service has direct engagement with Race Equality First to explore opportunities for direct community engagement.	GREEN
			Explore Direct Entry opportunities.	The Service has considered direct entry opportunities through the NFCC and is maintaining a watching brief on the existing trials and pilots ongoing across the UK.	AMBER
33. By 1 August 2023, Chief Fire Officers should develop plans to promote progression paths for existing staff in non-operational roles and put plans in place to reduce any inequalities of opportunity	Confirm launch of Service's Pathways and record how future inequality issues will be overcome.	SWFRS	A new Inclusive action plan created by EDI lead within Service addressing any barriers to progression internal to organisation. Organisational development pathways already provide a robust pathway and were launched in April 2023 after a few years in development.	Pathways have been developed for all roles across the Service. The Personal Review process aligned to NFCC Leadership Framework is in the second annual cycle. Supervisory launched April 2023 Middle Leaders pathways due to be launched September 2023 Strategic pathways to be developed for 2024	GREEN

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The Core Code of Ethics

Recommendation	Service Response	Organisation	Actions	Current Position	RAG
34. With immediate effect, Chief Fire Officers should review their implementation of the Core Code of Ethics and make sure it is being applied across their Services.	Carry out initial review and report to SMT Business	SWFRS	Review against Core Code of Ethics.	This is fully embedded in the Service values and behaviour statements. Evidence below Standards and Expectations Policy OP-02.051 The Independent Culture Review will assess how the Core Code of Ethics and the Values of the Service are embedded.	GREEN

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The Fire & Rescue National Framework for England

Recommendation	Service	Organisation	Actions	Current Position	RAG
35. By the end of this Parliament, the Government should consider the findings and recommendations in this report when refreshing the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.	Response Keep up to date with ongoing discussions and recommended revisions to FRS Framework for England. Consider implications for Wales FRSSs.	WG HO	Review findings.	SWFRS will fully engage and support the delivery of this recommendation	WHITE

WHITE - NOT SWFRS ACTION / AWAITING GUIDANCE	RED - ACTION NOT STARTED	AMBER - ACTION IN PROGRESS	GREEN - ACTION COMPLETE & CONTINUE TO MONITOR
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Note of meeting

In attendance:

Hannah Blythyn MS, Deputy Minister for Social Partnership (Chair)
Councillor Dylan Rees, Chair North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA)
Councillor Steve Bradwick, Chair South Wales FRA
Councillor Elwyn Williams, Chair Mid and West Wales FRA
Councillor Jane Gebbie, WLGA spokesperson for Workforce
Duncan Stewart-Ball, Fire Brigades Union
Tristan Ashby, Fire and Rescue Services Association (via Teams)
Richard Fairhead, Fire Leaders' Association (via Teams)
Ade Robinson, Chief Executive, Fire Officers' Association (via Teams)
Naomi Alleyne - WLGA
CFO Huw Jakeway, South Wales FRA
CFO Dawn Docx, North Wales FRA
CFO Roger Thomas, Mid and West Wales FRA

Liz Lalley, Director, Risk, Resilience and Community Safety - WG
Neil Surman, Head of Social Partnership - WG
Gary Haggaty, Head Community Safety - WG
Dan Stephens, Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser - WG
Steve Pomeroy, Head of Fire Services Branch - WG
Kerry Citric, Fire Services Branch - WG
Lisa Walters, Fire Services Branch - WG

Introductions

1. The Deputy Minister welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Social Partnership Forum for Fire and Rescue Services and introductions around the table were made. She indicated the Forum was an opportunity for collective discussions on broader issues and practical challenges facing the fire and rescue services in Wales and hoped it would be constructive and productive for everyone.

Agenda Item 1: Terms of Reference

2. The Deputy Minister noted the Terms of Reference (circulated to members prior to the meeting) reflected the Welsh system of social partnership. Cllr Bradwick disagreed, indicating that having the Chief Fire Officers (CFOs) as observers on the Forum as opposed to standing members, did not reflect that ethos. The Chairs did not have the same level of expertise as the CFOs, and therefore in his view, the CFOs should also be able to ask questions. Cllr Rees agreed, referring to his letter to the Deputy Minister in December raising similar concerns. The Deputy Minister explained the composition had been set in this way to create a balanced membership of employer representatives, representative bodies and Welsh Government officials and reaffirmed that as observers, the CFOs could contribute to discussions if called upon by the Chairs.
3. Cllr Gebbie was concerned that union membership of the Forum did not represent green book staff and asked that this be reconsidered. She also questioned how

collective discussions could support the broadening of the role proposal, when this directly impacted firefighter pay, terms and conditions and health and well-being, if these elements were excluded from discussions. As a minimum discussions should include terms and conditions. The Deputy Minister explained the rationale was to set aside pay as that would remain a matter for the National Joint Council though agreed to reconsider the membership of representative bodies.

Action 1.1: Deputy Minister to consider inviting representatives from green book unions and to update members with the outcome.

Agenda Item 2: Social Partnership and Public Procurement Bill and how it relates to FRAs

4. NS provided an update on the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill. The Bill had completed its Stage 2 consideration in Committee on 23 January, with Stage 3 to take place in March. He explained the Bill had four main aims:
 - to establish a statutory Social Partnership Council (SPC) for Wales composed of a diverse range of members, chaired by the First Minister. It is proposed the SPC would include other Ministers as well as 9 seats for employer representatives from the public, private and third sectors and 9 seats for worker representatives to be nominated by Wales TUC. The Partnership Council would provide information and advice to Welsh Ministers on all of the duties set out in the Bill;
 - to amend the “A Prosperous Wales” goal set out in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (WFGA) in order to strengthen links to fair work; all public bodies will need to revisit their well-being objectives;
 - to introduce statutory social partnership duties on public bodies. This would require public bodies, including FRAs, to seek compromise or consensus with their recognised trade unions or, where there is no recognised trade union, with other representatives of their staff in setting and delivering on their well-being objectives under the WFGA;
 - to undertake socially responsible procurement and imposing new contract management duties on public bodies aimed at improving ethical standards in procurement supply chains and a requirement that public bodies publish their plans for procuring in a socially responsible way.
5. NS indicated the Bill was scheduled to receive Royal Assent at the end of April and become law end of May. The SPC would need to be established within 6 months of the Bill coming into force. Following Royal Assent, the Deputy Minister indicated she planned to engage with those the legislation will affect to see how it could be delivered. NS noted there was a programme in place to manage implementation of the legislation and a Social Partnership Forum, chaired by the Deputy Minister, had been established to make recommendations on the practical arrangements and composition of the SPC. Members of the SPC would be appointed by the First Minister.
6. Cllr Bradwick asked if the UK Government had been consulted with on the Bill and whether there was a risk of challenge to the Bill’s proposals. The Deputy Minister explained there was a four week window in which the UK Government could

challenge the proposals though only on the basis of competency. She was confident the proposals were within the competence of the Senedd, and NS said the proposals were tailored to the constraints of the devolution settlement and framed around the WFGA in order to mitigate such challenge.

7. CFO Jakeway asked the Deputy Minister's thoughts on the UK Government's Bill for minimum cover level during strikes. The Deputy Minister indicated Welsh Ministers were opposed to the Bill which in their view acted as a distraction to the wider issues. Advice from the Counsel General was currently being sought and the Deputy Minister assured members she would keep them abreast of the situation.

Action 2.1: Officials to update FRAs on any developments relating to the Welsh Government response to the Minimum Service Standards Bill.

Agenda Item 3: RDS retention and recruitment

8. The Deputy Minister acknowledged issues around recruitment and retention to the RDS were longstanding and would not be solved overnight. It would take a collective effort to unpick some of the issues and discussions today would be a starting point. The Deputy Minister recognised the contribution RDS made to the workforce and recorded her gratitude for their professionalism, dedication and commitment to the role. Any issues were related to the system and not the firefighters themselves.
9. Cllr Rees indicated real challenges in North Wales FRA in recruiting and retaining firefighters to RDS. The CFO had commissioned a review of the system, resulting in 87 recommendations relating to pay, reward and training. The review had included interviewing serving RDS firefighters and established that the goodwill of the RDS normally relied on, was rapidly declining. Cllr Rees noted the review would align to the FRA's Emergency Fire Cover review. CFO Docx indicated the service could no longer rely on goodwill to recruit and retain firefighters to the RDS, but rather it needed an appropriate pay and reward scheme. Similar issues were echoed in Mid and West Wales FRA. The pay as you go system meant that because call out rates were lower RDS firefighters were now being paid less than they were 10 years ago.
10. CFO Thomas viewed his service as on-call with wholetime back-up, which in many areas, it was wholly dependent on. For him, the current RDS model was no longer fit for purpose, with a decline over the last 7 years further impacted by Covid. Whilst his service had attempted to address some of the issues, it had always come back to remuneration. CFO Thomas recognised the financial pressures on his constituent authorities, indicating that remuneration for RDS would be addressed incrementally.
11. Although the same issues were not experienced in South Wales FRA due to its geography and salary scheme for RDS firefighters, Cllr Bradwick noted similar issues in recruiting RDS firefighters in Abergavenny and Monmouthshire. CFO Jakeway indicated his service's investment in a salary scheme for RDS 15 years ago had not been cheap. However, it provided a contract of 105 hours per week

within which community fire safety activity and administration was included. He noted that in rural areas and due to the constraints of valleys' geography, recruitment and retention to the RDS from these areas, still proved challenging.

12. DS-B indicated his reasons for joining the RDS had been based on its exciting challenges, acknowledging RDS firefighters' contribution to the reduction in overall fires in Wales. That reduction however, now called for broadening of the role to be included to increase calls and workload, and to also help communities.
13. TA recognised the issue of RDS recruitment and retention was not restricted to FRAs in Wales, however, highlighted Hertfordshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire FRAs as good practice. He acknowledged the many reviews undertaken to determine the reasons for low recruitment and retention rates to the RDS, but noted most had not been enacted effectively or in full as too often concentration and focus moved to other issues. He echoed that broadening the role would be an incentive for joining the RDS. CFO Thomas however, suggested that broadening the role made a small but not significant difference. A number of stations in Mid and West Wales FRS were already responding to uninjured fallers with little difference to recruitment and retention rates.
14. SP suggested that there were a set of improvements that could be made based on good practice elsewhere, but that there were a broader more fundamental set of issues around the role that needed further long term consideration. The issue was not just about broadening the role but could expand to how RDS fits into the way public services are delivered in rural areas. He further added that whilst it would cost five times as much to change all RDS stations to wholetime, he suggested reviewing the number of wholetime stations to determine if they were actually needed. CFO Jakeway indicated FRAs were risk based organisations, therefore having all wholetime stations would go against that ethos. RDS stations were a valued resource and a good use of public money. CFO Docx added this was the process of her authority's Emergency Fire cover review, though constituent authorities would likely view this as a reduction in costs to them.
15. TA did not see that increasing remuneration would solve the issues of recruitment and retention to RDS. Firefighters did not normally join for pay, though it is often the reason they leave, suggesting in-service recognition or bonus payments could aid retention. DS-B also shared that following drills, firefighters were often expected to complete their personal development record in their own time, due to a lack of tablet devices.
16. The Deputy Minister concluded the issues presented would require a wholesale approach to solving them, recognising that some small changes could be made in the interim and suggested they be explored. She noted a question had been raised in plenary earlier that week on the issues of recruitment and retention to RDS where she made a commitment to collectively discuss the issues at the Social Partnership Forum for Fire and Rescue Services.
17. Cllr Bradwick placed on record his thoughts for the Scottish firefighter in a critical condition resultant of the fire at Jenners in Edinburgh earlier that week, which members echoed.

Agenda Item 4: Firefighter safety

18. The Deputy Minister acknowledged the CFRA's reviews on Capacity to undertake Broadening of the Role and Operational Training had made for some challenging conversations. She made clear it was not her intention to impose changes to firefighters' terms and conditions, though she did expect firefighter safety to be considered. DS had met with the three CFOs the week before to discuss how firefighter capacity could be accessed to support a broadened role, indicating he would meet again with them individually in the coming weeks. DS noted he had also discussed the training review recommendations with the CFOs and separate advice would be submitted to the Deputy Minister.
19. Members' overall consensus was that any changes to current shift patterns would be seen as a fundamental attack on firefighters' terms and conditions and would undoubtedly result in industrial action. Cllr Gebbie asked if there was an intention to look at the working hours of all public services, indicating a change in working hours for firefighters would set a precedent.
20. DS-B indicated current shift patterns did not breach the Working Time Regulations 1998, referring to section 10 of the regulations which implies a rest period of 11 hours between shifts. DS-B noted that CFOs were undertaking a training time analysis across Wales which should show that there was still capacity under current arrangements to also undertake a broadened role.
21. DS made clear it was not about shift changes, but rather shift equalisation, indicating that many FRAs had achieved shift equalisation through a collective agreement. He made reference to Merseyside as one such FRA. DS-B asked whether an evaluation of those firefighters on a 12-hour shift pattern had been carried out, indicating that intelligence suggested firefighters moving to this shift pattern experienced increased fatigue with no increase in productivity. It also affected firefighters' work life balance, particularly affecting female firefighters.
22. CFO Jakeway indicated his authority's response to the review recommendations was progressing through its usual governance structure and in line with those arrangements, would be considered by the Fire Authority next month before a formal response to the Deputy Minister was made. Cllr Rees noted his authority was looking to address the recommendations through an action plan linked into its Emergency Fire Cover review.
23. CFO Thomas had real concerns about the impact response to non-injured fallers would have on the services' statutory duties. Non-injured faller incidents were categorised as green calls for WAST and had the potential to tie-up firefighters for long periods of time, impacting on their availability. DS-B indicated the FBU's support for broadening of the role and for progressing this agenda.

Agenda Item 5: Budget setting

24. Cllr Rees noted the budget setting discussions with his constituent authorities for the forthcoming financial year had been challenging, indicating extreme pushback

to the FRA's initial budget proposal of a 13.5 percent increase. Several further negotiations concluded a 9.9 percent increase, meaning a reduction in frontline services from 20 to 18 day time crews and a reduction in home safety visits from 20,000 to 17,500 per annum.

25. Cllr Bradwick indicated a similar experience with his constituent authorities, with negotiations concluding a 13.8 per cent increase compared with the current year. He suggested a council tax precept for raising FRA budgets, be considered.
26. Cllr Williams noted a 13 percent increase to his authority's budget in 2023-24, indicating the withdrawal of the Airwave grant had been difficult to accept. The Deputy Minister acknowledged this, adding the pressures were acutely felt by the Welsh Government also, making for some difficult conversations overall.

Agenda Item 6: University of Central Lancashire's study of mortality rates in firefighters

27. DS-B referred to two recent studies undertaken by the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) into cancer incidence and mortality rates amongst firefighters. The studies concluded that UK firefighters were significantly more likely to die from cancer, heart attack, stroke or other diseases, and that contaminants found in fires were linked to increased rates of these diseases and to mental health issues among firefighters. The reports included that:
 - the cancer rate in firefighters aged 35-39 is up to 323% higher than in the general population that age.
 - firefighters have higher cancer death rates at younger age brackets (55–59) when compared to the general population (at the age 70–74).
 - firefighters' mortality rate from all cancers is 1.6 times higher than the general population.
28. DS-B also noted the studies found that certain types of cancer were significantly higher; prostate 4 times higher, leukaemia 3 times higher and oesophagus 2 times higher. Where cancer with an unknown origin had spread, the rate was 6.37 times higher than the general population. UK firefighters who had served at least 15 years were almost twice as likely to develop cancer compared with those who had served less time, and firefighters had over five times higher mortality rates from heart attack and almost three times from a stroke, compared with the general public.
29. DS-B noted the topic was debated on in the Scottish Parliament on the 19 January by MP Maggie Chapman, indicating the debate had been very positive with overwhelming support for the report's recommendations. DS-B expressed his gratitude to the three CFOs for the work they had implemented as part of the FBU's decontamination campaign, including a Decontamination working group, two breathing apparatus washing machines and designated zones on stations to prevent cross-contamination.
30. DS-B indicated the FBU was seeking the Welsh Government's support for the three FRAs in implementing:

- annual health monitoring for all firefighters, to also continue after retirement.
 - adequate monitoring and recording of firefighter exposures.
 - adequate recording of occupation of firefighter (or former occupation) in health and similar records, including on death certificates.
 - the introduction of effective decontamination policies and training across the FRS.
 - the introduction of facilities and contracts for appropriate and effective PPE and workwear cleaning across all services and duty systems.
 - the introduction of legislation that will ensure that affected firefighters are given the compensation and protection they deserve.
31. SP noted amendments to the Firefighters Compensation Scheme regulations were in the pipeline, indicating a potential opportunity to address some of these requirements. SP agreed to liaise with DS-B separately.
32. The Deputy Minister recognised the value of updating members on these important findings and suggested the conversations continue in advance of the next Social Partnership meeting.

Action 6.1: Officials to establish how the Welsh Government could support FRAs to implement the recommendations of the studies into the mortality rates of firefighters, including opportunities to address them in forthcoming changes to the Firefighters Compensation Scheme regulations.

Note of meeting

In attendance:

Hannah Blythyn MS, Deputy Minister for Social Partnership (Chair)
Dan Stephens, Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser - WG
Councillor Steve Bradwick, Chair South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA)
Councillor Dylan Rees, Chair North Wales FRA (via Teams)
Councillor Elwyn Williams, Chair Mid and West Wales FRA
Councillor Jane Gebbie, WLGA spokesperson for Workforce
Cerith Griffiths, Fire Brigades Union
Tristan Ashby, Fire and Rescue Services Association (via Teams)
Richard Fairhead, Fire Leaders' Association (via Teams)
Ade Robinson, Chief Executive, Fire Officers' Association (via Teams)

Karen Higgins – Head of Employment, WLGA
CFO Huw Jakeway, South Wales FRA
CFO Dawn Docx, North Wales FRA (via Teams)
CFO Roger Thomas, Mid and West Wales FRA
Liz Lalley, Director, Risk, Resilience and Community Safety - WG
Neil Surman, Head of Social Partnership - WG
Steve Pomeroy, Head of Fire Services Branch – WG
Philippa Marsden, Special Adviser - WG
Kerry Citric, Fire Services Branch - WG
Lisa Walters, Fire Services Branch – WG (secretariat)

Agenda Item 1: Welcome/Opening remarks

1. The Deputy Minister for Social Partnership welcomed everyone to the second meeting of the Social Partnership Forum for Fire and Rescue Services, introducing Philippa Marsden, Welsh Government Special Adviser. The Deputy Minister commented there was a good selection of items for discussion and reminded everyone that contributions were welcome from all.

Agenda Item 2: Minutes from last meeting on 26 January and Matters Arising

2. Prior to the meeting, members of the Forum were provided with an update on the three actions arising from the last meeting on 26 January. Further to those updates, the Deputy Minister explained that she had written to the Wales TUC to seek a representative for the Forum from the green book unions; Unison, Unite and GMB and that she hoped to have a nomination in time for the next meeting in July. She further added that members would be notified once a representative was known.
3. Members endorsed the revised Terms of Reference for the Forum which the Deputy Minister confirmed had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Action 2.1: Members to be notified of the green book union representative when known.

Agenda Item 3: Update on: Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill, and Strikes (Minimum Services Levels) Bill

- **Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill**

4. The Deputy Minister confirmed the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill had passed its final scrutiny stage in the Senedd on the 14 March and was on course for Royal Assent. This would be slightly delayed however, in light of King Charles III's coronation. The Deputy Minister indicated there was an opportunity to discuss the detail of the Bill and what it will mean for the Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) at a future Social Partnership Forum meeting, emphasising the importance of government, employers and unions working together to meet the social partnership duties imposed by the Bill.

- **Strikes (Minimum Services Levels) Bill**

5. The Deputy Minister advised members of the Forum that the Legislative Consent Motion on the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill was tabled in the Senedd yesterday (25 April) to which the Senedd opposed consent for the legislation in Wales. She further noted that all correspondence on the Bill, including the letter from the Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution to the UK Government opposing the Bill, had been shared with members of the Forum prior to the meeting. The Deputy Minister stressed that concerns were about how the Bill would work in practice and its impact on devolved services, and the Counsel General's letter had made reference to the FRAs in Wales, as an example.

6. The Deputy Minister confirmed that the Bill was at report stage in the House of Lords and that the Welsh Ministers were keeping a watching brief on its implications for Wales. As the Bill makes progress, the Deputy Minister suggested a meeting between the Counsel General and the Chairs and Chief Fire Officers to discuss the Bill implications for FRAs. All three FRAs welcomed a meeting. Councillor Gebbie recorded her support for the Deputy Minister's stance on the Bill's introduction in Wales.

Action 3.1: As the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill makes progress, officials to arrange a meeting between the Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution and the Chairs and Chief Fire Officers of all three FRAs.

Agenda Item 4: Health and Safety of Firefighters

7. The Deputy Minister reminded members of the brief discussion at the last meeting in January, about the effects of fire contaminants on firefighters, highlighting the insightful report provided by Duncan Stewart-Ball of the FBU. The Deputy Minister emphasised the importance of continued discussions on this important issue and invited CG to open those discussions.

8. CG thanked the Deputy Minister for keeping the item on the agenda. Referring to paragraph 30 of the minutes from the last meeting (on 26 January), CG reaffirmed the FBU's aspiration for protecting firefighters by introducing:
 - annual health monitoring for all firefighters, to also continue after retirement.
 - adequate monitoring and recording of firefighter exposures.
 - adequate recording of occupation of firefighter (or former occupation) in health and similar records, including on death certificates.
 - effective decontamination policies and training across the FRS.
 - facilities and contracts for appropriate and effective PPE and workwear cleaning across all services and duty systems.
 - legislation that will ensure that affected firefighters are given the compensation and protection they deserve.

9. Whilst appreciating that all of these points could not be introduced overnight and that all three FRAs were already taking action to reduce the risk to firefighters, CG suggested a working group be established (including union representatives), to take these forward. In response, CFRA Dan Stephens acknowledged the work the fire and rescue services were already doing in this area, suggesting there could be value in identifying and then disseminating best practice across the three Welsh Fire and Rescue Services. He further indicated the value in identifying options to eliminate or reduce the risk from contamination to firefighters through the adoption of alternative firefighting tactics, making reference to the Dutch 4 Quadrant firefighting model. He explained that this model of firefighting included the tactical option of offensive exterior attack which reduces the overall risk to firefighters as well as from fire contaminants. DS reiterated the point that the primary objective must be to proactively prevent firefighters being exposed as far as reasonably possible to contaminants which are known to cause cancers.

10. All three FRAs indicated a significant amount of work to reduce the risk of fire contaminants was already happening locally though acknowledged that it was also about firefighter behaviour. CFO Jakeway advised that in South Wales FRA, local adaptations had been made supported by the National Fire Chiefs Council, including revised decontamination procedures. His service had a fleet replacement programme and had Occupational Health provision with specialist toxicology experience. CFO Thomas indicated similar activity in Mid and West Wales FRA, with a refresh of its appliances and strengthening of links to Occupational Health. CFO Docx reported that a Decontamination Working Group had been established in North Wales FRA reporting to its Health and Safety Committee and work was ongoing with its suppliers, Emergency One, on a clean cab concept. She also made reference to the breathing apparatus washing facilities funded by the Welsh Government and her service's intention to replace existing firefighting kit and to introduce new smoke hoods. This approach was based on local input from firefighters.

11. CG thanked the CFOs for their updates which he said would provide assurance to his members. He recognised though that new decontamination policies would only be successful if accompanied by behavioural change in firefighters too.

12. The Deputy Minister recognised the good work and practice already in place in each of the FRAs, though acknowledged the merit of getting together to discuss the issues in more detail and to discuss good practice to be applied consistently across Wales. She proposed the CFRA arranges a meeting, chaired by him, to include all three FRAs and representative bodies. The CFRA confirmed he would report back to the Forum at a later date following such discussions, with an update on identified good practice.

Action 4.1: CFRA Dan Stephens to arrange (and chair) a meeting with the three FRAs and representative bodies with a view of identifying good practice in relation to reducing the risk of fire contaminants to firefighters.

Agenda Item 5: FRS Culture and Values

13. The Deputy Minister referred to the media reports on abuse and harassment cases in several fire and rescue services across the UK and in particular, to the findings of the independent review of culture in London Fire Brigade which had led to His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) report on the values and culture of fire services in England. She acknowledged that concerns were not restricted to the emergency services, and extended to all walks of life, cultures and society as a whole. Members agreed that this was an issue that was not exclusive to the fire and rescue service referring to similarly shocking reports from the GMB and RCN, and with recent revelations about the WRU and the CBI.
14. Whilst the issues were very challenging, the Deputy Minister recognised that there was now an opportunity for the FRAs to get on the front foot in how they handle cases reported to them, highlighting the [Wales TUC Sexual Harassment in the Workplace](#) toolkit as a way of supporting them in doing so.
15. It was noted that the toolkit had received positive endorsement from a number of organisations, including the Joint Council for Wales which had pledged its support. The Deputy Minister suggested Rhianydd Williams from Wales TUC be invited to a future Forum meeting to deliver the TUC's presentation on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace.
16. Concerns were raised that in some cases the media reported inaccurate information on how organisations handled reports of abuse and harassment, often reporting they had not been responded to at all, exacerbating the situation. Councillor Gebbie indicated that it was important to find a way to make the public understand that employers were taking action to deal with cases whilst at the same time not breaching the employment rights of the individuals involved. CFO Jakeway agreed, recognising it was about having reassurance that appropriate action had been taken. Philippa Marsden suggested that what the FRAs do publicly and collectively on what behaviours the services support and will stand for, could drive a change in culture. CFO Docx recognised that whilst we might not be able to change society, organisations could demand appropriate and respectful behaviour in the workplace.

17. The Deputy Minister suggested that when developing policy on the issues, that discussions involve staff from all levels of an organisation to ensure they can be delivered in practice and at a lower level. CG referenced the FBU's policy of '*all different, all equal*' giving every member the right to be accepted and treated the same as everyone else. He further confirmed the FBU would facilitate training sessions for officials in the FBU on the matter.
18. Referring to HMICFRS' report on the values and culture of fire services in England published on 30 March, CFO Jakeway confirmed that all three FRAs were conducting a gap analysis. He acknowledged however, that the report also contained recommendations for government and suggested a summary of the recommendations be set out and who was responsible for each. CFO Jakeway also suggested a collective approach in responding to the recommendations. SP agreed, indicating officials were already in discussions with the Home Office in respect of the recommendations that could only work on a UK-wide basis, for instance the recommendation for a national barred list that holds details of staff who have been dismissed for gross misconduct (including staff who have already left services). He acknowledged that where, for instance, recommendations related to the Fire Standards Board, this applied to England only and not to Wales. In order to address this, an addendum to the National Framework to incorporate the recommendations for the Fire Standards Board in England would be considered. SP suggested a further meeting was needed to reflect on Wales' response to the recommendations and to report back on that at the next Forum meeting in July.
19. KH recognised that there was an opportunity for Wales to drive best practice and to do it first in Wales. The Deputy Minister agreed, confirming the Forum could be a means of tracking progress. CFO Jakeway referred to the 'Speak Up Guardians' in the NHS in England. He explained these were individuals in the NHS Trust that employees can go to, to raise issues and voice concerns. He suggested ascertaining if this was good practice and to consider introducing for Wales. PM agreed to find out and report back to the Forum. Councillor Gebbie referred to the many different communication systems in the health boards in Wales which made for ineffective communication methods. She indicated a piece of work being undertaken in the Cwm Taf area in which Speak Up Guardians was being considered. The Deputy Minister asked that the Forum be kept informed of developments.

Action 5.1: Officials to invite Rhianydd Williams from the Wales TUC to a future meeting to deliver a presentation on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace.

Action 5.2: PM to find out more about the Speak Up Guardians in England and report back to the Forum. Councillor Gebbie to keep the Forum updated on developments regarding Speak Up Guardians.

Action 5.3: Officials to facilitate a meeting with FRAs to reflect on Wales' response to the recommendations from HMICFRS' report on the values and culture of fire services in England and to report back to the next Forum meeting in July.

Agenda Item 6: AOB

20. The Deputy Minister asked members of the Forum to consider any items for discussion at the next meeting in July. Councillor Gebbie suggested an item on the National Joint Council (NJC) workstream on Broadening the Role of Firefighters. It was confirmed this would be added to the agenda.
21. Councillor Williams notified members of the Forum that he would be stepping down as Chair of Mid and West Wales FRA in June; this would be the end of his 2 year appointment. The Deputy Minister thanked Councillor Williams for his contribution and service and wished him well. This was echoed by other Forum members.

Action 6.1: Secretariat to include an item on the NJC workstream on Broadening the Role of Firefighters at the next meeting on 5 July.

Note of meeting

In attendance:

Hannah Blythyn MS, Deputy Minister for Social Partnership (Chair)
Dan Stephens, Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser - WG
Councillor Steve Bradwick, Chair South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA)
Councillor Dylan Rees, Chair North Wales FRA (via Teams)
Councillor Gwynfor Thomas, Chair Mid and West Wales FRA
Councillor Jane Gebbie, WLGA spokesperson for Workforce
Cerith Griffiths, Fire Brigades Union
Mark Palmer, Fire and Rescue Services Association
Stewart Forshaw, Fire Leaders' Association (via Teams)
Ade Robinson, Chief Executive, Fire Officers' Association (via Teams)

CFO Huw Jakeway, South Wales FRA
CFO Dawn Docx, North Wales FRA
CFO Roger Thomas, Mid and West Wales FRA
Liz Lalley, Director, Risk, Resilience and Community Safety - WG
Neil Surman, Head of Social Partnership - WG
Steve Pomeroy, Head of Fire Services Branch – WG
David Hooson, Special Adviser – WG (via Teams)
Kerry Citric, Fire Services Branch - WG
Cerys Myers, Fire Services Branch – WG (secretariat)
Andrea Street, Building Safety – WG
Audrey Johns, Building Safety – WG
Jo Larner, Building Safety – WG (via Teams)
Rhianydd Williams, Wales TUC

Apologies

Naomi Alleyne, WLGA
Karin Phillips, Deputy Director of Community Safety - WG

Agenda Item 1: Welcome/Opening remarks

1. The Deputy Minister for Social Partnership welcomed everyone to the third meeting of the Social Partnership Forum for Fire and Rescue Services and apologised for the delay due to issues with the technology.
2. The Deputy Minister extended a welcome to Cllr Gwynfor Thomas, (new Chair of Mid and West Wales FRA), Stewart Forshaw (new representative for the Fire Leaders' Association) and Mark Palmer, attending on behalf of Tristan Ashby (FRSA). The Deputy Minister also welcomed Rhianydd Williams, Wales TUC and Andrea Street, Audrey Johns and Jo Larner from Welsh Government's Building Safety Team. The Deputy Minister recorded her thanks to Richard Fairhead for his contribution to the Forum and wished him well in his retirement.

Agenda Item 2: Minutes from last meeting on 26 April and Matters Arising

3. Prior to the meeting, members of the Forum were provided with an update on the six actions arising from the last meeting on 26 April. Further to those updates, the Deputy Minister explained that the meeting with the Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution and the Chairs and Chief Fire Officers of the FRAs had taken place to discuss the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill. The Deputy Minister suggested the Bill, and its implications for Wales, be discussed again at a future meeting of the Forum, if and, when the Bill received Royal Assent.
4. Steve Pomeroy referred to the action to reflect on Wales' response to His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) report. All three of the FRAs had provided detailed responses to the Deputy Minister's letter of 6 May which provided assurance that they were taking appropriate action to implement the recommendations for FRAs. The remaining recommendations required development at a national level and would be progressed by Welsh Government in discussion with the Home Office and the other devolved governments. A written update would be provided at the next meeting to set out the position in detail across all of the recommendations.
5. The Deputy Minister added that the representatives for the Forum from the green book unions, Unison, Unite and GMB, had been confirmed the previous day. The details of the meeting had been shared with them, but they had been unable to attend. The Deputy Minister indicated that she would meet the new members to update them on the purpose of the Forum and developments to date, in advance of their attendance at the next meeting.

Action 2.1: Officials to provide a paper on Wales' response to the recommendations of the HMICFRS report, at the next meeting on 25 October.

Action 2.2: Officials to arrange a meeting between the Deputy Minister and Unison, Unite and GMB representatives, in advance of the next meeting.

Agenda Item 3: Building Safety

6. Building Safety officials provided an update on remediation works, including progress on buildings where developers have signed up to a contract to undertake life critical fire safety works, the initial cohort of orphan buildings and the PAS 9980 Task and Finish Group, which included representation from the Fire and Rescue Service.
7. Officials from the Building Safety team updated on proposals for changes to the building safety regime for multi-occupied residential buildings at the occupation phase and the implications for the FRAs.
8. Work had continued to take place to build on proposals originally set out in the [Safer Buildings in Wales](#) White Paper. The proposals aimed to establish a robust and coherent regulatory system, which would hold those responsible to account

and ensure accurate, up to date information was held on all in-scope, multi-occupied residential buildings. This was to include the identification of an accountable person to be responsible for managing building safety risks and would include enforcement sanctions and collaboration issues. It was anticipated that local authorities would maintain a register of the buildings and accountable persons. Although Local Authorities would be responsible for regulating the regime, responsibility for fire safety would remain with FRS. This meant that there would be a need for greater collaboration and information sharing between the FRS and LAs.

9. The Welsh Government was working alongside the WLGA to set up a Joint Inspection Team (JIT) for Wales. The JIT would bring added capacity to inspection and was intended to be a live learning experience over a period of two years. This work was progressing although there were some issues still being worked through.
10. The Welsh Government had also commissioned IFF Research to look at the current building safety workforce, specifically, Housing and Environmental Health teams and the support services they used, such as legal and administration. This work was looking at a range of issues including capacity, learning and development and barriers to enforcement. The final report was expected to be received in August and would be published in the autumn.
11. A series of workshops was underway to discuss the proposed occupation phase regime reforms with local authorities and the FRAs. The FRAs were thanked for their continued support in developing the proposals.
12. The following points were raised:-
 - Cllr Gebbie raised concerns about the responsibility being placed upon local authorities which would add to the existing pressures they faced in terms of workforce capacity. Local authorities were experiencing difficulty in recruitment and retention in building control and legal services. Cllr Gebbie also raised concerns with limiting the JIT appointments to a two-year contract, suggesting this may deter applicants.
 - Cllr Bradwick queried the level of funding required to implement the proposals, and voiced concerns over the lack of awareness of the position on buildings in Senedd Members' own areas.
 - CFO Docx queried North Wales region representation at the workshops. Audrey Johns advised that Lee Williams and Tim Owens represented the FRA from North Wales but would need to confirm the LA representative.
 - CFO Jakeway recognised that some work was needed to ensure the Fire Safety Act 2021 and Building Safety Act 2022 interacted with each other. CFO Jakeway added that the local authorities and the fire and rescue authorities would need to work through the sensitivities surrounding the regulatory role, at the planned workshops. He reiterated his concern that six years after the

Grenfell Tower fire, there were still buildings in Wales that required remediation.

- CFO Thomas referred to the delay in appointing the JIT and queried the start time of the two-year appointments. It was confirmed that currently plans are for the two-year period to commence once the team had been enrolled.
13. The Deputy Minister recognised the workforce challenges presented by the proposals and stated that the purpose of the Forum was to provide a space to voice such concerns. The Deputy Minister indicated that she would follow up concerns regarding Senedd members having an up to date understanding of the current building safety landscape in Wales with officials outside the meeting. The Deputy Minister agreed that the information needed to be as accessible as possible to make clear that action was being taken. The Deputy Minister suggested the Building Safety team be invited back to a future meeting of the forum to provide an update on progress.
14. Andrea Street thanked the Forum for its feedback and confirmed that similar concerns about workforce had been raised at the workshops held to date and that they were mindful of this in their work. She further added that the Minister for Climate Change had issued a statement about building safety ([Plenary 04/07/2023 - Welsh Parliament \(assembly.wales\)](#)) recently. In terms of the JIT, Andrea Street recognised the challenges in recruiting on a short-term contract in terms of attractiveness to potential applicants but that there was some contingency in place to bring in expertise on an ad-hoc basis if needed. The JIT had established a steering group to assist with the recruitment phase and to begin to think about evaluation. Andrea Street noted that in terms of building safety across reform and remediation, consideration had been given to various mechanisms for communicating the changes to the public. This ranged from regular newsletters to social media campaigns. Building Safety officials would share the latest newsletter with the Deputy Minister, and details of how to access this and future updates with Forum members.

Action 3.1: Building Safety officials to confirm LA representatives from North Wales that had attended the workshops.

Action 3.2: Building Safety officials to provide a copy of the most recent newsletter to the Deputy Minister for sharing with other members of the Senedd and include details of how to sign up to future updates to be shared with Forum Members.

Action 3.3: Officials to invite the Building Safety team to provide a further update at a future meeting of the forum.

Agenda Item 4: Sexual Harassment in the workplace

15. Rhianydd Williams explained that the Wales TUC had undertaken a survey amongst its workers and the results had shown various forms of sexual harassment had taken place. Sexual Harassment was now a standard agenda

item at all Wales TUC meetings. The FRAs were encouraged to follow this practice and to develop a statement to be read or displayed at every public meeting held, to outline its expectation of behavioural standards.

16. Rhianydd Williams explained that technology had become a key part in the movement of change of sexual harassment and domestic terrorism. She referred to the various social media channels currently available, such as Tik Tok, Pick up Artists and Dating Life Coaches, and named a number of content creators who focussed on masculine empowerment and rejection of feminism. The content appeared to have a strong influence on younger persons, particularly those that are lonely and vulnerable and may lack social interaction with their peers.
17. The [Wales TUC Sexual Harassment in the Workplace](#) toolkit was aimed at union officials and workplace representatives to help reduce this type of behaviour, recognising that no workforce was immune. The Wales TUC had engaged with the Welsh Governments Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse team to produce an All-Wales Sexual Harassment Policy. The Work Protection Bill, aimed at placing a duty on employers to protect employees from sexual harassment in the workplace, was likely to fail in Parliament. Rhianydd Williams indicated that the challenge now was for the Welsh Government to consider how it could support the policy in Wales. The Deputy Minister agreed that abuse and harassment in the workplace could not be tolerated and recognised that managers also needed support to ensure that incidents were dealt with fairly and effectively.
18. The Forum made the following observations:-
 - Cllr Gebbie spoke of instances where victims and perpetrators had disclosed information of their experiences, yet employers were prevented from disclosing the action it had taken to respond. There was no recourse for employers to reflect that an issue had been dealt with effectively.
 - Cllr Gebbie also referred to an incident where a perpetrator had been a trade union representative and the Trade Union had not disclosed the reported incident to the employer. Cllr Gebbie suggested that Trade Unions should be required to report any such incidents so that the employer could carry out the appropriate disciplinary procedures.
 - CFO Jakeway suggested building on the existing training materials and programmes aimed at young persons (through the FRAs Fire Cadets programme for instance), to help guide them to influential podcasts and appropriate male role models. But it was important that input on appropriate behaviours around misogyny were part of the overall school curriculum too.
 - CFO Jakeway informed the Forum of a legislative change to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order which allowed the fire and rescue services to access higher levels of Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) checks more efficiently. CFO Jakeway invited the unions to support the FRAs in implementing the change. The amendment was supported by the Forum with

no issues raised by any of the Trades Union representatives in attendance. CFO Jakeway would provide a copy of the press statement that had been issued by the National Fire Chiefs Council.

- Cllr Gebbie suggested a group photo of the Forum members with Rhianydd Williams, as representative of the Wales TUC, would demonstrate their support and endorsement of the Workplace Harassment Toolkit / agenda. The Forum agreed.

19. Rhianydd Williams advised that Wales TUC was considering the principles of the General Data Protection Regulations to reduce barriers that some employers have faced. She added that a campaign would be launched in October, which would focus on the interaction and communication amongst the male gender.

Action 4.1: CFO Jakeway to share a copy of the National Fire Chiefs Council press statement on changes to Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order.

Action 4.2: Officials to share contact details for Rhianydd Williams with the Forum.

Agenda Item 5: Health and Safety of Firefighters

20. CFRA Dan Stephens referred to the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) study into cancer incidence and mortality rates amongst firefighters, as raised by the FBU and discussed at the last meeting. The CFRA had produced a summary of the work that was being undertaken by the three FRAs, against each of the recommendations. The CFRA thanked the FRAs for the extensive level of detail they had provided.

21. The CFRA reported that he had met with the three FRAs and representative bodies on 14 June, to discuss the work that the FRAs had undertaken to date and to highlight areas of good practice. The note of that meeting had been provided to the Forum as part of the papers.

22. The CFRA noted that the FRAs had no control over matters relating to legislation around compensation, and the recording of occupation in health records, which were a matter for the Welsh Government. These issues had been raised with Health policy officials.

23. Cerith Griffiths thanked the Forum for the work undertaken to address the concerns raised. He added a further concern that the presentation by Dr Huw Rees, included as an appendix to the main report, may be seen as diminishing of the work undertaken by the UCLan. The CFRA and CFO Jakeway assured Cerith Griffiths that this was not the case, and that Dr Rees was offering a well-informed view based on his expertise in this area. CFO Thomas referred to an error in the summary of work compiled by the CFRA and clarified that firefighters in Mid and West Wales undertook bi-annual fitness testing whereas the instructors undertook annual testing. CFO Thomas added that a new facility for compartment fire

training had been built into their training centre at Earlswood. The Deputy Minister thanked the Forum for working in partnership to achieve the desired outcome.

Agenda Item 6: National Joint Council's project on Broadening the Role of Firefighters

24. The Deputy Minister invited Cllr Gebbie to lead the discussion. Cllr Gebbie informed the Forum that she was representing Wales at a working group established by the National Joint Council. Cllr Gebbie asked the Welsh Government to clarify its position ahead of the first meeting, which was to take place in September. The Deputy Minister agreed that we needed clarity on what the outcome of any NJC discussions on broadening the role would mean for FRAs in Wales, but also how the work to develop the BRF specification in Wales should feed into the NJC discussions as this ultimately set out the agreed support needed for the NHS in Wales. The Deputy Minister indicated that this would be picked up with Cllr Gebbie outside the meeting. It was also agreed that Cllr Gebbie would provide feedback on NJC progress at the next meeting.
25. Huw Jakeway pointed out that the Home Office White Paper on FRA reform fed into these developments. The Deputy Minister informed the Forum that she had met with Rt Hon Chris Philp MP recently where he had expressed interest in progressing the broadening the role agenda in England. As part of that discussion, the Deputy Minister had briefed the Home Office Minister on the work undertaken in Wales to establish the needs of the NHS and the firefighter safety issues that have emerged as part of that work. The UK Government's White Paper was expected to be published in the forthcoming months. A link would be provided to the Forum.

Action 6.1: Officials to update Cllr Gebbie on the Welsh Government's position on Broadening the Role of Firefighters, in advance of the NJC Working Group meeting in September.

Action 6.2: Officials to circulate a link to the UK Government's response to its White Paper once published.

Agenda Item 7: AOB

26. The Deputy Minister asked members of the Forum to consider any items for discussion at the next meeting in October. Councillor Gebbie suggested an item on White Ribbon Day. It was confirmed this would be added to the agenda along with an update on BRF NJC developments, the Home Office white paper and, as previously discussed, an update on action taken regarding HMICFRS Culture recommendations.

Action 7.1: Secretariat to include agenda items on White Ribbon Day, Broadening the Role of Firefighters NJC developments, the Home Office White Paper response and the HMICFRS Culture recommendations, at the next meeting on 25 October.

Note of meeting

In attendance:

Hannah Blythyn MS	Deputy Minister for Social Partnership (Chair)
Dan Stephens	Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, WG
Cllr Paul Cunningham	Deputy Chair, North Wales FRA (via Teams)
Cllr Gwynfor Thomas	Chair, Mid and West Wales FRA
Cllr Jane Gebbie	WLGA spokesperson for Workforce
Cerith Griffiths	Fire Brigades Union
Tristan Ashby	Fire and Rescue Services Association (via Teams)
Zoe Codd	Unite the Union (via Teams)
Darron Dupre	UNISON
Gareth Morgans	GMB (via Teams)
CFO Huw Jakeway	South Wales FRA
CFO Dawn Docx	North Wales FRA
CFO Roger Thomas	Mid and West Wales FRA
Naomi Alleyne	WLGA
Liz Lalley	Director, Risk, Resilience and Community Safety, WG
Stephen Layne	Deputy Director Fair Work, WG
Steve Pomeroy	Head of Fire Services Branch, WG
Kerry Citric	Fire Services Branch, WG
Lisa Walters	Fire Services Branch, WG (secretariat)

Apologies

Cllr Steve Bradwick	Chair, South Wales FRA
Cllr Dylan Rees	Chair, North Wales FRA
Ade Robinson	Fire Officers' Association
Stewart Forshaw	Fire Leaders' Association
Karin Phillips	Deputy Director of Community Safety, WG

Agenda Item 1: Welcome/Opening remarks

1. The Deputy Minister welcomed everyone to the fourth meeting of the Social Partnership Forum for Fire and Rescue Services, extending a welcome to new standing members, Zoe Codd (Unite), Darron Dupre (UNISON) and Gareth Morgans (GMB). The Deputy Minister explained to members that she had met with Zoe, Darron and Gareth for an introductory meeting on 4 October and to give them a flavour of the work of the Forum to date. The Deputy Minister also informed members that the minutes from the first three meetings of the Forum had been provided to Zoe, Darron and Gareth, and that she welcomed their contributions to future discussions.
2. The Deputy Minister also welcomed Cllr Paul Cunningham (Deputy Chair, North Wales FRA), deputising for Cllr Dylan Rees; and Stephen Layne, Deputy Director of Fair Work (WG), attending to cover the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023, at agenda item 3. Apologies were noted from Cllr Dylan Rees, Cllr Steve

Bradwick, Stewart Forshaw, Ade Robinson and Karin Phillips. The Deputy Minister also extended her best wishes to Cllr Bradwick.

Agenda Item 2: Minutes from last meeting on 5 July and Matters Arising

3. Prior to the meeting, members of the Forum were provided with the note of the last meeting on 5 July and an update on the 10 actions arising from it. The Deputy Minister reflected that all of the actions had been discharged as indicated, apart from action 6.2 which was for officials to circulate a link to the UK Government's (UKG) response to its White Paper on reforming Fire and Rescue Services in England, when published. The Deputy Minister explained that the UKG's response to its consultation had not yet been published, and therefore a link to the response and a follow-up discussion at a future Forum meeting would take place following its publication. The Deputy Minister suggested however, that publication of the response might be delayed pending the next general election. Members endorsed the note of the last meeting as presented.
4. The Deputy Minister informed members that the Terms of Reference for the Forum had been updated to reflect standing members from UNISON, Unite and GMB. Darron Dupre clarified that all three unions (UNISON, Unite and GMB) had been fully willing to attend the last meeting of the Forum in July, except for the late invitation (the day before), and wished to put that on record. The Deputy Minister explained that there had been a misunderstanding in communications.

Agenda Item 3: Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023

5. The Deputy Minister invited Stephen Layne to present the item. Stephen explained to members that the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 which received Royal Assent on 20 July, had three main principles:
 - Provides the Secretary of State with regulation making powers to specify minimum services levels across a range of public services during periods of strike action;
 - Enables employers to serve a "work notice" when strike action is called. The work notice will identify the individuals required to work and the work they must do to maintain minimum service levels during strike action;
 - Requires Trade Unions to take "reasonable steps" to encourage members who are identified in the work notice to attend work and not participate in strike action.
6. Stephen explained that the reasonable steps will include Trade Unions having to issue a "compliance notice" encouraging members to comply with the work notice. The compliance notice is expected to remind members of the work notice issued, instruct those who have been served a work notice to ignore strike action, and to actively encourage members to cross the picket line. Whilst adhering to those requirements would provide Trade Unions with immunity from being sued for economic loss, Stephen expressed that the reasonable steps require trade unions to operate in ways that effectively undermine strike action and members' rights to strike. Workers who breach a work notice would lose protection from unfair dismissal.

7. Stephen Layne referred to the Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution's latest [letter](#) to the UKG in which he reaffirmed the Welsh Government's opposition to the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act because in the Welsh Government's view, the Act is unnecessary, probably unworkable and interferes with devolved public services. Stephen further commented that there had been no campaign from employers or members of the public to legislate for a minimum service level. He further indicated that the Act would not help industrial relations.
8. Stephen Layne explained that the Act was a skeleton framework on how the minimum service levels would operate and that the detail, which was still being defined, would become clearer when the draft regulations were published. Stephen informed members that the timetable for publishing the draft regulations was uncertain and difficult to predict. He further advised however, that ahead of making the regulations, the UKG had undertaken a public consultation on the reasonable steps trade unions should take to ensure their members comply with a work notice served by an employer, as well as developing guidance for employers, trade unions and workers on the serving of work notices.
9. Stephen Layne stressed that it was clear the UKG was committed to the Act, and recognised the importance of discussions like this to help determine how public services in Wales would respond to a minimum service level regulation. Passenger rail services would probably be the UKG's first priority to progress.
10. The Deputy Minister thanked Stephen for the update and invited members to respond. Cllr Gebbie sought clarification on whether the Act was within the legislative competence of the Senedd. She also asked if the Welsh Government was planning to issue guidance and whether the UKG was able to challenge the Welsh FRAs for non-compliance of the Act. CFO Jakeway also asked whether any Wales-specific guidance would be issued to support the regulations, and if so, the timings for publication. In response, Stephen Layne explained that the question of competence had been considered in depth and had no further mileage. He further explained that whilst the Senedd had opposed the Legislative Consent Motion (LCM) on the Bill's content for Wales, the UKG had ignored it (as they also did for Scotland) on the basis that the Act's provisions were within the realm of industrial action and must therefore apply equally across Wales, Scotland and England. Stephen also confirmed that there would be no Wales-specific guidance as doing so, would give credence to the Act. He further stressed that social partnership was the best and most appropriate vehicle for agreeing any service levels during strike action.
11. Gareth Morgans thanked Stephen for the update, acknowledging full support to the Welsh Government's stance on minimum service levels. He reflected on Trade Unions' proud history of preserving public safety and prioritising 'life and limb' and expressed insult to the Act's expectation for Trade Unions to encourage its members to cross picket lines. He further reflected that Trade Unions' priority would always be to avoid industrial action. Cerith Griffiths also thanked Stephen for the update reflecting on Firefighter pay negotiations last year which had a strong mandate to negotiate, and which had negated the need for strike action. He also reflected on historical periods of industrial action where firefighters had agreed to respond to certain incidents during those periods.

12. CFO Jakeway reflected on his service's proud record of social partnership and the potential conflict that might arise from a requirement to issue work notices. He explained that currently, South Wales FRA's operational resilience arrangements during periods of industrial action were discharged through a cohort of auxiliary firefighters. He questioned therefore, that should he continue to utilise the auxiliary firefighters during periods of industrial action as opposed to issuing a work notice, would his FRA be liable if a serious incident were to occur during that time.
13. In response, Stephen Layne explained that employers would have complete discretion on the issuing of work notices. Whilst minimum service levels will be law, he indicated that it would be down to the employer to decide how they could meet those minimum service levels, whether that be through issuing a work notice or otherwise, or through a social partnership arrangement which could encourage a voluntary minimum service level. Stephen acknowledged that any decision, however, would depend on how the minimum service levels are set, and recognised the difficulty of doing so until the draft regulations were published. Darron Dupre suggested introducing a formal mechanism to strengthen our social partnership arrangements where employers had not issued a work notice.
14. CFO Docx also welcomed the discussion. She acknowledged however, that whilst it was unlikely that South Wales FRA would need to issue a work notice in view of its auxiliary support, it could be different for North Wales FRA depending on the minimum service level set.
15. Stephen Layne acknowledged all were valid points, which he said put into perspective how unhelpful and unworkable the Act was. The Deputy Minister thanked members for the useful discussion and confirmed the Forum would discuss the item again at a future meeting.

Action 3.1: Secretariat to include an item on the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 at a future meeting of the Forum.

Agenda Item 4: White Ribbon Day

16. The Deputy Minister reflected that Cllr Gebbie had suggested this item at the last meeting in July and invited her to lead the discussion. Cllr Gebbie was frustrated that the press only published negative stories about the FRAs when there was a vast amount of positive work being undertaken across the three FRAs towards the VAWDA SV agenda. She felt therefore, that the Forum presented an opportunity to hear about some of that work and invited the three CFOs to provide an update in their respective services:

South Wales FRA – CFO Jakeway explained that South Wales FRA had been a proud champion of White Ribbon for many years and to the Welsh Government's Live Fear Free campaign. In support of this year's White Ribbon campaign, he indicated that his service would host a live panel discussion across stations to include a policy and survivor aspect. He also reported that all fire stations across South Wales were designated Safe Havens for anyone in imminent danger and that they were being utilised. CFO Jakeway also informed members that his

service had introduced a digital solution for all stations where call boxes had been fitted outside stations so that anyone at risk could call the service, with those calls directed to joint fire control in Bridgend. It was noted the space outside fire stations were illuminated at night to provide a safe environment. CFO Jakeway advised that those facilities would be promoted during their 16 days of activism for this year's White Ribbon campaign. CFO Jakeway also reported that South Wales FRA's three year White Ribbon re-accreditation had been endorsed by senior management and would be presented to the White Ribbon charity imminently.

North Wales FRA – CFO Docx informed members that her service was undertaking a social media campaign in support of this year's White Ribbon campaign and that all North Wales FRA fire stations and appliances had been branded in support of White Ribbon. She also reported that a working group had been established to sit under the service's Equalities Adviser and that her service was currently in the process of re-accreditation for White Ribbon status.

Mid and West Wales FRA – CFO Thomas confirmed that training on the VAWDA SV was part of his service's training programme and reported an 88 per cent completion rate for staff undertaking induction training. He further confirmed that 'Ask and Act' and Safeguarding training was also delivered to staff and that fire stations were designated Safe Havens, and had been used. CFO Thomas also indicated that the VAWDA SV agenda formed part of his service's Culture Action Plan.

17. Cllr Gebbie highlighted that incidents of domestic abuse had increased during the pandemic, reporting 917 cases in 2021 and 1236 in 2022, in Bridgend alone. The Deputy Minister thanked Cllr Gebbie for suggesting the item and agreed it should be discussed again at a future Forum meeting. The Deputy Minister also welcomed input from other members of the Forum of activity being undertaken elsewhere. Darron Dupre agreed a future discussion would be helpful and asked how the White Ribbon campaign and other work to support the VAWDA SV agenda could be turned into measurable outcomes, and whether that was about measuring the number of cases.
18. Cllr Gebbie confirmed that data was maintained by local authorities and could be presented to members. CFO Jakeway recognised however, that an increase in numbers might be as a result of increased confidence in victims to report incidents. He further confirmed that the three FRAs were leading in the delivery of the Welsh Government's National Training Framework and were members of the VAWDA National Programme Board.

Action 4.1: Secretariat to include an item on the VAWDA SV agenda at a future meeting on the Forum.

Agenda Item 5: His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services' (HMICFRS) report on FRS culture and values

19. The Deputy Minister indicated that a written update on progress against the 35 recommendations contained in HMICFRS' report into the culture and values of the Fire and Rescue Services in England had been circulated to members prior to the

meeting. The Deputy Minister thanked the CFOs for providing their updates and invited CFRA Dan Stephens to lead discussions.

20. CFRA Stephens reflected that the majority of the 35 recommendations in HMICFRS' report were targeted at the CFOs and were captured in Appendix 1 to the paper circulated. CFRA Stephens acknowledged a discrepancy in the covering paper to the item (paragraph 3, first bullet) where it should read '*NW has introduced 'Safe Call', MAWW is identifying an Independent Reporting Line (IRL)*', and confirmed that would be corrected. He further explained that the recommendations targeted at the Home Office would be for the Welsh Government to consider.
21. CFRA Stephens indicated that a proportionate reporting mechanism had been established for the FRAs and the updates provided were reflective of that. The Deputy Minister stressed the importance of recognising that it would take time to embed the recommendations into normal working practices, and welcomed feedback at a later date on how implementation of the recommendations was having a positive impact.
22. CFO Docx indicated that North Wales FRA's position had changed since providing her initial update. She explained that the number of complaints into the service had increased, which was likely due to increase in staff confidence to complain. CFO Docx further explained that the complaints were of varying levels, with not all requiring further action.
23. CFO Thomas confirmed that his service had received its final cultural audit report. Whilst the report had contained some uncomfortable content, he reported there was some equally positive content also. He recognised this was a starting point and confirmed that an action plan to address the issues had been developed.
24. CFO Jakeway indicated that the findings and recommendations from the independent cultural review of his service would be completed by the end of the calendar year, and published after that.
25. Cllr Gebbie was concerned that the press would only report on the negative cases and emphasised the importance of reporting in a wider context to the public. The Deputy Minister recognised it was about having the right systems and process in place to manage it. Whilst Gareth Morgans welcomed easier reporting mechanisms for staff to report complaints, he expressed concern that it could also provide an opportunity for those with personal vendettas to use it inappropriately, and therefore stressed the importance of working with Trade Unions.

Agenda Item 6: National Joint Council's project on Broadening the Role of Firefighters

26. The Deputy Minister invited Cllr Gebbie to update members on the latest discussions from the National Joint Council's working group on broadening the role of firefighters. Cllr Gebbie informed members however, that the working group had not met since the last meeting of the Forum and as such, there was no update to report. The Deputy Minister reflected that she had met with Cllr Andrew

Morgan (Leader of the WLGA) and Cllr Gebbie on 20 September where she outlined Wales' position on the broadening the role agenda, and also in a follow-up letter to Cllr Gebbie on 11 October.

Agenda Item 7: AOB

27. The Deputy Minister asked members of the Forum if there were any other issues they wished to discuss. None were raised.
28. It was agreed that any documents provided to members were provided as attachments as opposed to links to improve accessibility.

Summary of Actions

Action	Update
<u>Action 3.1:</u> Secretariat to include an item on the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023 at a future meeting of the Forum.	
<u>Action 4.1:</u> Secretariat to include an item on the VAWDA SV agenda at a future meeting on the Forum.	

SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP FORUM FOR FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

Agenda

11 March 2024 12:30-14:00 – Hybrid

Chair – Deputy Minister for Social Partnership

Item	Agenda Item	Owner	Style
1.	Welcome/Opening Remarks	Deputy Minister for Social Partnership	Verbal
	For Approval/Decision		
2.	Minutes from last meeting on 25 October and Matters Arising	Deputy Minister for Social Partnership	Paper
	For Discussion		
3.	FRS Culture and Values <u>Purpose:</u> to discuss the wider implications of Fenella Morris KC's report of culture in South Wales FRA.	Deputy Minister for Social Partnership	Verbal
4.	AOB	Deputy Minister for Social Partnership	Verbal

Next Meeting – 8 May 2024