

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



Report to the Cabinet

Meeting Date: 29 January 2019
Cabinet Member: Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn
Contact Officer: Vera Jones
Contact Number: 01286 679267
Item Title: Gwynedd Council response to the White Paper: Consultation on reform of the Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales' governance and funding arrangements

1 DECISION SOUGHT

1.1. The Cabinet's agreement to form a final response to the above consultation based on the draft response to the consultation on the governance and funding arrangements for the Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales (appendix A) to be adjusted according to any comments from Cabinet members during the meeting.

2 REASON WHY DECISION IS NEEDED

2.1 To ensure agreement on the response from Gwynedd Council to the consultation document following input by Cabinet members.

3 INTRODUCTION AND REASON AND JUSTIFICATION BEHIND THE DECISION

3.1 The White Paper: Consultation on reform of the Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales' governance and funding arrangements was published on 13th November, 2018. The closing date for responses is 5th February 2019.

3.2 The paper consults on five main elements as follows:

- The Case for Change – aims for reforming the service(Chapter 1)
- Designing a New System (Chapter 2)
- Governance and Membership (Chapter 3)
- Proposals for funding (Chapter 4)
- Performance Management (Chapter 5)

With specific questions asked per chapter.

The report in Appendix A outlines the key issues per chapter, along with the consultation questions and the draft response from Gwynedd Council.

4 NEXT STEPS & TIMETABLE

- 4.1 Formal response on behalf of the Council by the closing date of 5th February 2019

5 ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO MAKING THE DECISION

Statutory Officers response:

i. Monitoring Officer:

I have co-operated with the author on this response. From the perspective of the proposed democratic arrangements the exact nature of the case for change, the link between that case and the proposed changes and realising outcomes are difficult to follow at times. This is reflected in the draft responses.

ii. Head of Finance:

I have co-operated with the author on this response and support the content.

In the response in Chapter 4, I agree that the funding arrangements for the Fire Service needs to be reviewed, and a precept system would be much more transparent rather than the current levy arrangements for the region's local authorities. Of course, we are happy to continue to collect the money on behalf of the Fire Authority, however the amount and increase should appear separately on the council tax bill, like the precept for the police and the community councils. This would lead to improved accountability from the Fire Authority for its expenditure.

In accordance with improved accountability, I also agree with the response to Chapter 3, where it is noted that strategic and Financial decisions should be in the hands of elected members on the Fire Authority, rather than the responsibility of the Chief Fire Officer.

Appendix