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Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

Local Government (Wales) Bill: Stage 1

Response from: North Wales Fire and Rescue

Consultation on the Local Government (Wales) Bill

Thank you for your letter dated 28 January 2015 inviting comments on the above, and specifically on the proposed provision to suspend the requirement under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 for the Welsh Ministers to hold an inquiry if they wish to revoke or amend a Fire and Rescue combination order as a consequence of a voluntary merger.

In response North Wales Fire and Rescue Service wish to make the following observations to assist the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee's consideration of the Bill:

1. We note the reference in the explanatory memorandum at paragraph 47 to a continuing duty to consult in the absence of an inquiry - "However, the duty to consult on such changes will still apply". We assume that this refers to the duty on the principal local authorities that are considering entering into a voluntary merger (section 4 of the bill) but would welcome the inclusion of clarification that this is what is meant;
2. In the event of boundary changes of existing FRAs to avoid having one new local authority served by two FRAs, this would inevitably impact upon all the other local authorities served by the FRAs, not only the merging authorities. We therefore suggest the inclusion of a reference to this secondary effect framed around the need to consult with all affected authorities;

Continued

3. Again, with reference to boundary changes to existing FRAs, we would welcome additional consideration by the Committee of the many advantages of co-terminosity of authorities and the benefit of having mergers that contribute to achieving or maintaining co-terminosity of authorities in an area.

Yours faithfully

Simon A Smith
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER