# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Culture and values in Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service and North Wales Fire and Rescue Service** |
| **DATE** | **11 March 2024** |
| **BY** | **Hannah Blythyn MS, Deputy Minister for Social Partnership** |

Last month, I took the unprecedented step to appoint four commissioners to take over the running of South Wales Fire and Rescue Service. This followed a damning report by Fenella Morris KC, which revealed persistent levels of staff misconduct, a dysfunctional workplace culture and serious and systemic failings in management at all levels.

I said I would reflect urgently on the extent to which similar issues were present in Wales’s two other fire and rescue services. I have subsequently met both the chief fire officers of Mid and West Wales and North Wales fire and rescue services and the chairs of the fire and rescue authorities to discuss the Morris report and its recommendations. At these meetings I sought assurances about the culture and values and set out my expectations about workplace culture in the services

Both organisations have embarked on comprehensive programmes to review and improve their organisational cultures. These build on their own staff surveys; seek to respond to an ITV News report about South Wales Fire and Rescue Service; the findings of His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services in England Spotlight report and the Morris report.

There are some examples of good practice in both services: for example, every fire station in North Wales has a dedicated support officer, who staff can approach in confidence and in Mid and West Wales, any employee can raise any issue with any level of management as of right.

However, I continue to receive correspondence from current and former employees of both organisations, including allegations of bullying, sexual harassment and favouritism in promotion.

The public need to be re-assured about the culture and related management practices in our fire and rescue services and staff need to be assured they have a safe and effective means to share their experiences – good and bad – within their organisation.

Both Mid and West Wales and North Wales fire and rescue services have agreed to carry out an independent review to:

* Undertake an assessment of the organisation’s current position in relation to Fenella Morris KC’s findings and other relevant studies regarding workplace culture; staff satisfaction and motivation; staff engagement; promotion arrangements; grievance arrangements; and workforce diversity.
* Consider the outcomes of work already commissioned by both organisations in these areas, such as staff engagement surveys and focus groups and the next steps proposed in response.
* Identify and prioritise opportunities for improvement, with indicative timelines for implementation.
* Engage fully and openly with current and former staff and with other interested parties as part of the above.
* Engage and involve appropriately the relevant trade unions and staff organisations in this process.
* Produce a report which will be published in full, except for any details which may identify individuals.

I would expect Mid and West Wales and North Wales fire and rescue services to make an appointment as soon as possible, and to publish a report no later than autumn 2024. I will, of course, keep Members updated.