

Fire & Rescue Service Governance reform in the context of the 'Levelling Up' White Paper

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West Yorkshire context

- WYFRA – 40 Fire stations, and 46 Fire appliances, employing circa 1500 people.
- Geographic area of 2029 Km², serving a population of circa 2.4M people, covering the Local Authorities of Kirklees, Leeds, Bradford, Wakefield and Calderdale.
- Metro Mayor Tracy Brabin elected in May 2021, West Yorkshire Combined Authority. The Metro Mayor has responsibility for policing, delegated to a Deputy Mayor as the PCC.
- WYFRA is coterminous with West Yorkshire Police and the MCA.
- WYFRS HMICFRS inspections: The last full inspection 2018/19 resulted in a grading of Good in all areas. The C-19 inspection was not graded, but all areas of preparedness and response were good.

Levelling Up White Paper – 2 February 2022

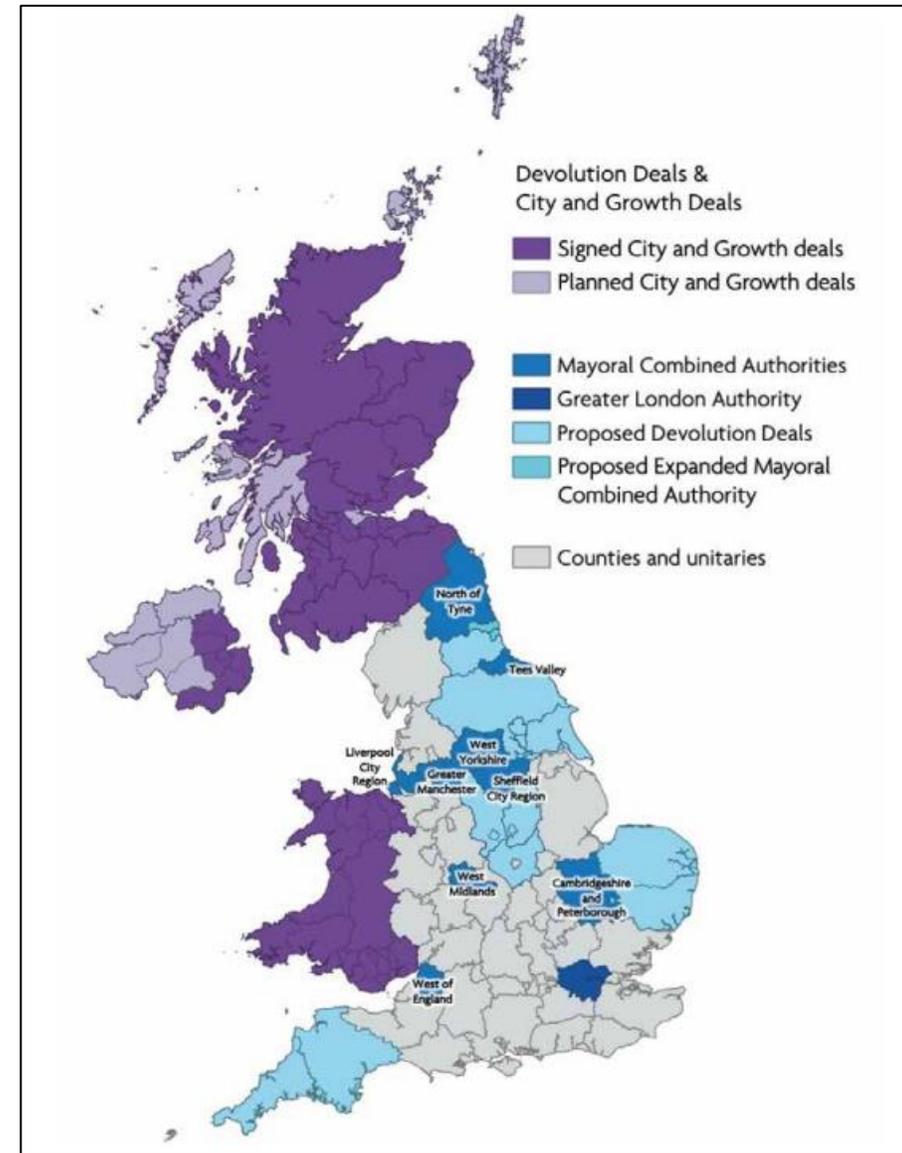
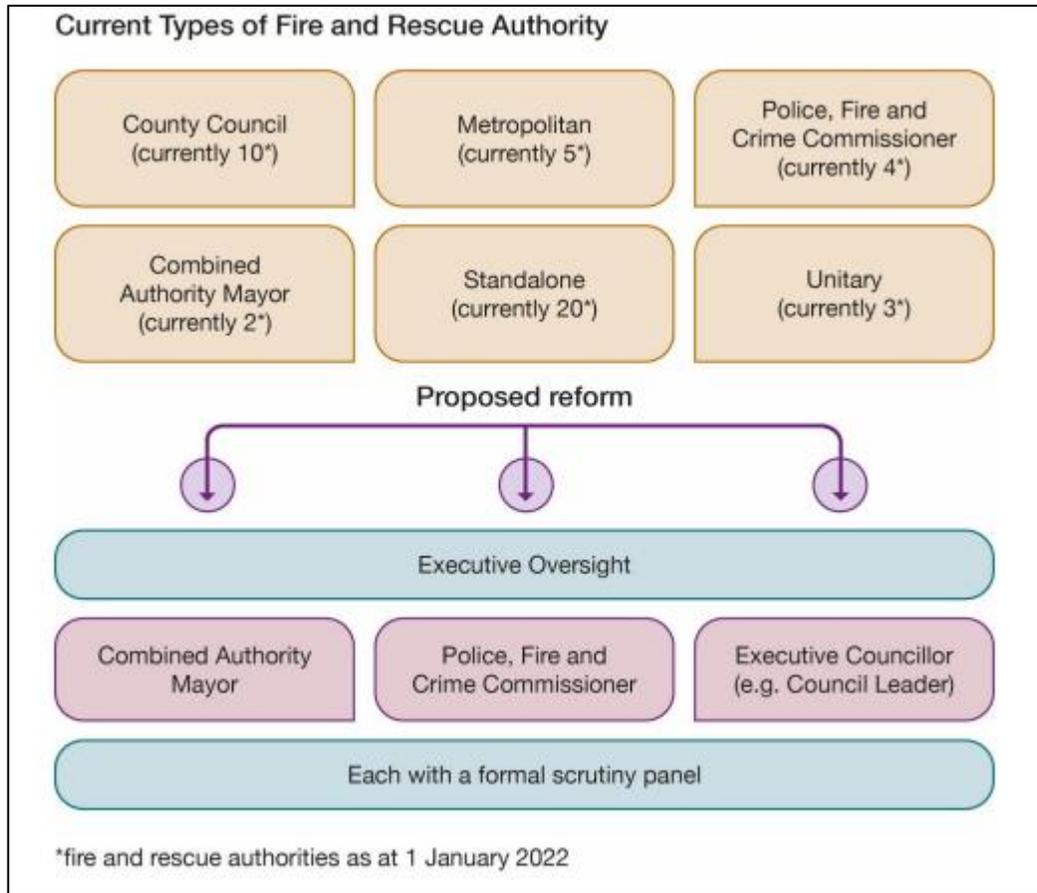
“Strengthening fire governance will be an important element of the fire reform White Paper “Reforming Our Fire Service”, in which options to transfer governance to an executive leader, such as a mayor, will be consulted on. The devolution framework will be updated following this consultation if appropriate. The UK Government will consider the role that directly elected mayors of local authorities with a county deal could have when it comes to police and fire governance.

The UK Government will take steps to remove barriers to combined authority mayors taking on public safety functions. Where there are existing or planned mayoral combined authorities with coterminous boundaries to PCCs and Fire and Rescue Authorities, the UK Government will look to transfer these functions to the Mayor. For remaining MCAs, resolution to any challenges will be sought, including exploring aligning boundaries.”

Reforming Our Fire & Rescue Service – 18 May 2022

“The government view is that oversight of fire services needs to change. Our preferred governance model is one that meets the following criteria:

- There has a single, elected – ideally directly elected – individual who is accountable for the service rather than governance by committee
- There is clear demarcation between the political and strategic oversight by this individual, and the operationally independent running of the service by the Chief Fire Officer
- That the person with oversight has control of necessary funding and estates
- Decision-making, including budgets and spending, is transparent and linked to local public priorities”



The current FRA Governance arrangements

Key Points

- The driving narrative of 'Levelling Up' is to 'empower decision makers in local areas'
- It also looks for combined authorities to have a 'clear role' in local resilience – this being an extension of the vision described in the Integrated Review (2021) which looked at UK national security
- In the 'Levelling Up' White Paper the Government has a vision to 'have all combined authority mayors lead on public safety – taking on the PCC role where boundaries align

Key Points

- Fire Reform White Paper describes a vision that provides for greater 'accountability and transparency' for the public
- It proposes to do this by simplifying fire governance models and providing for greater consistency
- The focus is on a single, elected, individual rather than the existing committee model which is in place in many areas
- To accompany this the White Paper proposes to implement the HMICFRS proposal to confer operational independence to Chief Fire Officers
- This will provide clear demarcation between the Executive Leader who will be charged with oversight and the setting of priorities, and the CFO will deliver these priorities to the public

Thank You

Questions and Discussion