

## Appendix A

**Options Appraisal Considered by CGIB – 31 October 2025****Options**

1. Any Executive Committee meetings, regardless of format, would be held in public, with all papers published in advance in the same manner as Fire Authority and other committee meetings. It is suggested that any model of Executive Committee decisions would be subject to scrutiny by the Scrutiny Committee.
2. This section provides an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of two options. It draws on desktop analysis of other executive committee models and feedback provided by two FRAs we have received direct feedback from.

**Option 1 – Adoption of an Executive Committee**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Streamlined decision-making process. Other FRAs said it was easier to brief and get engagement from a smaller number of councillors. This could help to ensure members have a more proactive role in decision making and are able to interrogate proposals more thoroughly.	It could be difficult to operate an Executive Committee in an FRA with just 15 members. Most FRAs have far more members than ours and this helps them to accommodate an Executive Committee within their structures. As Executive Committee members cannot serve on the Audit and Risk or Scrutiny committees, these latter committees would have to be served by many of the same councillors.
Greater agility in responding to urgent matters. It is easier to convene a small group of councillors for a meeting to discuss matters that need to be addressed at speed. It is also easier to ensure councillors are able to contribute to the debate on such matters in this smaller group setting.	One of the key reasons the CfGS report recommends the creation of an Executive Committee is that it is difficult to make decisions and have the space for members to debate them fully with such a large numbers of councillors on an FRA. However, this is less applicable in an authority with a comparatively small number of members.
With fewer members on the Executive Committee than the full Fire Authority, there is a reduced chance of a conflict of interest arising due to members	Risk of centralising power in the hands of those on the Executive Committee. There is a risk that this committee's decision-making mandate could give a small

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<p>exercising both decision-making and scrutiny roles.</p>	<p>number of councillors too much influence over the Fire Authority and deprive those outside of it of their voice, as full Fire Authority delegates away most of its decision making. The reduced decision-making powers of councillors not on the Executive Committee could result in them being disenfranchised and having little involvement in the functions of the Fire Authority. This lack of member engagement was highlighted as an existing issue in the CfGS report.</p>
<p>There would also be a clearer demarcation of decision-making responsibilities from scrutiny responsibilities, allowing the Scrutiny Committee to more effectively hold decision making to account.</p>	<p>There is a risk that confusion could arise between the roles of the Executive Committee and the full Fire Authority. As the Fire Authority delegates some of its functions to the Executive Committee, it could become unclear to members where decision-making powers lie and what their individual role is. Some FRAs said this structure created duplication, in which the same discussions and decisions were happening at two separate committees.</p>
<p>The size of agendas at full Fire Authority meetings risks preventing proper scrutiny of each item. The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) report suggested members were “sighted” rather than proactively involved in decision making. The introduction of an Executive Committee would create the opportunity for smaller, more focused agendas and more considered decision making.</p>	<p>In a more politically balanced Fire Authority in which no one party had a majority and many were represented, it may be difficult to maintain political proportionality on the Executive Committee due to its smaller size. It may also be difficult for such a committee to function effectively if it is made up of a small number of councillors from different political parties who have widely diverging views on key policy matters.</p>
<p>While some FRAs said there was a risk of duplication, as both full Fire Authority and the Executive Committee debated and voted on certain issues, this could be</p>	<p>This option would not completely remove the chance of a conflict of interest. No structure could eliminate the possibility of a conflict of interest as there are not</p>

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seen as a positive in that it allows for an extra layer of political oversight over key decisions.	enough councillors to ensure that no one member has both a decision-making role and a scrutiny role.
In a Fire Authority in which one party has a clear majority, it would be easy to maintain political proportionality on an Executive Committee. One would expect that in these circumstances such a committee would be able to quickly develop a common perspective on key policy areas and make decisions efficiently.	Taking forward this option would have resource implications. The Fire Authority would have to prepare for and organise additional meetings and councillors on the Executive Committee would have to commit additional time to their roles on it.
	It would be difficult to retain the independence of the Audit and Risk and Scrutiny Committees. Executive Committee members would not be able to serve on either of these committees, meaning there would be lots of overlap between the memberships of them.

**Option 2: Do not establish an Executive Committee and retain the current structure**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
All members maintain their current say in decision making. Members would not have to cede their current role in policy making to an Executive Committee.	Making key policy decisions at meetings of the full Fire Authority means agendas are very heavy and members may not have the chance to fully debate critical decisions.
Familiar structure with established processes. Members of the Fire Authority would not have to adapt to and learn a new process.	Whereas focusing decision making in a smaller Executive Committee would give members time to scrutinise proposals in greater detail.
No additional pressures on resource. Retaining the current structure would prevent the additional burden on the Fire Authority and its members that	Preserving the current model could prevent the Fire Authority becoming more agile in its decision making. Without an Executive Committee to deal with certain policy matters, many decisions have to go

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<p>facilitating, preparing for and attending extra meetings would create.</p>	<p>through the full Fire Authority. This can lead to a less agile process, in which it is not possible to make decisions on urgent matters as quickly as is needed for the effective functioning of the Fire Service.</p>
<p>There would be no issue maintaining political balance on the authority, as there would still be 15 members which would be easier to split between different parties.</p>	
<p>Role of the PCC and Co-opted members remains clear, without risk they are left out of ability to scrutinise decision making.</p>	

**Executive Committee Models**

1. If Option 1 is recommended, this section outlines two different models that the FRA could choose to adopt. In both models, the scrutiny committee would have a key role in holding the committee to account and where necessary calling-in decisions.
2. Option 1 is a maximalist Executive Committee that contains seven councillors and takes on the vast majority of decision making, including most ASAC responsibilities and all but statutory responsibilities from the FRA.
3. Option 2 is a minimalist model that contains five members and sees the Executive Committee taking on some decisions, but leaves many to other committees and the full FRA. For instance, the ASAC would remain in place and retain its functions.
4. This section provides an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of these two options. Members will have the chance to explore these options in more detail if they choose to go ahead with forming an Executive Committee.

**Option 1 – Maximalist Executive Committee, 7 people**

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Having more councillors on the committee will make it easier to balance</p>	<p>Having more councillors on the Executive Committee will lead to a lot of overlap in</p>

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<p>politically, particularly so in a situation where many parties are represented on the authority.</p>	<p>the membership of the Audit and Risk Committee and the Scrutiny Committee. This is because there will be a smaller pool of councillors available to make up these two communities, given no one councillor can serve on the Executive Committee and one of these two committees.</p>
<p>There will be more councillors available to do the work of the Executive Committee, meaning it can get more done and dig into key decisions more thoroughly.</p>	<p>This option would have extra resource implications, as it would see more councillors required to do the additional work required to sit on the Executive Committee.</p>
<p>Having more councillors will enable the committee to take on more decision-making powers, helping the authority to become more agile and quicker in its decision-making process.</p>	<p>This option could more fully disenfranchise councillors not on this committee, as most decisions would be taken away from them.</p>
<p>This should create more capacity for considered debate on key issues.</p>	<p>Associated with this is the risk of concentrating a lot of power in the hands of the seven Executive Committee members and giving too little a say to the rest of the members on the authority.</p>
<p>The chances of duplication between the Executive Committee and the full FRA would be reduced as the Executive Committee would be taking on most of the decisions.</p>	<p>This would reduce the opportunity for extra scrutiny of key decisions that having both bodies look at them would create.</p>

**Option 2 – Minimalist Executive Committee**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<p>With fewer members on the Executive Committee, there will be less of an overlap between the memberships of the Audit and Risk Committee and the Scrutiny Committee.</p>	<p>It will be more difficult to politically balance a smaller Executive Committee, particularly in an authority in which many different political parties are represented.</p>

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There will be a potential resource benefit, as fewer councillors will have to commit time to this extra role on the authority.	There will be fewer councillors available to do the work of the Executive Committee.
Fewer councillors will be disenfranchised, as many powers will remain with the full FRA. This will help to retain the purpose of full authority meetings and ASAC.	The authority may be less agile in its decision making, as fewer decisions would be made by this smaller committee.
The opportunity for additional scrutiny of key decisions would be increased as both bodies would get the chance to look at them.	There would be fewer resources available to thoroughly debate and consider decisions being made at the Executive Committee.
	The chances of duplication between the Executive Committee and the full FRA would be increased as the Executive Committee would have less decision-making power and may end up spending time debating decisions that ultimately have to be made at full FRA meetings.

**Further considerations**

1. Some other FRAs who have an Executive Committee have Lead Members who specialise in different policy areas – for instance Finance, Community Risk Management Planning and Strategic Assets. They report on progress in their areas to full FRA or the Executive Committee itself, but do not (and cannot) have executive decision making powers.

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
This would have the advantage of putting a particular focus on each policy area and ensuring councillors were regularly updated on the work of different parts of the fire service.	This move would create extra items at Executive Committee and full FRA meetings, which could clutter them and risk exacerbating a problem of members being “sighted” regarding key decisions rather than being proactively involved in making them.

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<p>It may also create subject matter experts on particular policy areas among members of the Executive Committee, with more ability to challenge officers and ensure good decisions are being made.</p>	<p>It also risks creating silos, in which Lead Members are experts on their policy area but other councillors leave the detail to them and disengage from their role on the Executive Committee and the authority more broadly.</p>
	<p>A Lead Member model also risks creating a situation in which councillors and those outside of the organisation believe Lead Members to have cabinet-style executive powers – in which they have delegated power to take certain key decisions. In practice, this would not be the case and they would have no more formal power to dictate policy in a given area than any other member of the Executive Committee.</p>