



AGENDA ITEM: 11

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY EXECUTIVE PANEL

20 July 2015

WELSH LANGUAGE MONITORING REPORT

Report by Richard Fairhead, Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Purpose of Report

- 1 To seek approval for the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service Welsh Language Scheme Monitoring Report for 2014-15 prior to formal submission to the Welsh Language Commissioner.

Background

- 2 Each year, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service is required to produce a detailed report which sets out progress made towards meeting the targets outlined in the Service's Welsh Language Scheme. This is submitted to the Welsh Language Commissioner under the arrangements as a result of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

Information

- 3 The introduction of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 has led to an increased emphasis on promoting and facilitating the use of the Welsh language across Wales, by raising awareness of the official status of the language and improving standards to ensure consistency across Wales. This has been welcomed by North Wales Fire and Rescue Service and the three Welsh Fire and Rescue Services will continue working together to respond to obligations associated with the introduction of the new Welsh Language Standards.

- 4 Last year, the Welsh Language Commissioner welcomed many aspects of our work in relation to the Welsh language and the general progress achieved in the implementation of the Welsh Language Scheme during 2014-15.
- 5 Once again, this has been a period in which North Wales Fire and Rescue Service has achieved considerable progress in relation to the Welsh Language.
- 6 Data relating to Welsh language skills and learning is recorded in the Service's HR database. The data for 2014-15 is detailed in the Monitoring Report which summarises the main findings, identifying positive outcomes and continuing challenges which the Service will pursue further during the coming year to strive for improvement. Key positive findings this reporting year are;
 - Positive outcomes and improvements are evidence that despite decreasing budgets and financial challenges the Service remains committed to the Welsh Language.
 - Despite a further reduction in the size of the workforce, the Service's Welsh language strategy is continuing to effectively raise the level of skills in speaking Welsh.
 - The Service has a good understanding of the language skills profile of its workforce and what areas to target for improvement.
 - Welsh Language skills of staff continue to improve – with a decrease in the number of staff remaining at minimal Level 0 or 1 skills, an increase in the number of staff achieving at least the minimum level of skills (Level 2 or above), and an increase in the number of staff who have achieved the required Level 3 or 4 skills for their post this year.
 - There is significant improvement in the Welsh speaking skills of staff filling main reception and control operator roles achieving the required level.
- 7 The Service launched an e-learning module for Welsh Awareness Training on 1st of March, to coincide with St David's Day. The module makes the training more accessible for staff who may work part time eg retained firefighters. Encouragingly, during the first month after its launch, almost 90 people completed the module. Face to face awareness sessions continue alongside the e-learning module.

- 8 Previous Monitoring Reports have detailed how the three Fire and Rescue Services in Wales took part in the 'Mae Gen Ti Ddewis' campaign to promote the availability of Home Fire Safety Checks through the medium of Welsh. The success of the campaign saw the number of residents in North Wales receiving home fire safety checks through the medium of Welsh increasing from 6% to a peak figure of 20% in a three year period. Last year there was a further slight reduction in these numbers to 14%, however the Service remains committed to promoting these checks bilingually and continues to promote this service widely.
- 9 NWFRS's Welsh Language Scheme stipulates the requirement for all new members of staff and those successful in promotion to learn basic conversational Welsh to Level 2 standard in our CD programme and this has continued to be promoted successfully amongst staff during 2014-15. The Service continues to support members of staff who wish to attend courses in their local community rather than internal courses and supports Developing Welsh Language Skills for Managers training.
- 10 The Monitoring Report also highlights the work carried out in relation to promoting Welsh within the workplace as well as providing a bilingual service to the public. This includes our continued commitment to identifying and supporting Welsh Language Champions across the region. During the reporting period the Service had 25 Champions in this role who continue to mentor others and receive guidance and support to help promote the language and facilitate learning.
- 11 The Service remains committed to promoting the language and encouraging Welsh language skills development amongst its staff. This work ensures the provision of bilingual services to the people of North Wales and encourages the use of Welsh within the workplace.

Recommendation

- 12 That Members note the progress made in relation to the Welsh Language Scheme and approve the 2014-15 Monitoring Report prior to formal submission to the Welsh Language Commissioner.