



AGENDA ITEM: 9

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY EXECUTIVE PANEL

21 July 2014

COMBINED IMPROVEMENT AND RISK REDUCTION PLAN 2015-16 ONWARDS PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION PROPOSAL

Report by Ruth Simmons, Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Purpose of Report

- 1 To inform members of the proposed public engagement and consultation strategy in support of the development of the combined Improvement and Risk Reduction Plan, 2015-16 onwards.

Background

- 2 North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority, as a Welsh Improvement Authority, is required under the Local Government Measure 2009 to:
 - Determine its own improvement objectives under any of the seven defined elements of improvement. Although required to set improvement objectives every year, this does not mean that the objectives have to change every year or be deliverable within one year.
 - Consult publicly on its objectives for a period of time. There is no set time for consultations, although most are about 12 weeks. Consultations should have a clear start and end date.
- 3 At the meeting on 16th June 2014 members of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority considering the draft Improvement Objective resolved that:

- (i) in order to maintain the current level of Fire and Rescue Service in North Wales, there should be an increase to the budget. However, the safeguard, that the level of annual increase should equate to no more than an additional £1 per year per head of population in North Wales, should continue and be extended from 2016-17 to 2019-20;
- (ii) this should be extensively and robustly consulted upon, in order to determine this 5-year strategy in time for the December Fire and Rescue Authority meeting.

Information

- 4 The purpose of the consultation strategy is to set out the means by which NWFRA members can obtain the views of the public on their draft objectives prior to choosing the best way forward for the future of fire and rescue services in North Wales. This process is important in shaping those draft objectives before they are published in the Improvement and Risk Reduction Plan and to ensure that there is public faith in the decisions being made.
- 5 The strategy has been informed by Participation Cymru National Principles of Public Engagement in Wales, (2011) endorsed by the First Minister,
 - Engagement is effectively designed to make a difference
 - Encourage and enable everyone affected to be involved, if they so choose
 - Engagement is planned and delivered in a timely and appropriate way
 - Work with relevant partner organisations
 - The information provided will be jargon free, appropriate and understandable
 - Make it easier for people to take part
 - Enable people to take part effectively
 - Engagement is given the right resources and support to be effective
 - People are told the impact of their contribution
 - Learn and share lessons to improve the process of engagement

- 6 Participation Cymru define engagement as an active and participative process by which people can influence and shape policy and services that includes a wide range of different methods and techniques. Whilst consultation is defined as a formal process by which policy makers and service providers ask for the views of interested groups and individuals.
- 7 The strategy reflects these principles and definitions. It is measurable, in that each of the main communication channels will have its own specific evaluation metrics. A target has been set to increase qualitative and quantitative engagement by 20% compared to previous consultations which have resulted in an average of 30 responses. The target audiences have been identified through stakeholder mapping encompassing, residents of North Wales, partner organisations, Welsh Government, local politicians, service personnel.

Key Messages for Stakeholders

- 8 Key messages are the phrases that represent the main ideas we want to express to our audiences. Given out consistently and frequently they can help to shape perceptions of the organisation. The key messages will be shaped by the objectives set out in the Draft Improvement Plan. For example,
 - NWFRA is committed to making its service area in Wales a safer place to live work and visit. Our aim is to enhance people's lives by continuously striving for improvement in the services we provide and to do more than simply meet minimum requirements.
 - Our communities and our partners have a vital role to play in helping us improve our service, reduce risk and develop safer communities.
 - NWFRA will strive to continue to deliver against demanding expectations for efficiency and value for money, while still driving improvement by implementing new ways of working rather than seeing a reduction in the services delivered.

- The Authority is seeking to increase the annual budget by just enough to maintain the current level of service, with a safeguard that the level of annual increase should equate to no more than an additional £1 per year per head of population in North Wales.
- 9 Additional key messages, linked to the specific objectives of the Draft Improvement Plan, will be built into the engagement and consultation strategy following the initial stage

External Communications

- 10 All external communication will be provided bilingually and in a range of formats for example, braille, telephone survey. Consideration will also be given to the needs of all audiences and encompass a variety of media including email/mailchimp, social media, service website and at community events.
- 11 Fire and Rescue Authority Members would be requested to be proactive in encouraging engagement of stakeholders. Members could support additional engagement and consultation events in their area such as a roadshow on rural fire cover.

Internal Communications

- 12 Internal communication will be significant in supporting any decision made by NWFRA. For communication to be effective, all members of the organisation have a part to play in planning and carrying out communications activity. Information to staff will be provided in a choice of languages, English or Welsh by means of intranet, staff newsletter/magazine, Chief's update/briefing, internal briefings and station visits

Feeding results back to stakeholders

- 13 It is important to finish off the process by ensuring those we have consulted are informed of the results of the engagement and consultation.

- 14 This will be via a report presented to Authority Members and promoted via a media campaign including traditional and social media with links to the full report on our website, as well as actions to promote feedback within the organisation for example, Authority Headlines, Weekly Brief, Y Fflam etc.

Recommendations

- 15 That Members:
 - (i) note the various aspects of the consultation strategy; and
 - (ii) endorse the key messages.