



AGENDA ITEM: 14

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

19th June 2006

FORMAT FOR COMMITTEE REPORTS

Report by Simon Smith, Chief Fire Officer

Purpose of Report

1. To inform members of the new presentational format for reports submitted to the Fire and Rescue Authority and its committees.

Introduction

2. Recently a review was undertaken of the format for the presentation of reports to the Authority and its committees with a view to adopting a corporate format for the presentation of committee reports from the commencement of the Authority's new municipal year, in June 2006.
3. In addition to reviewing the format for the presentation of reports, consideration was also given to adopting a colour coding method for their publication. Adopting this method would assist members to differentiate between reports submitted for information purposes and reports that require a decision.



Background

4. As part of the review copies of committee reports from a number of the constituent authorities and other fire and rescue authorities were obtained for the purpose of comparing styles and formats.
5. In addition, advice was sought from the Service's Equalities Adviser on the types and sizes of fonts recommended by organisations representing disability groups and with regards to compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

Information

6. The research undertaken revealed that the majority of the constituent authorities and other fire and rescue authorities tend to use a similar format for the presentation of their reports.
7. In addition to reports bearing the author's name at the top of the report, it was also evident that the use of the following standard headings is commonplace across authorities:
 - Report title
 - Purpose of the Report or Decision Sought
 - Background; and ending with
 - Recommendation(s)
8. A number of authorities include sub-headings on the following subjects in the body of the report: "Cost Implications", "Consultation Carried Out" and "Implications on other Policy Areas".



Information *(continued)*

9. The advice received from the Service's Equalities Adviser in relation to ensuring that committee papers were accessible to the visually impaired stated that the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) recommended organisations use a "larger font (14 size minimum) in a sans serif typeface for...printed information" as "this is more legible for people with a visual impairment".
10. Adopting a procedure of publishing different types of reports on paper of different colours would assist members in easily identifying reports that fall into different categories. When considering this procedure, and with a view to adopting a consistent approach across all authorities, enquiries were made with the constituent authorities to see whether a common colour was used for different categories of reports. Unfortunately each council has its own individual procedure for defining reports requiring different decisions.

Financial implications

11. Publishing committee reports on coloured paper and the use of size 14 font will entail modest financial implications for the Authority. It is anticipated that, on average, the cost of publishing committee papers will increase per meeting by approximately £30 to £40. This increase can be absorbed within the current committee services' budget.



Conclusions

12. Following consideration of the above information it is proposed that all committee reports in future shall be presented in a set format which will include, as standard, the Author's name, report title, the headings "Purpose of Report/Decision Sought" followed by "Background".
13. Each sub-heading that follow the above paragraphs will be included at the author's discretion following consideration of the implications of the report's contents on the following areas of policy/consultation:
 - Equal Opportunities
 - Human Resources
 - Health and Safety
 - Human Rights
 - Financial
 - Data Protection and Freedom of Information
 - Environmental
 - Collaborative/Partnership Working Potential which is in-keeping with "Making the Connections"
 - Representative Bodies
 - Risk Reduction Planning (RRP)/Wales Programme for Improvement (WPI)
 - Other Welsh Assembly Government or UK Government strategies current at the time of writing the report e.g. the Wales Spatial Plan, Resilience policies
 - Welsh Language
14. And that all reports should close with a "Recommendation(s)" paragraph.



Conclusions *(continued)*

- 15.** As there is no uniform policy with regard to the use of coloured paper across the constituent authorities, the Fire and Rescue Authority will therefore publish committee reports that require a decision on yellow paper, with reports submitted for information purposes being published on pink paper. Part II or confidential reports will be published on light green coloured paper.
- 16.** To keep the increased costs to a minimum, minutes, agendas, and draft documents submitted as attachments to the main reports will continue to be published on white paper

Recommendation

- 17.** That members note the information provided on the future format for the presentation of committee reports.