



AGENDA ITEM: 13

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

15th October 2007

CHAMPIONS WORKING GROUP UPDATE

Joint Report by Councillor Ted George, Member Support and Development Champion and Rhian Evans, Member Liaison Officer

Purpose of Report

- 1.** To inform members of the work of the Community Safety and Member Support and Development Champions Working Group since the Authority's last meeting on 18th June 2007.

Background

- 2.** The Community Safety and Member Support and Development Working Group was established by the Fire and Rescue Authority in March 2007 for the purpose of forging stronger working relationships between local authorities and the Fire and Rescue Authority in the area of community safety, and with a view to promoting and enhancing member support and development.
- 3.** In preparation for its bid for accreditation under the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development the Fire and Rescue Authority, at its meeting on 18th June 2007, adopted a set of Role Descriptions and Person Specifications for Authority member, Committee Chair and Vice-Chair and Authority Chair and Vice-Chair.



Information

- 4.** Although the Working Group endeavours to meet on a 6 weekly frequency basis, unfortunately it has met only once since the Authority's last meeting on 18th June. Due to unforeseen circumstances the meeting scheduled for 7th September had to be postponed. The Working Group's next meeting is scheduled for 6th November 2007.
- 5.** At its meeting on the 6th July 2007, in addition to the standard business items on the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development and 'The Effect and Impact of the Home Fire Safety Check Campaign' from a particular county area's perspective, Group members received a number of other presentations, briefings and discussed other related subjects.
- 6.** Following a presentation on 'External Funding' by experts from North Wales Police who specialise in seeking financial support for projects and initiatives, the Group decided that it would be worthwhile for all County Safety Managers to set up meetings with the Police personnel with a view to researching possible funding streams for community safety work and the viability of collaborating with other organisations to submit joint bids to fund certain projects or initiatives.
- 7.** Group members were advised of Mrs Ann Jones AM's proposed Domestic Fire Safety Legislative Competence Order (LCO). They were briefed about its contents, the LCO procedure and the Service's involvement as the lead Service advising Mrs Jones on the issue of domestic sprinklers.



Information *(continued)*

- 8.** Working Group members were informed that because of the extremely encouraging take-up level for free Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSCs), which was to be welcomed, the Authority was facing a resourcing dilemma as it attempted to accommodate the 'popularity' of this initiative. Budgetary constraints for 2008/09 would also mean that the Authority would continue to struggle to keep up with the high demand for this vital intervention service during the next financial year. With a view to alleviating these budgetary pressures the Group requested that the financial implications of establishing and maintaining a service, similar to 'Fire Service Direct', be researched along with the availability of potential funding or sponsorship streams.
- 9.** The delivery of fire safety messages to ethnic and minority communities within North Wales, which has proved difficult at times, is an area which the Service has earmarked as requiring to be addressed. Group members were given a presentation by the County Safety Manager and a migrant worker, working as a volunteer in the County Safety Office at Wrexham, on how the Service had been able to engage with hard to reach communities in that area. The volunteer worker explained how she had gained valuable work experience in information technology, administration and office work in return for assisting the Service, via the Asylum Seekers and Refugee Council in Wrexham, in making contact with asylum seekers and refugees for the purpose of communicating fire safety messages to them and their families and to gain access to their homes in order to perform HFSCs. This example of joint working had recently gained national recognition when both the County Safety Manager and the volunteer worker had been invited to speak at the Volunteering and Asylum Conference in Cardiff.



Information *(continued)*

- 10.** An example of good practice was highlighted to the Group of one Fire and Rescue Authority member who, by displaying the freephone number on his own personal web blog, was encouraging the general public to register for free HFSCs. In addition this particular member's web blog also included photographs and an article on an event at which Service personnel had been present relaying fire safety messages. All members were encouraged to utilise whatever methods available to them for the promotion and communication of safety messages.

- 11.** Both officers and members are of the view that since its establishment, due to the less structured format of its meetings, this Working Group has made considerable strides in enhancing member/officer working relationships. As a result of the momentum gained, Group members feel that they are contributing towards shaping the future direction for the fire and rescue service in North Wales with the aim of making it a safer place to live, work and visit.

Recommendation

- 12.** To note the information provided.