



## AGENDA ITEM: 13

### NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

20<sup>th</sup> June 2011

#### COMPLAINTS AND LETTERS OF APPRECIATION

Report by Colin Hanks, Assistant Chief Fire Officer

#### Purpose of Report

- 1 To inform and update Members in respect of the number of complaints and letters of appreciation received from the public for the period April 1<sup>st</sup> 2010 to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2011.

#### Information

##### Complaints Received April 2010 – March 2011

- 2 The number of complaints received, investigated and resolved in accordance with the policy and procedures adopted by the Fire and Rescue Authority have been recorded as follows:

Number of <b>Complaints Received</b>	Last Year	This Year
Welsh Language issues	2	0
Human Resource procedures	5	2
Driving	9	10
Fire Safety: Enforcement	0	3
Community Safety	3	4
Operational Activities	2	6
Conduct	10	13
Health & Safety	-	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>40</b>

Number of <b>Complaints Substantiated</b>	Last Year	This Year
Welsh Language issues	2	0
Human Resource procedures	0	0
Driving	3	5
Fire Safety: Enforcement	0	0
Community Safety	1	2
Operational Activities	2	1
Conduct	2	1
Health & Safety	-	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
Percentage of complaints substantiated	29%	25%

## Summary of Substantiated Complaints

### 3.1 *Driving*

Standard of driving a fire appliance whilst proceeding to an incident through a housing estate	Complaint and road craft discussed with driver, driving assessment in date.
Driver guided a member of the public past the fire appliance whilst it was stationary at an incident, this resulted in damage to the oncoming car	Driver interviewed, Service Policies & Procedures discussed in relation to appliances stationary at incidents and consideration to other road users
Damage sustained to the stone wall of a domestic property caused by a passing fire appliance whilst proceeding to incident	Driver interviewed, accident report form completed. Referred to FRS Insurance, complaint resolved under stage 1
Standard of driving a fire appliance whilst proceeding to an incident. Member of public had to swerve, mounted the curb resulting in a punctured tyre on their vehicle	Driver interviewed and instructed to ensure road craft was observed at all times. Driving assessment was in date however the investigating officer recommended a further assessment take place.

Complaint regarding the standard of driving by an individual (RDS) when responding to the station for calls	Driver interviewed and advice given. All station personnel informed to ensure driving standards are in accordance with policy, procedure and Road Traffic Regulation. Verbal resolution, complainant satisfied
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***Fire appliances and manager vehicles undertook 16,418<sup>(p)</sup> 'Blue Light' journeys when responding to operational incidents between April 1<sup>st</sup> 2010 and March 31<sup>st</sup> 2011***

### 3.2 Community Safety

Standard of response following a requested HFSC. Three requests to the Service for an attendance for HFSC, arrangements made for Service member to attend but did not turn up as scheduled	Complaint discussed with Community Safety Practitioner and advice given regarding non attendance at pre-arranged appointments. Letter of apology sent to complainant, issue resolved satisfactorily under stage 1.
Failure to respond to a request for attendance at local fete	Verbal resolution, local administration procedures reviewed and revised.

***NWFRS personnel carried out 36,522 home fire safety checks between April 1<sup>st</sup> 2010 and March 31<sup>st</sup> 2011***

### 3.3 Operational Activities

Delivery of HFSC leaflets at an inappropriate time following a local incident, resulting in disruption to the sleeping patterns of a child at a property within the hot strike zone	Local verbal resolution, complainant satisfied
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***NWFRS personnel attended 8,924<sup>(p)</sup> operational incidents between April 1<sup>st</sup> 2010 and March 31<sup>st</sup> 2011***

### 3.4 *Conduct*

Complaint regarding the professionalism of crew whilst responding to a request for information from the member of the public	Duty crew interviewed and reminded of the Core Values and appropriate conduct. Personnel apologised, the complainant was satisfied with the Service's response
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### 3.5 *Health & Safety*

Youths playing football on fire station yard, hitting windows and climbing buildings	Verbal resolution, crews reminded to remain vigilant and ensure premises are secure from unauthorised visitors. Caller requested to make Police aware if repeat incident
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3.6 During this reporting period a complaint was made in relation to comments that had been made by a passenger of a passing fire appliance. However on investigation it was confirmed that this was not a NWFRS vehicle; the investigating officer was unable to identify whether this was an appliance from a neighbouring FRA or a decommissioned fire appliance that is used by a local company for party nights. Members are asked to note that whilst complaints of this nature, may in the first instance, be referred to NWFRS, the complainant will be advised accordingly if it is confirmed that the said vehicle does not belong to the Service.

## **Letters of Appreciation**

4.1 It is worthy of note that 81 letters, cards, e-mails and Facebook messages have been received expressing appreciation and satisfaction with the Service. This is a slight increase on last year.

- 4.2 The letters of appreciation received covered a wide range of Fire and Rescue Service activity but broadly fall into the following categories:

#### Community Fire Safety Initiatives and Community Events

- 4.3 Thirteen expressions of appreciation were received from a broad section of the Community thanking the Service for their involvement with or lead on Community Safety activities. These included station or individual attendance at Schools, fetes and open days and talks to Community Groups such as the Rotary and Women's Institute. Many members of staff were specifically named and congratulated on their proactive involvement with initiatives such as the impact road show and protection of vulnerable adults.

#### Visits to Schools by the Service and to Stations by the Community

- 4.4 There were a total of twelve expressions of appreciation thanking the Service for both attendances at schools to give safety advice and also from members of community groups such as the Scouts, thanking station personnel for the group's attendance at station.

#### Home Fire Safety Checks

- 4.5 Five individuals communicated their appreciation for the service received during home fire safety checks. This also included the process, information and intervention measures available.

#### Partnership Working

- 4.6 A total of sixteen appreciations were received from Partners with whom we work to make our Communities safer. These included thanks from the Caia Park Communities First Project to the Arson Reduction Team, for their continued involvement in a wide ranging set of ongoing initiatives such as the bulk waste collection scheme.

#### Charitable and Partnership Support

- 4.7 Throughout this reporting period NWFRS received twelve letters of appreciation for monies donated to charity as a result of events

such as the station bonfires. Included in this total are a number of donations to the Firefighters' Charity from members of the public as a direct response of their appreciation for assistance rendered by the Service.

### Operational Incidents

- 4.8 Seventeen acknowledgements of professionalism were received for crews attending operational incidents, many of which were written following a distressing event. These letters express how crews attending incidents were professional, sympathetic, careful and above all considerate of feelings. They include letters from individuals who were cut free from the wreckage of road traffic collisions, residents who have had chimney fires where the attending crew have made sure no mess was made and households that have suffered arson attacks with the crews assisting in clearing up debris.
- 4.9 The Joint Communications Centre received three letters of appreciation for visits undertaken by the High Sheriffs and Jane Hutt AM.
- 4.10 The Service also received expressions of appreciation for sporting activities and where one of the Service Managers assisted a female whose vehicle had broken down.

### **Recommendation**

- 5 That Members note the number of complaints and expressions of appreciation received.