



AGENDA ITEM: 13

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

19th December 2011

WELSH LANGUAGE BOARD MONITORING REPORT FEEDBACK

Report by Colin Hanks, Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Purpose of Report

- 1 To report back on the feedback received from the Welsh Language Board in relation to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service Welsh Language Scheme Monitoring Report 2010-11.

Background

- 2 Each year, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service is required to produce a detailed report on its Welsh Language Scheme to the Welsh Language Board. This details progress made towards meeting the targets outlined in the Service's Welsh Language Scheme 2010-13. Executive Panel members approved the report at the September meeting and North Wales Fire and Rescue Service has since received formal feedback on this year's report and met with the Welsh Language Board to discuss this feedback further.

Information

- 3 The Welsh Language Board commended the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority on the submission of a comprehensive report that contains useful information and highlights progress in the implementation of the Welsh Language Scheme during 2010/11.
- 4 The Board also welcomed and congratulated the Service on the quantitative and qualitative data which has resulted from the analysis of Welsh Speaking Skills that the Service has undertaken

in the course of the year. This data will assist the Service in planning the workforce effectively and the Board commented that it looks forward to seeing the targets that are set following this exercise.

- 5 There are some points in the report to which the Welsh Language Board has requested a more detailed response and this has since been provided to the Board's satisfaction in a feedback meeting on 1st November 2011.
- 6 The Welsh Language Board welcomed the statistics recorded as part of the Welsh Speaking Skills Analysis as very few organisations are able to provide such an accurate picture of Welsh language skills amongst staff. However, the Board questioned the statistics for the Welsh language skills recorded for those staff whose role requires level 4 or above Welsh skills. The Service provided reassurance that it is addressing this matter, and indeed the current Administration Review being undertaken also takes Welsh Language skills into consideration in order to help ensure progress with this.
- 7 The Service continues to promote the language and encourage Welsh language skills development amongst its staff to ensure that continued progress is made and that it continues to provide bilingual services to the people of North Wales and encourage the use of Welsh within the workplace.

Recommendation

- 8 That Members note the progress made in relation to the Welsh Language Scheme and the assurance given to ensuring that the Service continues to monitor progress in this area.

18/10/2011

Mr Simon Smith – Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive

North Wales Fire and Rescue Service
Salesbury Road
St Asaph Business Park
St Asaph
Denbighshire
LL17 0JJ

Dear Mr Smith,

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY 2010/11 MONITORING REPORT

Thank you very much for submitting the above report to the Welsh Language Board for its consideration. Detailed comments are attached to this letter, but there are a few things which need to be noted first.

The Authority has presented a comprehensive report which adheres to the format agreed with the Board. We believe the report on the whole contains useful information and that it highlights progress in the implementation of the Welsh Language Scheme during 2010/11.

The Board welcomes the quantitative and qualitative data which has emanated from the analysis of Welsh Speaking Skills the service has undertaken in the course of the year. This data will assist the service in planning the workforce effectively and we look forward to seeing the targets that are set following this exercise. The Service has not succeeded in reporting against the Board's Welsh Language Indicator 1, namely 'Services on contract – the percentage of a sample of contracts that were monitored that conform to the requirements of the Language Scheme'. We request that the Service provide this information, please.

There are some points in the report to which we would like a more detailed response, and these are identified in our report. The next step usually is for us to hold a feedback meeting in the near future in order to discuss matters arising from the report and from this response.

This meeting will be held on Friday, 21st October. In the meantime if you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, you are welcome to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

DYLAN JONES
Government in Wales Unit

Copy to: Colin Hanks, Assistant Chief Fire Officer;
Tracey Williams, Corporate Communications Manager;

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority - 2010/11 Welsh Language Scheme Monitoring Report
Observations of the Welsh Language Board, October 2011

Section	Comments
1. Introduction	
Page 3 • 1	We welcome the fact the website now has a bilingual voice enabling device. Thank you also for the relevant data in section 4.
Page 3 • 2	We appreciate the update on the Service's bilingual intranet. Is it possible for you to monitor the use of this intranet as you are able to do with your website? If so, could you let us have the relevant figures, please?
Page 3 • 3	Following the website survey conducted by the Board during the summer of 2010, it is good to be able to note that the Service has now adopted Welsh e-mail addresses.
Page 5	<p>We welcome and congratulate the Service on the work and statistics recorded as part of the Welsh Speaking Skills Analysis. We understand what you explain concerning the number of staff that are on level 0 or 1 in relation to the use of Welsh. However, this means there are 397 out of 933 staff at those levels; therefore what is the Service's plan to reduce this number.</p> <p>It is also noted that 92 posts have been identified as level 4 and that 53 of those have the requisite skills. Are the other 39 therefore receiving or going to receive training in the near future? We can discuss this further at our feedback meeting.</p>
Page 6 • 1	In the report it is stated that, "consideration will be given to combining the two groups" that discuss the Service's Welsh language issues. Has any decision been made concerning this?
Page 6 • 3	We welcome the commitment and the expenditure on Welsh interpretation equipment for your internal meetings.
Page 6 • 5	We appreciate the difficulties associated with attempting to provide all the fire officers with a language awareness session, particularly considering that a number of them are part-time. We greatly welcome therefore the development of an on-line language awareness session. We look forward to seeing this. Would this be something that could be shared with the Fire Services of Mid-Wales, West Wales and South Wales? Are you developing this internally, or are you using an external agency?
Page 6 • 7	It is good to note the new set of Performance Indicators that have been agreed by the departments, and we welcome the data presented as part of your report.

Page 9 • 2	We welcome the fact the Service is using Facebook and Twitter as part of its Communication Strategy. It is good to note the updates are available bilingually.
2.2 – Managing and Administering the Scheme	
	On pages 10 and 11 it is noted that a Language Working Group and a Strategic Welsh Language Group exist within the Service. Could you please expand on this and explain what the functions of the two groups are?
3. Compliance with the Welsh Language Scheme	
Page 16	It is noted here under the Ongoing Self-awareness section that you are “working with the Human Resources department to close the gap”. Would you please enlarge on this, explaining what exactly the role of the Human Resources department is?
4. The Fire and Rescue Service Welsh Language Performance Indicators	
WLA 19	It is noted here that the Service has approximately 100 contractors on its approved list. The aim of the Language Board WLA 1 is to receive information on the percentage of a sample of contracts that were monitored that conform to the Language Scheme requirements. Did you carry out any sampling work during the year?
	Generally, however, the information and the data that is presented here under the Indicators set a firm foundation for the Service to measure progress in the years to come.
Welsh Language Speaking Analysis, May 2011	
	<p>We greatly welcome, as noted above, the work you have carried out in order to be able to submit this data. You are to be congratulated on obtaining information about the vast majority of the workforce.</p> <p>The figures are very encouraging in some areas, and cause a little concern in a few areas, such as the number of main reception posts that are Welsh essential but are filled by 12 (46.15%). Having said that, the figures give the Service a clear picture of the work that needs to be done in order to achieve the aim.</p> <p>As noted above, we can discuss this further at our feedback meeting.</p>