



## **AGENDA ITEM: 13**

### **NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**19<sup>th</sup> March 2012**

#### **ESTABLISHMENT OF THE WELSH FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITIES' NATIONAL ISSUES COMMITTEE**

**Report by Simon Smith, Chief Fire Officer**

##### **Purpose of Report**

- 1 Members are asked to confirm their approval for the establishment of the National Issues Committee.

##### **Background**

- 2 At the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting on 19 December 2011, Members considered a paper from the Chief Fire Officer outlining a number of potential strategic options relating to the structural arrangements for the Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales. The document considered was not a detailed business case, nor an exhaustive analysis of options, more a document to stimulate discussion around any options Members were minded to consider further.
- 3 At that meeting, Members indicated their preferred model and resolved that further discussion, research and analysis should be undertaken around the establishment of a National Issues Committee for the three Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales. This work has now been completed and the terms of reference for the National Issues Committee is presented in Appendix 1.

## **Information**

- 4 The setting up of the Welsh Fire and Rescue Services' National Issues Committee would further improve collaborative working, service delivery and sustained service improvement.
- 5 In essence it would put a clear, structured programme management approach towards service collaboration in order to maximise efficiencies, prevent missed collaborative opportunities and provide a vehicle for long term service improvements across the three Services.
- 6 The Committee would consist of a structured forum, meeting bi-monthly, comprised of the three Chairs, three Deputy Chairs, three Chief Fire Officers and three Deputy Chief Fire Officers. The Chair would rotate on a bi-annual basis between the three Authorities.
- 7 A structured forward work programme would be developed with a Member appointed lead, an Officer member of the National Issues Committee appointed as key advisor to the work stream lead, along with a Project Manager.
- 8 It is envisaged that the key strategic collaborative work stream areas would be around:
  - (i) Integration of common and specialist services (including Transport and ICT);
  - (ii) Effective resilience and operational plans;
  - (iii) National HR functions;
  - (iv) National approach to Training and Development;
  - (v) National Control arrangements;
  - (vi) National Procurement function.
- 9 Specific priority areas would be developed by the National Issues Committee shortly after its inception, along with a structured forward work plan.
- 10 The aim of the National Issues Committee would be to develop and implement improved arrangements for the co-ordinated delivery of collaborative work. These will embody intent to deliver national outcomes without compromising the independence of the constituent Fire and Rescue Authorities.

- 11 The three Chief Fire Officers in Wales firmly believe that the National Issues Committee is the best way forward for an enhanced three Authority model aligning itself to the Welsh Government's stated preferred option of partnership working and focused collaboration.
- 12 The same terms of reference for the National Issues Committee will be presented to members of Mid and West Wales and South Wales Fire and Rescue Authorities for their approval later this month. There is officer consensus across the three Welsh Services that the formation of the National Issues Committee would significantly enhance the current three Authority model.

### **Financial Implications**

- 13 The costs associated with the set up of a National Issues Committee are limited to one third of the salary and oncosts of a seconded officer, to act a programme co-ordinator. In addition to some travel expenses and Officer/Member time. The potential collaborative benefits far outweigh any set up costs.

### **Legal Implications**

- 14 The proposal is for the National Issues Committee to be established on a voluntary, informal basis and not by way of a variation to the Combination Order, nor by way of the Local Government Act. In addition, given the complete retention of the existing three Authority model with all associated powers and governance arrangements, there are no specific legal implications.

### **Recommendation**

- 15 That Members:
  - (i) confirm their agreement to set up a non-statutory National Issues Committee to deal with collaborative issues.
  - (ii) agree the terms of reference attached to this report.