



AGENDA ITEM: 12

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY EXECUTIVE PANEL

8 February 2016

COMMISSIONER'S FEEDBACK ON WELSH LANGUAGE ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT

Report by Richard Fairhead, Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Purpose of Report

- 1 To report on the feedback received from the Welsh Language Commissioner in relation to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service Welsh Language Monitoring Report 2014-15.

Background

- 2 Each year, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service is required to present a detailed report on its Welsh Language Scheme to the Welsh Language Commissioner. The Monitoring Report details progress made towards meeting the targets outlined in the Scheme 2010-13. Executive Panel Members approved the report at the meeting last July. North Wales Fire and Rescue Service has since received formal feedback on this year's report and officers have met with the Commissioner's representatives to go through the feedback in detail.

Information

- 3 The Commissioner welcomed many aspects of the Service's work in relation to the Welsh language and the general progress achieved during 2014-15, noting the following key positive findings;

- Positive outcomes and improvements are evidence that despite decreasing budgets and financial challenges the Service remains committed to the Welsh language.
 - Despite a further reduction in the size of the workforce, the Service's Welsh language strategy is continuing to effectively raise the level of skills in speaking Welsh.
 - The Service has a good understanding of the language skills profile of its workforce and what areas to target for improvement.
 - Welsh language skills of staff continue to improve – with a decrease in the number of staff remaining at minimal Level 0 or 1 skills, an increase in the number of staff achieving at least the minimum level of skills (Level 2 or above), and an increase in the number of staff who have achieved the required Level 3 or 4 skills for their post this year.
 - There is significant improvement in the Welsh speaking skills of staff filling main reception and control operator roles.
- 4 In relation to performance, the Commissioner noted the fact that the Service had launched an e-learning module for Welsh awareness training which makes the training more accessible for staff.
- 5 In addition, the Commissioner noted that interviews in Welsh were offered when recruiting staff and that four new members of staff who are fluent Welsh speakers were appointed to the Human Resources Department within the last reporting period.
- 6 In relation to staffing, it was noted that rota systems had been reviewed to consider the Welsh language so that emergencies can be dealt with through the medium of Welsh as required.
- 7 The Commissioner had requested further information on a number of specific aspects of our work in relation to the Welsh language – this was provided in detail to the Commissioner's satisfaction.

- 8 In 2011, the Welsh Language (Wales) measure was introduced, which sets the legal framework for organisations to comply with statutory standards relating to the Welsh language. These standards are now being formally introduced. The Service will continue to work towards meeting the requirements of the new standards in collaboration with the other two Welsh fire and rescue services and is sharing best practice with North Wales Police. Our current Welsh Language Scheme 2010-13 extends until the time the new standards come into effect.

Recommendation

- 9 That Members note the progress made in relation to the Service's commitment to ensuring continued promotion of the Welsh language.