


Report to	Executive Panel	
Date	17 June 2024	
Lead Officer	Stewart Forshaw, Deputy Chief Fire Officer	
Contact Officer	Anthony Jones, Head of Planning, Performance and Transformation	
Subject	Summary Report on Emergency Cover Review Task and Finish Group	

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To provide Members with an update on the progress made by the Emergency Cover Review (ECR) Task and Finish Group, established in response to the decision made by the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) at its meeting on 18 December 2023, to develop a new permanent option for the provision of emergency cover across North Wales.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 Following the Authority meeting on 18 December 2023, a staff led ECR Task and Finish Group was established to develop options for the provision of emergency cover in North Wales.
- 3 The ECR Task and Finish Group, chaired by a member of staff and attended by sixteen colleagues working at various levels, areas and departments within the Service, including the Fire Brigades Union, met on nine occasions during which they discussed and researched several emergency response models.
- 4 This work concluded with three pieces of emergency response model research being presented by the ECR Task and Finish Group to the Authority ECR Working Group on 20 May 2024. These three pieces of research represent a significant amount of effort, work and engagement by stakeholders and members of the ECR Task and Finish Group and all offer potential improvements in emergency cover.
- 5 At its meeting on 20 May 2024, the Authority ECR Working Group requested that North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) review in detail the three pieces of research presented by the ECR Task and Finish Group to provide recommendations at the next Authority ECR Working Group meeting on 12 June 2024.

RECOMMENDATION

- 6 That Members:
- i) note the engagement and efforts of all stakeholders on the ECR Task and Finish Group to work together to develop options for improvements to the provision of fair and equitable emergency cover across North Wales; and
 - ii) note, the progress made by both the ECR Task and Finish Group and the Authority ECR Working Group to develop a new permanent option for the provision of emergency cover across North Wales.

BACKGROUND

7 During the period of July to September 2023 the Authority consulted the public on three possible options for the future delivery of its emergency response to the communities of North Wales.

8 Following the 12-week public consultation exercise the Authority met on 18 December 2023 and it was resolved that:

Members request that Officers continue to work with all stakeholders to develop a new permanent option taking into consideration today's decision and the limits of the proposed budget.

9 Therefore, expressions of interest were sought from staff working at all levels across Service departments, stations and duty systems and an ECR Task and Finish Group was established in January 2024. The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) have also been represented and present at every meeting.

10 The ECR Task and Finish Group held its first meeting on 1 February 2024 and have met on nine occasions, discussing the current response model in depth and examining innovative means of providing a future, more equitable emergency response model.

INFORMATION

11 The ECR Task and Finish Group accepted that improvements in emergency cover, particularly in more rural areas of North Wales are required and understood that any proposals they put forward must meet the ECR evaluation criteria used throughout the development of options.

- 12 The ECR Task and Finish Group has been supported by Service departments as required, had access to emergency response data and modelling and also received presentations on alternative emergency cover delivery models from other UK Fire and Rescue Services.
- 13 Following each meeting, ECR Task and Finish Group members were tasked with speaking to their colleagues to gauge feedback on the ideas being discussed in order that the wider workforce remain informed on progress. Colleagues were also encouraged to bring their ideas forward to the ECR Task and Finish Group representatives for inclusion in their group discussions.
- 14 The ECR Task and Finish Group explored a variety of future emergency response options and reviewed these against the ECR evaluation criteria and feedback from colleagues.
- 15 Three pieces of emergency response model research were developed and presented by the ECR Task and Finish Group Chair and Deputy Chair to the Authority ECR Working Group on 20 May 2024. These three pieces of research represent a significant amount of effort, work and engagement by stakeholders and members of the ECR Task and Finish Group and all offered potential improvements in emergency cover.
- 16 At its meeting on 20 May 2024, the Authority ECR Working Group requested that Officers review the research and provide recommendations at its meeting on 12 June 2024.
- 17 Future meetings of the ECR Task and Finish Group have been placed on hold pending the outcome of the Authority ECR Working Group meeting on 12 June 2024.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	The ECR outcomes must meet the Authority's obligations under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
Budget	The consultation budget implications have been publicised. The ECR Task and Finish Group have been reviewing emergency cover options that sit within the current budget.
Legal	Our legislation requires that the Authority must consult the public on changes to our emergency cover. The ECR consultation and the best practices the Service is following as recommended by the Consultation Institute support the Authority in meeting these requirements.
Staffing	The Service has conducted extensive direct consultation with staff and their representative bodies during pre-consultation and this continued during the full public consultation. However, in deciding on options to be presented, staff will be impacted by the proposed changes within the options.
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	The Service's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Officer engaged with EDI groups throughout the consultation. The best practice the Service is following and the quality assurance of the consultation by the Consultation Institute, ensures focus on the Authority's requirements in this area.
Risks	The ECR, its consultation and the work of the Task and Finish Group reduces the risks of not being able to respond to emergencies effectively and efficiently in the communities of North Wales.