

**NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**20 JUNE 2005**

**FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR HANDLING BEST VALUE**

Report by the Clerk

**Purpose of Report**

- 1 To consider a recommendation that the responsibilities of the Best Value Committee should be transferred to the Executive Panel.

**Background**

- 2 Since the implementation of the legislation on best value, the authority has had a dedicated committee to deal with responsibilities under the Local Government Act 1999 including approving the annual improvement plan, considering best value studies and reports, monitoring performance indicators etc.
- 3 Devolution of responsibility for the fire and rescue service to the National Assembly for Wales means that the authority will be brought within the Wales Programme for Improvement. Since assuming responsibility in November 2004, the Welsh Assembly Government has yet to issue legislation or detailed guidance for fire and rescue authorities in Wales. Therefore the precise requirements for 2005-06 and subsequent years are not yet known. However a central element of the annual Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) is consideration of how best the authority should deliver services to improve community fire safety. This is bound to involve challenging what the authority does and questions of efficiency, cost effectiveness, quality of service etc. – in other words the very things that the best value legislation also covers. The Executive Panel leads work on the IRMP, prior to its adoption each year by the full authority.
- 4 At its meeting on 10 March, the Best Value Committee considered the situation and recommended that its responsibilities should be transferred to the Executive Panel. At its meeting on 25 April, the Panel agreed to make such a recommendation to the fire authority.

## **Advice**

- 5 Given the new constitutional and legal framework within which the authority operates, and that best value has developed and matured since the introduction of the original legislation, it is opportune to review whether the responsibilities under the 1999 Act should in future be dealt with by the Executive Panel. As a result, the Best Value Committee would be wound up. This would produce modest savings for the authority in terms of costs associated with holding separate meetings of two committees, such as travel costs of members.
- 6 The Panel's terms of reference would need to be amended as a consequence. The proposed wording in paragraph 7.2 below follows closely the present terms of reference of the Best Value Committee, although the final limb ("to act as the authority's forum for involving members in all aspects of compliance with best value legislation and in approving the direction of the service") has been omitted because it does not seem to add anything.

## **Recommendation**

- 7 That the Fire and Rescue Authority agrees that:
  - 7.1 the Best Value Committee should be wound up and its responsibilities transferred to the Executive Panel;
  - 7.2 the Panel's terms of reference should be amended by adding as paragraph 2.4:

"In addition the Panel shall exercise the authority's functions under sections 3 to 6 of the Local Government Act 1999 including:

- (i) overseeing and monitoring the authority's compliance with the best value requirements of the 1999 Act;
- (ii) overseeing and approving best value reviews;
- (iii) overseeing and approving the content of the best value performance plan;
- (iv) monitoring performance against best value performance indicators and local performance indicators."