



AGENDA ITEM: 8

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY EXECUTIVE PANEL

18 July 2016

WELSH LANGUAGE MONITORING REPORT

Report by Richard Fairhead, Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Purpose of Report

- 1 To seek approval for the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service Welsh Language Scheme Monitoring Report for 2015-16 prior to formal submission to the Welsh Language Commissioner.

Background

- 2 Each year, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service is required to produce a detailed report which sets out progress made towards meeting the targets outlined in the Service's Welsh Language Scheme. This is submitted to the Welsh Language Commissioner under the arrangements as a result of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

Information

- 3 The introduction of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 has led to an increased emphasis on promoting and facilitating the use of the Welsh language across Wales, by raising awareness of the official status of the language and improving standards to ensure consistency across Wales. This has been welcomed by North Wales Fire and Rescue Service and the three Welsh Fire and Rescue Services are currently working together to respond to obligations associated with the formal introduction of the new Welsh Language Standards applicable to the Fire and Rescue Services later this year.

- 4 Last year, the Welsh Language Commissioner welcomed many aspects of our work in relation to the Welsh language and the general progress achieved in the implementation of the Welsh Language Scheme during 2014-15.
- 5 Once again, this has been a period in which North Wales Fire and Rescue Service has achieved considerable progress in relation to the Welsh Language.
- 6 Data relating to Welsh language skills and learning is recorded in the Service's HR database. The data for 2015-16 is detailed in the Monitoring Report which summarises the main findings, identifying positive outcomes and continuing challenges which the Service will pursue further during the coming year to strive for improvement. Key positive findings this reporting year are;
 - Despite a further reduction in the size of its workforce, the proportion of staff whose Welsh speaking skills meet the designated standard has increased significantly during the year. At the same time the proportion of staff who do not meet the required skills or remain at minimal levels has continued to decline.
 - The percentage of staff achieving at least the minimum level of skills (Level 2 or above) continues to increase – and the number of postholders with higher level skills also continues to increase.
 - There has been a considerable increase in compliance with Welsh language requirements for all posts in 2016.
 - Encouragingly, following a concerted awareness raising campaign on social media and at events, there has been a slight improvement in the number of Home Safety Checks conducted through the medium of Welsh which had previously declined year on year in the previous three years.
 - The number of school presentations conducted in Welsh has increased significantly.

- 7 NWFRS's Welsh Language Scheme stipulates the requirement for all new members of staff and those successful in promotion to learn basic conversational Welsh to Level 2 standard in our CD programme and this has continued to be promoted successfully amongst staff during 2015-16. The Service continues to support members of staff who wish to attend courses in their local community rather than internal courses and supports Developing Welsh Language Skills for Managers training.
- 8 The monitoring report also highlights the work carried out in relation to promoting Welsh within the workplace as well as providing a bilingual service to the public. This includes our continued commitment to identifying and supporting Welsh Language Champions across the region who continue to mentor others and receive guidance and support to help promote the language and facilitate learning.
- 9 The Service remains committed to promoting the language and encouraging Welsh language skills development amongst its staff. This work ensures the provision of bilingual services to the people of North Wales and encourages the use of Welsh within the workplace.

Recommendation

- 10 That Members note the progress made in relation to the Welsh Language Scheme and approve the 2015-16 Monitoring Report prior to formal submission to the Welsh Language Commissioner.