



AGENDA ITEM: 10

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY EXECUTIVE PANEL

15 July 2013

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 2012-13 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. In the past this has been presented to the Welsh Language Board for approval but it is now submitted to the Welsh Language Commissioner under the new 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 will continue working together to respond to obligations associated with the introduction of the new Welsh Language Standards.

- 4 Last year, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service's report received a positive response from the Welsh Language Commissioner and particular aspects of the report which were welcomed included the recruitment of Welsh Language Champions, recognition of staff achievement in learning Welsh and the investment in training and translation services. The Service's progress in the implementation of its Welsh Language Scheme 2010-13 was duly noted.
- 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. It has recently received notable recognition for its work in promoting the Welsh language by winning an Inspire Wales Award 2013 in the category of Welsh at Work – the Service was among three organisations that were shortlisted for the award which was unveiled at a presentation ceremony in Cardiff on 18th June 2013. This was also the second year running that the Service was shortlisted for this award.
- 6 Previous Monitoring Reports have detailed how the three Fire and Rescue Services in Wales took part in the 'Mae Gen Ti Ddewis' campaign supported by the Welsh Language Board to promote the availability of Home Fire Safety Checks through the medium of Welsh. The success of the campaign saw the number of residents in North Wales receiving home fire safety checks through the medium of Welsh increasing from 6% to 20% in a three year period. In the last year there was a slight reduction in these numbers which now fluctuate between 14% - 20% during different times of the year. The Service remains committed to promoting these checks bilingually and the campaign is being re-launched this summer, with the aim of promoting this bilingual service both internally to our staff who provide the checks as well as externally to our communities.
- 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 also continued to be promoted amongst staff during 2012-13. A further Level 3 CD has been produced as an extension of the existing learning programmes and in response to the number of staff who have shown an interest in developing their language skills further after completing the Level 2 training.

This was adapted from the Level 3 course that was produced by North Wales Police and we are grateful to them for allowing us to adapt the course content. The CD features four members of our own staff, as well as a bilingual introduction from the Chief Fire Officer, and will be launched later on this year.

- 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. During the reporting period the Service has recruited additional Champions and now has 27 individuals in this role who continue to mentor others and receive guidance and support to help promote the language and facilitate learning.
- 9 Data relating to Welsh language skills and learning is collated and recorded in the Service's HR database. The database continues to be developed to include staff information on self-assessed skills in Welsh, formal assessments in Levels 1-5, achievement in Levels 1, 2 and 3 courtesy skills, Welsh language training accreditation as well as the skills required by posts and defined in job descriptions. The data recorded for 2012-13 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.
- 10 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

- 11 That Members note the progress made in relation to the Welsh Language Scheme and approve the 2012-13 Monitoring Report prior to formal submission to the Welsh Language Commissioner.