



AGENDA ITEM: 16

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

18th June 2012

COMPLAINTS AND LETTERS OF APPRECIATION

Report by Ruth Simmons, Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Purpose of Report

- 1 To inform and update Members in respect of the number of complaints and letters of appreciation received from the public for the period April 1st 2011 to March 31st 2012.

Information

2 Complaints Received 1st April 2011 – 31st March 2012

- 2.1 The number of complaints received, investigated and resolved in accordance with the policy and procedures adopted by the Fire and Rescue Authority have been recorded as follows:

Complaint categories	Number of complaints received by financial year as a biennial comparator	
	2010 / 2011	2011 / 2012
Welsh Language issues	0	0
Policy & Procedure	2	1
Driving	10	6
Fire Safety: Enforcement	3	0
Community Safety	4	0
Operational Activities	6	2
Conduct	13	12
Health & Safety	2	1
Total	40	22
Percentage decrease from 10/11		45%

2.2 Table of complaints substantiated following formal investigation

Complaint categories	Number of complaints substantiated by financial year as a biennial comparator	
	2010 / 2011	2011 / 2012
Welsh Language issues	0	0
Policy & Procedure	0	0
Driving	5	5
Fire Safety: Enforcement	0	0
Community Safety	2	0
Operational Activities	1	0
Conduct	1	3
Health & Safety	1	0
Total	10	8
Percentage of complaints substantiated	25%	36%

3 Summary of Substantiated Complaints

3.1 *Driving*

Substantiated complaint	Resolution
FRS vehicle drove over flood defences instead of using proper route.	Key holder protocols discussed with crew and current list made available.
Fire appliance not on blue light journey travelling too fast for type of road. Vehicle crossed over central white line.	Driver interviewed, Service Policies & Procedures discussed in relation to appliance driving standards, road craft and consideration to other road users
Standards of driving whilst under blue light conditions – too close to vehicle in front	Driver interviewed, Service Policies & Procedures discussed in relation to appliances driving to incidents including the nature and type, road craft and consideration to other road users
Erratic driving of Berlingo type vehicle on A55 causing complainant to brake	Driver interviewed, Service Policies & Procedures discussed specifically impact on other road users when driving a vehicle with a speed restrictor

Use of blue lights and two tones in the vicinity of a horse and rider	Crew interviewed, Service Policies & Procedures discussed specifically impact of an appliance on the road in the vicinity of animals. Reference made to the Somerset incident where a farmer was trampled to death by cows stampeding due to activation of two tones on a fire engine
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Fire appliances and manager vehicles undertook 14,225 'Blue Light' journeys when responding to operational incidents between April 1st 2011 and March 31st 2012

3.2 *Conduct*

Substantiated complaint	Resolution
Complaint a CFS Practitioner was unhelpful on the telephone – did not fully explain the purpose of the call	Individual interviewed and reminded of the Core Values and appropriate conduct. Verbal apology given to complainant which was accepted
NWFRS employee parked on hotel car park using Firefighter on call notice to attend a local car boot sale with their family	Discussed with individual regarding the image this is portraying. Verbal apology given to hotel owner which was accepted
Competency of CFS Practitioner in relation to hard of hearing interventions. Discrepancy in the understanding of requirements between the community member and practitioner	Discussed with individual the importance of effective communication with the community and passing on relevant information

4 Letters of Appreciation

- 4.1 It is worthy to note that 97 letters, cards, e-mails and Facebook messages have been received expressing appreciation and satisfaction with the Service. This is a 20% increase on last year.
- 4.2 The letters of appreciation received covered a wide range of Fire and Rescue Service activity but broadly fall into the following categories.

Community Fire Safety Initiatives and Community Events

- 4.3 Sixteen expressions of appreciation were received from a broad section of the Community thanking the Service for their involvement with or lead on Community Safety activities. These included station or individual attendance at fetes and open days and talks to Community Groups such as the Rotary and Women's Institute. Many members of staff were specifically named and congratulated on their proactive involvement with initiatives such as the impact road show and protection of vulnerable adults.

Visits to Schools by the Service and to Stations by the Community

- 4.4 There were a total of seven expressions of appreciation thanking the Service for attendances at schools to give safety advice and also from community groups such as the Rotarians thanking station personnel for the group's attendance at station.

Home Fire Safety Checks

- 4.5 Thirteen appreciations have been received following the provision of a home fire safety check. These include references to the professionalism of individuals, the process, information and intervention measures available.

Partnership Working

- 4.6 A total of four appreciations were received from Partners with whom we work to make our Communities safer. These included thanks to the Arson Reduction Team for their continued involvement in a wide ranging set of ongoing initiatives and to the Phoenix Project personnel.

Charitable and Partnership Support

- 4.7 Throughout this reporting period NWFRS received nineteen letters of appreciation for monies donated to charity as a result of events such as the station bonfires and monies raised in partnership with groups such as the Alzheimer's Society. The majority of these were thanks following the Deeside fire station presentation evening when monies raised from the annual bonfire were presented to local charity groups.

4.8 Operational Incidents

22 acknowledgements of professionalism were received for crews attending operational incidents, many of which were written following distressing events. These letters express how crews attending incidents were professional, sympathetic, careful and above all considerate of feelings. They include letters from owners of buildings who have suffered substantial loss due to fire, rescue of persons and members of the local community thanking the Service for their immediate actions when fires have occurred involving moorland or mountains and the prevention of spread to property has been undertaken.

4.9 The Joint Communications Centre received a number of joint appreciations with operations however letters of appreciation were received from Cheshire FRS for assistance with a 20 pump incident in the area, the High Sheriffs of Clwyd and Gwynedd for a visit to the JCC and from Staffordshire FRS following a visit by staff and Authority Members.

4.10 The Corporate Communications department also received a number of appreciations in this reporting year. A total of five appreciations were received from North Wales Police for assistance with an appeal for missing persons, BBC for the programme Ffeil and the Daily Post for bonfire night information.

4.11 The Service also received the following eight appreciations

- Thank you from the widow of a retired firefighter for attendance at his funeral
- First aid given by two members of NWFRS to a casualty in cardiac arrest during an event in Caernarfon
- Hospitality shown by NWFRS to personnel from South Wales FRS whilst undertaken a North to South charity bike ride
- Thank you from ACFO R Hammerton of South Wales FRS for NWFRS participation in an all Wales exercise
- Thank you to ACFO Colin Hanks for speaking at a CIPFA conference on asset management
- From Leahurst Equine Practice thanking staff for delivering training to new equine practice students on the FRS perspective of animal rescue

- Thank you to Wrexham crew who attended an incident in 2005 and rescued a female child who was not breathing at the time. The thank you was from her parents advising she is now 18 years old and doing well.
- From Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen thanking the Service for being able to place a Year 12 student on work experience.

Recommendation

- 5 That Members note the number of complaints and expressions of appreciation received.