



AGENDA ITEM: 8

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY EXECUTIVE PANEL

26 October 2015

FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY BUDGET 2015-16 SUPPORTING PROJECTS - UPDATE

Report by Richard Fairhead, Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Purpose of Report

- 1 To inform Members of the effects of the decisions made at the extraordinary meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority on 2 December 2014 regarding stopping providing specialist rope rescue and large animal rescue services, and revising arrangements for calls originating from automatic fire alarms (AFAs).

Background

- 2 At the Executive Panel meeting of 27 October 2014, Members considered a range of budget options in preparation for the meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority on 15 December 2014 when the Authority would be required to set its budget for 2015/16.
- 3 At an extraordinary meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority on 2 December 2014, Members were presented with potential savings options available to them, including additional information that had been specifically requested by the Executive Panel. This information related to potential savings and the risk impacts of ceasing to provide some specific non-statutory services and reducing attendance to calls originating from automatic fire alarms.

- 4 At a meeting of the full Fire and Rescue Authority on 15 December 2014, Members confirmed which of the options considered at the extraordinary meeting would be implemented from 1 April 2015:
- to stop providing non-statutory rope rescue and large animal rescue services;
 - not to respond automatically to calls received from AFAs.

Information

Rope rescue and large animal rescue

- 6 Members resolved to cease providing these types of rescue services. The project plan to remove these capabilities focused on communication of the changes, with the aim of minimising the impact on stakeholders, the public and staff. Specifically:
- written information was provided and a series of meetings were held with those other organisations that also respond to these types of rescues;
 - public information was provided through special events, information on the Service's website and messages posted on social media sites;
 - briefings were provided for affected staff, and additional guidance and training provided for Control staff who deal directly with requests for assistance at these types of incidents;
- 7 The number of calls received by NWFRS since the 1 April 2015 to the 12 October 2015 is shown in the table below:

Incident type	calls received	Attendances made
Rope rescue	0	0
Large animal rescue	10	1

- 8 The attendance made was following a second call to the incident where it was reported that a person was also trapped. This resulted in a specialist water rescue and a fire appliance being mobilised.

Stopping attending false alarms from automatic fire alarms

- 9 Members resolved to introduce a more robust policy for responding to these types of calls, with a view to attending fewer.
- 10 A project plan focussing on communicating the new policy, amending internal policies and procedures and the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing was completed. Specifically, contact was made with:
- companies operating from premises fitted with remotely monitored AFAs that have previously generated false alarms. The managers of these premises were informed that they should not expect the same response in future, and have been offered advice and support from the Services' Business Fire Safety department regarding managing their AFA systems to minimise false alarms. They were reassured, however, that the Service will continue to respond to 999 calls received from premises;
 - remote monitoring companies, informing them of the changes;
 - partners such as local authorities and other emergency services.
- 11 Policies and procedures were updated to reflect the changes. New Control procedures were developed and staff provided with training.
- 12 The table below shows details of the AFAs calls received between 1 April 2015 and 12 October 2015.

Calls received	Number not attended	Number where attendance reduced
685	640	45

- 13 The statistics in the table identify a reduction of 685 in fire appliance responses to AFA calls.

- 14 The savings to the Authority from not attending the 685 false alarms from AFA systems can be split into two distinct areas:
- cashable savings, where the non-attendance at 426 AFAs has resulted in RDS crews not being mobilised. This has resulted in a direct cost saving of £ 34,719 (applying a notional cost calculator of £81.50, this is the salary cost of a crew of four firefighters with a watch manager, for one hour).
 - non cashable savings where wholetime crews on duty have not been mobilised to 264 AFAs and therefore have been able to use their time more effectively on activities such as community safety work or training.

Recommendation

- 15 That Members note the positive impact of the introduction of the new policies.