



AGENDA ITEM: 13

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

17th June 2013

COMPLAINTS AND LETTERS OF APPRECIATION

Report by Paul Claydon, Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Purpose of Report

- 1 To inform Members of the number of complaints and letters of appreciation received from the public for the period 1st April 2012 to 31st March 2013.

Information

Redefined Formal Complaints Recording

- 2 In previous years, the Service has recorded and reported on all complaints received regardless of their root cause. Recent advice from The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Complaints Advice Team confirms that a complaint should only be recorded formally where behaviour or performance does not meet expectations whilst staff are undertaking the business of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service.
- 3 If a complaint is made regarding general issues outside of the remit of the business of the Service these may be dealt with as a conduct issue under the Service's own Standards of Conduct Policy if appropriate to do so.
- 4 The Ombudsman's office does not recommend these are recorded as formal complaints but suggests the Service may wish to maintain a record of any such information received.

- 5 It is also confirmed that, where a complaint is made and deemed to be the responsibility of another organisation, this should be passed to the appropriate body and the complainant advised. A record should be made in order to evidence the actions taken by North Wales Fire and Rescue Service but an investigation is not required.
- 6 The information contained in this report is in line with this guidance received from the Complaints Advice Team. Statistical information has been amended in order to give an accurate comparison of figures.

Complaints Received 1st April 2012 – 31st March 2013

- 7 The complaints received, investigated and resolved have been recorded as follows:

Complaint categories	Number of complaints received	
	2011 / 2012	2012 / 2013
Welsh Language issues	0	1
Policy & Procedure	1	1
Driving	6	0
Operational Activities	2	2
Conduct	8	8
Total	17	12
Percentage decrease from 11/12		29%

Complaint categories	Number of complaints substantiated	
	2011 / 2012	2012 / 2013
Welsh Language issues	0	1
Policy & Procedure	0	0
Driving	5	0
Operational Activities	0	0
Conduct	2	2
Total	7	3
Percentage of complaints substantiated	41%	25%

- 8 It should be noted that fire appliances and manager vehicles undertook 12,641 'Blue Light' journeys when responding to operational incidents between April 1st 2012 and March 31st 2013 with no complaints received during this reporting period.

Stage 3 Complaint

- 9 During this reporting period a Stage 2 complaint from 2011 was escalated to Stage 3 and referred to the Clerk to the Authority. This complaint was not upheld by the Authority; the complainant then referred it to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Ombudsman did not take up the complaint for investigation and referred it back to the complainant with no action taken.

Appreciations Received 1st April 2012 – 31st March 2013

- 10 It is worth noting that 123 letters, cards, e-mails, Facebook and Twitter messages have been received expressing appreciation and satisfaction with the Service. This is a 27% increase on last year.
- 11 The letters of appreciation received covered a wide range of Fire and Rescue Service activity but broadly fall into the following categories.

Category	Total Received
Community safety initiatives and events	6
Visits to schools by the Service and to stations by community groups	10
Home fire safety checks	5
Partnership working	7
Charitable support	3
Operational incidents	79
Other	13

- 12 The majority of appreciations for incidents were in relation to the November 2012 flooding of the St Asaph and Ruthin areas and were received via Twitter and Facebook.

Recommendation

- 13 That Members note the information provided.