



AGENDA ITEM: 6

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

15th October 2012

IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES 2013-14 CONSULTATION

Report by Dawn Docx, Deputy Chief Fire Officer

Purpose of Report

- 1 To present for Members' approval the contents of the draft Improvement Objectives 2013-14 Consultation document

Background

- 2 Welsh improvement authorities are required to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement and to set themselves Improvement Objectives every year, having first consulted on those objectives with representatives of interested parties. This is in accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.
- 3 Fire and Rescue Authorities are required to prepare and publish annually an improvement plan as soon as reasonably practicable after 31 December in the year before the year to which it relates. This is in accordance with the Fire and Rescue Authorities (Improvement Plans) (Wales) Order 2012

Information

- 4 At its meeting of 16th July 2012 the Executive Panel agreed the membership of an Improvement Plan (IP) Working Group of members, and approved a timetable for compiling and publishing the Authority's Improvement Plan for 2013-14 to comply with relevant regulations.

- 5 The IP Working Group met regularly to consider information and discuss the development of the Authority's 2013-14 Improvement Objectives. It also considered how work could progress to support the development of future Improvement Objectives
- 6 At its meeting of the 17th September 2012, the Executive Panel considered the recommendations of the IP Working Group as regards the Improvement Objectives for 2013-14 and other preparatory work to feed into future Improvement Objectives.
- 7 These have now been compiled into a draft document (Appendix 1) that will be converted into an attractive bilingual publication and used to gather views from the public and other interested parties between now and early January 2013.
- 8 Comments received during this period of consultation will then be considered by the Authority prior to final adoption of the 2013-14 Improvement Objectives before the end of March 2013.

Recommendations

- 9 That members approve the contents of the document 'Our plans for fire and rescue services in North Wales' for public consultation.

[NWF&RA branding]

Our plans for fire and rescue services in North Wales

Information and public consultation on proposed
improvement objectives for 2013-14 and beyond

Public Consultation
15th October 2012 to 7th January 2013

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INTRODUCTION

The risks that face North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority are changing. Like many other public sector organisations the Authority faces the prospect of meeting a potential increase in demand, but with less money.

In much the same way as individuals look to re-evaluate the way they live and to revise their plans for the future, so the Authority too is having to reconsider how it provides and delivers its services so as to put it in the best possible position to deliver high quality and effective services in North Wales over the next 20 or 30 years.

The Authority's aim is to provide continuously improving services in the most effective and efficient way it can with the money it has available. This usually involves introducing new and innovative ways of doing things. One important aspect of that continuous improvement is the emphasis the Authority places on close collaboration with other public sector organisations. In this way, the Authority is able to bring about numerous genuinely effective improvements in outcomes (e.g. by working with a range of other North Wales organisations to identify and support vulnerable people) and in efficiency (e.g. by working with North Wales Police in the Joint Communications Centre, in managing our buildings and premises, and in tackling the problem of arson and deliberate fire setting).

The Authority is fully committed to increasing collaboration wherever it can. It is actively engaged in the work of the Local Service Boards in North Wales, and works very closely with the other two Welsh Fire and Rescue Authorities. The National Issues Committee is an excellent recent example of the three Welsh Fire and Rescue Authorities coming together to drive forward the collaborative agenda across Wales.

Since the Authority's inception in 1996 it has built up a good understanding of the risk profile and business needs in the area it covers. During that time it has overseen a welcome reduction in the number of fires in the area and a steady decline in the number of people being injured by fire.

The challenge now is to maintain that record of success at a time of unprecedented challenges and potential demands on services. It is difficult to predict with absolute certainty the changes that will take place over the next decade, but it is possible to make a reasonable assessment of the likely pressures and move to alleviate those before they become too difficult to overcome.

We are committed to making North Wales a safer place to live, work and visit. We hope you will consider our proposals and let us know your views – whether you agree with them, or whether you can offer up better alternatives.

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SUMMARY

Based on previous assessments of risk and on known vulnerabilities of some sectors of the community, the Authority proposes that its Improvement Objectives for 2012-13 should continue into 2013-14.

OBJECTIVES FOR 2013-14

Improvement Objective 1

To help to keep people and communities safe by preventing deaths and injuries from accidental fires in living accommodation.

This will include the adoption of a new Dwelling Fire Response Charter and the setting of local dwelling fire response criteria.

Improvement Objective 2

To find ways of reducing the overall cost of running the Service each year in order to operate within the annual budget.

PREPARING FOR 2014-15

Based on a current assessment of the risks likely to face North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority in future, the Authority has concluded that those requiring high level improvement planning relate to: a projected increase in demand for services; an increasingly unpredictable workload; and the prospect of having less money to provide services with.

It therefore proposes to start working towards the development of the 2014-15 Improvement Objectives by undertaking two specific workstreams:

Workstream 1

To complete a Sustainable Fire and Rescue Services Review.

Workstream 2

To devise a 3-year financial plan for 2014/15 to 2016/17.

We are inviting responses to our consultation questions, but would also welcome any comments, particularly in relation to the two workstreams that will contribute to the development of the 2014-15 Improvement Objectives. Responses are invited by January 7th 2013.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

The following questions are intended to show the sorts of areas where we are interested to know your views. However, we would be very pleased to receive your comments about any aspects of fire and rescue services in North Wales.

QUESTIONS ON SETTING OUR OBJECTIVES

The 2013-14 Improvement Objectives (pages 28 to 34).

- Do you agree that we have identified the two highest priorities for next year? If not, what else would you suggest?

Preparing for setting the 2014-15 Improvement Objectives (pages 35 to 36).

- What do you think are the important things for us to consider now if we are to continue to provide excellent fire and rescue services in future with increased demand but less money to run the service?
- What do you think we should be thinking about as we develop our next three-year financial strategy?

QUESTIONS ON OUR RESPONSE TO DWELLING FIRES

The Dwelling Fires Response Charter (pages 30 to 32).

- Do you agree that we have adopted the right seven commitments in the Dwelling Fires Response Charter?
- Would you have included anything else, or phrased anything differently?

Local Dwelling Fires Response Criteria (page 31).

What are your views about the criteria that we intend to adopt for measuring our speed of response to dwelling fires?

Would you have included anything else?

QUESTION ABOUT OUR OVERALL APPROACH

If you had to choose between the following two options, which would you choose, and why?

- a) Keeping a fire station open because it is close to your home, but accepting that it is not available for several hours a week. Or
- b) Having a fire station that is always ready to respond but accepting that it is several miles further away from your home.

Section 1

KEY INFORMATION ABOUT NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE

[MAP SHOWING LOCATION OF FIRE STATIONS]

| | 2010-11 | 2011-12 |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Revenue budget | £32.093 million | £31.933 million |
| Grants received | £1.776 million | £2.692 million |
| Capital expenditure | £6.725 million | £4.491 million |
| Fire stations | 44 | 44 |
| Fire engines | 54 | 54 |
| People employed as at 31 March | 1,058 | 983 |
| Fires attended | 3,297 | 3,165 |
| Non-fire emergency incidents attended | 1,355 | 990 |
| False alarms attended | 3,743 | 3,566 |
| Home Fire Safety Checks delivered | 36,905 | 28,472 |

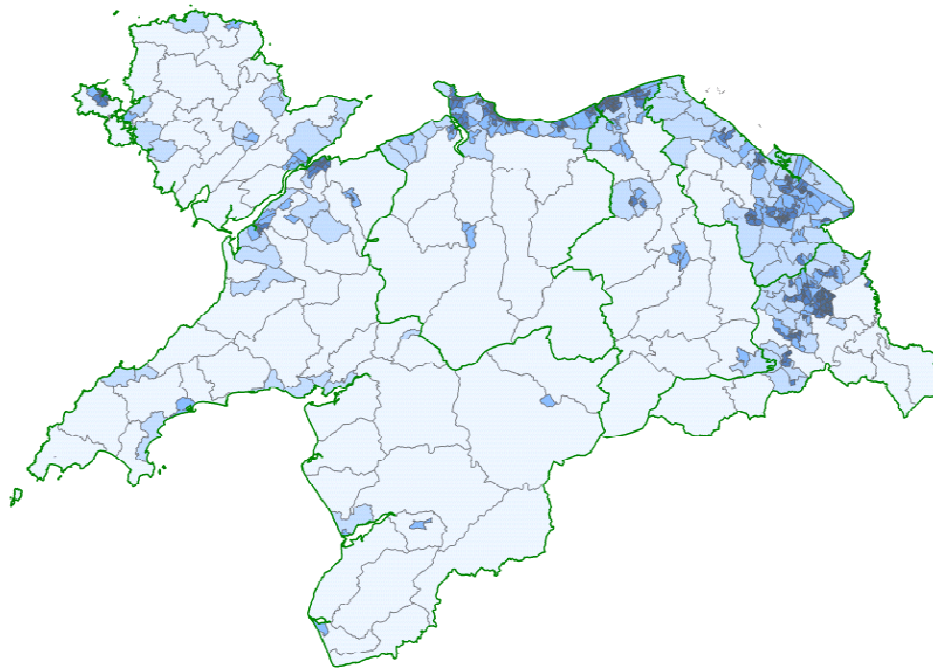
More information is provided in Section 4 and on our website, or alternatively you can contact us at the address given on the contents page.

A PROFILE OF NORTH WALES

This section presents information about the area that North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority protects, and profiles the main demographic and social risk projections that the Authority needs to consider.

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority is one of three fire and rescue authorities in Wales. It was established in 1996 and provides services in the six unitary authority areas of Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham, spending an annual revenue budget of around £32 million.

POPULATION The Authority serves a resident population of around 680,000¹ that is largely concentrated in the more industrial and urbanised areas of the North East and along the North Wales coast.



Source: Infobase Cymru

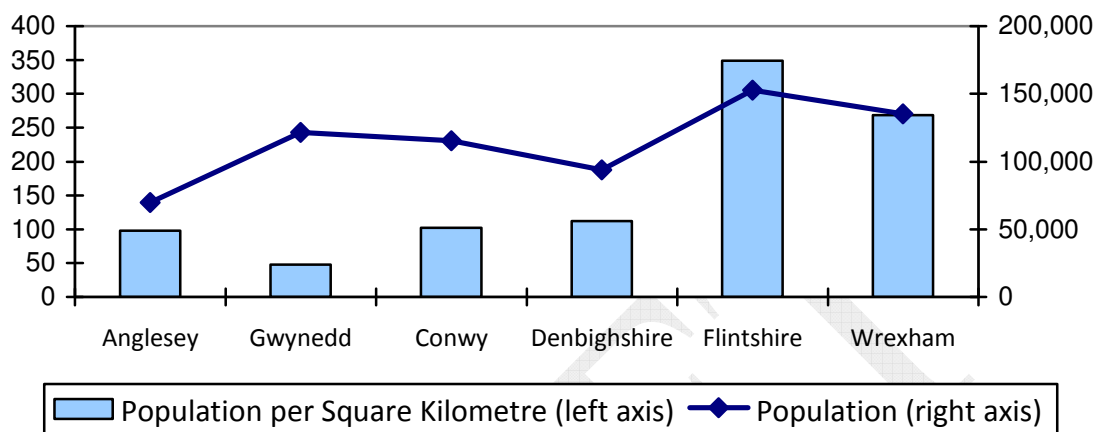
The map illustrates where the more sparsely populated and the more densely populated areas are in North Wales². Darker shades show a higher population density.

¹ 688,400 according to the Office of National Statistics 2011 mid year estimate and 687,600 according to the 2011 census.

² Figures taken at the time of the 2010 Small Area Population Estimates, published October 2011.

At a county level the population density ranges between 47 people per square kilometre in Gwynedd - one of the most sparsely populated counties in England and Wales - and 342 people per square kilometre in Flintshire.

Population and Population Density



Source: StatsWales Table 003647 and WG Bulletin SB 89/2012

INCOME According to Department for Work and Pensions figures, the median annual income of people living in each North Wales county in 2011 ranged between £23,267 and £28,719, compared to a Wales median of £25,157³.

QUALIFICATIONS Department for Work and Pensions figures showed that in 2011 the percentage of people living in each North Wales county and who had no qualifications ranged between 9.6% and 12.7%, compared to 12% across the whole of Wales⁴.

ETHNICITY: According to 2009 population estimates⁵, the population of North Wales was predominantly white (97.23%, compared to 95.88% for the whole of Wales).

NATIONAL IDENTITY: According to 2009 population estimates⁶, the percentage of the North Wales counties population that considered themselves to be Welsh ranged between 44% and 64% compared to a Wales average of 65%.

³ Source: Infobase Cymru.

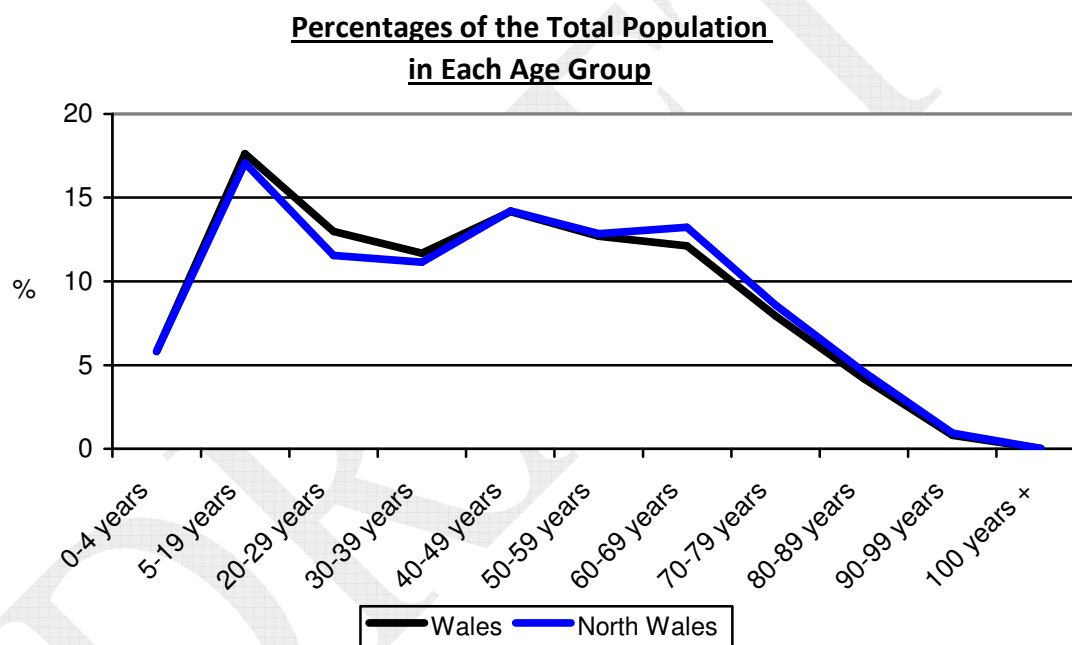
⁴ Source: Infobase Cymru.

⁵ StatsWales Table 014499

⁶ StatsWales Table 005501

WELSH LANGUAGE: Responses to the Integrated Household Survey conducted in 2010⁷ indicated that the percentages of Welsh speakers in North Wales counties ranged between 17% to over 70%, compared with a Wales average of just under 25%.

AGE: The population of North Wales, according to the 2011 Census, has a slightly lower percentage of people in their twenties and thirties, and a slightly higher percentage of people in their sixties, seventies and eighties than the whole of Wales. In March 2011, there were over 97,000 people aged over 70 years living in North Wales, including 159 centenarians.



Source: Census 2011. StatsWales Table 040221

DISABILITY: According to 2009 population survey⁸, it was estimated that between around 16% and 22% of the population of North Wales had some form of disability, compared with just under 22% for the whole of Wales.

SEXUAL IDENTITY: Responses to the Integrated Household Survey conducted in 2011⁹ suggested that between 92% and 96% of the population of North Wales was heterosexual, compared to the all-Wales average of 94%.

⁷ StatsWales Table 005502

⁸ StatsWales Table 005510

⁹ StatsWales Table 025006

AREA: North Wales has a land area of approximately 6,172 square kilometres and about 400 kilometres (250 miles) of coastline.

TRANSPORT: The key road transport links are the A55 Expressway, the A5, A483, A487 and A470. In total, there are around 9,735 km of A, B, C and minor roads in the area. Traffic volume in 2010 was 6.49 billion vehicle kilometres.

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Section 2

PROFILING FUTURE RISKS

The Authority has reviewed which risks are likely to affect its ability to deliver fire and rescue services in the next few years. These have been grouped into four broad categories: demographic, lifestyle, financial and area-based.

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DEMOGRAPHIC RISK PROJECTION

This section focuses on the risks arising from the demographic profile of the area.

- **THE POPULATION OF THE AREA IS INCREASING**

The mid-year estimate for 2010¹⁰ gave a population figure of 678,461 people for North Wales. This has been estimated to rise by 7.8% to 731,454 by the year 2033. If the same estimated rate of increase was applied to the more recent 2011 Census-based estimate of usually resident population¹¹ in North Wales (687,600), this would give a total of up to 741,233 people living in North Wales by the year 2033.

Why is that relevant?

Because the more people in the area, the greater the challenge of preventing fires and maintaining the quality of our response to emergency incidents.

An increasing demand for fire and rescue services may not necessarily be matched by an increasing budget.

¹⁰ ONS Mid Year Estimates www.statswales.wales.gov.uk Table 016889 Mid-Year Population Estimates (2001 onwards).

¹¹ Table CP04 2011 Census: Usually resident population by five-year age groups, unitary authorities in Wales.

- **THERE ARE LIKELY TO BE MORE ONE-PERSON HOUSEHOLDS**

There are around 301,141 households in North Wales¹². The number has been increasing steadily, as has the proportion of those households that are occupied by only one person¹³.

| Year | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|----------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| All households | 289,851 | 292,103 | 294,930 | 297,539 | 299,558 | 301,141 |
| 1-person households | 90,974 | 92,575 | 94,335 | 96,086 | 97,633 | 99,092 |
| 1-person households as a % | 31% | 32% | 32% | 32% | 33% | 33% |

It has also been calculated that the number of households in Wales is growing at a faster rate than the population, and there is a long run trend to smaller households, with a large increase in the number of single person households.

Why is that relevant?

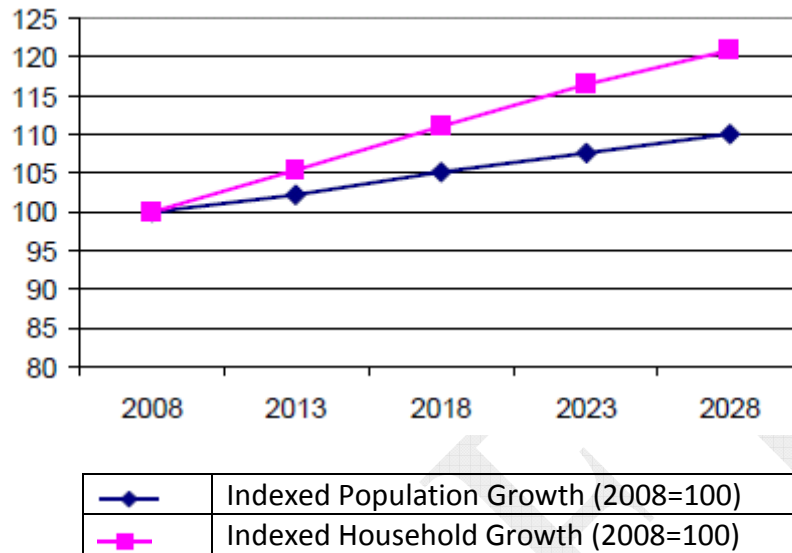
Because our analysis of fire deaths showed that being alone at the time of the fire was a risk factor. More people living alone increases the overall risk.

¹² As calculated from the ONS mid-year population estimates. When calculated from the 2011 Census, the number of households in North Wales with at least one usual resident is estimated at a slightly lower figure of 295,600.

¹³ StatsWales Table 028727 Household Estimates for Wales by Local Authority, 1991-2010.

•THE NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS IS GROWING AT A FASTER RATE THAN THE POPULATION

Indexed Projected Population and Household Growth in Wales



Why is that relevant?

Because when taken in combination, a growing population and more households in the area means that the Service will need to work even more effectively to continue to ensure good outcomes for people.

- **A SIGNIFICANT PROPORTION OF THE HOUSING STOCK IS IN THE SOCIAL HOUSING SECTOR**

According to figures released by the Welsh Government, the social housing stock in North Wales is estimated at around 51,383 units¹⁴. When calculated as a proportion of all households in each local authority area, both Gwynedd and Wrexham had a higher proportion than the Wales average. Conwy had the second lowest in Wales (around 13%).

Why is that relevant?

Because our analysis showed that the risk of dying in a dwelling fire is higher for households living in rented accommodation.

Conversely, our partnerships with the social housing sector make it easier to deliver prevention services to tenants in these dwellings than to tenants of individual private landlords.

¹⁴ Social Housing Stock and Rents, as at 31 March 2012. Published by Welsh Government 26 July 2012. <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/housing2012/120726/?lang=en>

- **PEOPLE ARE LIVING LONGER**

According to the 2011 Census, over 20% of the North Wales population (138,600 people) were aged 65 years and over. At that time there were 97,400 people aged 70 or over.

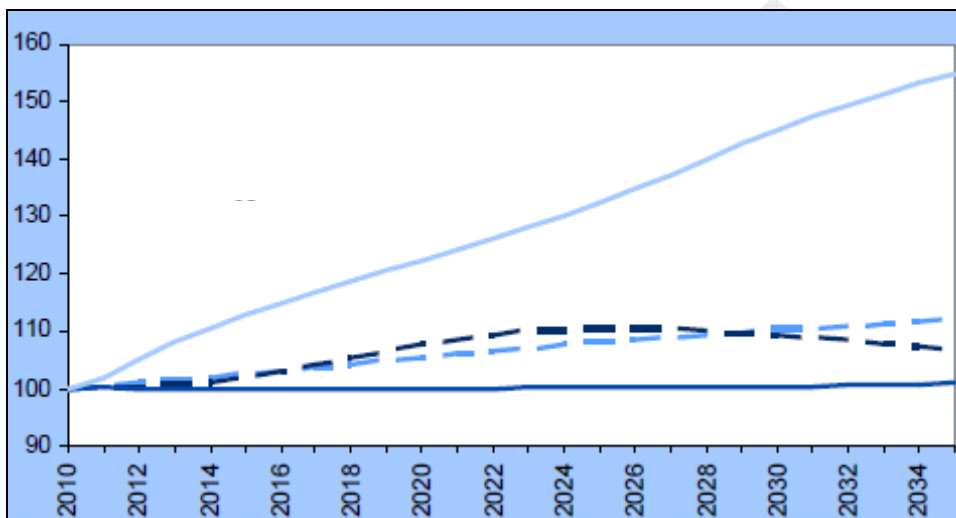
The number of older people living in Wales looks set to rise significantly as life expectancy continues to increase.

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- **THE NUMBER OF OLDER PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITIES LOOKS SET TO RISE SHARPLY**

Taking 2010 as the starting point, and projecting population figures forward from a single starting point, the graph below illustrates how the number of people aged over 65 years in Wales is likely to increase at a faster rate than the number of younger people.

Indexed projection showing increase in older people in Wales.



Source: ONS (2008-based national projections)

| | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| | All ages (2010=100) |
| | Aged under 16 years (2010=100) |
| | Aged 16-64 years (2010=100) |
| | Aged 65+ years (2010=100) |

Why is that relevant?

As people age they become more vulnerable because their mobility may be affected and their sensory responses may not be as sharp.

- **DEPENDENCY IS HIGH, BUT PEOPLE EXPECT TO MAINTAIN THEIR INDEPENDENCE AS LONG AS POSSIBLE**

The dependency ratio of older people to working age population in Wales is already high when compared with the other countries of the UK and internationally. The number of children in Wales is projected to rise in the medium term, before falling slightly in the longer term.

As summarised recently in the Chief Medical Officer for Wales's annual report 2011:

"The population of Wales is getting older. Projections from the Office of National Statistics suggest that the population aged 85 and over will more than double from 77,000 in 2010 to 186,000 in 2035.

We also know from this increased elderly population that the prevalence of dementia is likely to increase as people do not die prematurely from circulatory disease or cancer.

These demographic changes will have an impact on the NHS in the way that people are treated and the need to care for people with disabilities in the community. It is the policy of government that we wish to support independent living as much as possible and try to ensure that people can live their lives in their own homes."

Why is that relevant?

Because people will need to be supported to live independently as they age and the Authority will need to continuously find ways of contributing to their safety.

There will be more people to protect – and specifically more people in the higher risk categories.

LIFESTYLE RISK PROJECTION

This section focuses on the risks presented by the way people live.

- **THE RATE OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IS HIGH**

Drinking above daily guidelines means drinking more than 4 units (men) or 3 units (women); binge drinking means drinking more than double the daily guidelines.

Only a little over half of the Welsh population (56%) are drinking within recommended safe limits. The Chief Medical Officer for Wales reported¹⁵ that excessive alcohol intake is widespread in Wales; 44% of adults reported that they drank above the recommended guidelines on at least one day in the previous week, including 27% who reported binge drinking.

Why is that relevant?

Because people under the influence of alcohol are much more vulnerable to the dangers of fire as they underestimate or ignore risk and are less able to self-rescue.

¹⁵ Welsh Health Survey: Welsh Government (reported in Chief Medical Officer for Wales Annual Report 2011 "Our Healthy Future").

- **SMOKING RATES REMAIN RELATIVELY CONSTANT**

Almost a quarter (24%) of adults in Wales reported¹⁶ that they smoke daily or occasionally. Around 11% of 15-year old boys and 16% of 15-year old girls reported that they smoke at least once a week.

Why is that relevant?

Because fires started by carelessly discarded cigarettes can be amongst the most deadly. Despite the recent introduction of cigarettes that extinguish themselves when they are not being smoked, the risk is not entirely removed and the prevalence of smokers and the number of young smokers in Wales suggests that this should remain on the Authority's register of risk.

- **SUBSTANCE MISUSE IS WIDESPREAD**

There are almost 40,000 cases¹⁷ of people presenting for treatment services for substance misuse in Wales each year, although this probably constitutes only a proportion of all substance misusers. The top three continue to be alcohol, heroin and cannabis misuse.

Why is that relevant?

Because people are at greater risk if their lives are chaotic or their awareness of their surroundings is impaired through drugs or alcohol.

It isn't necessarily where people live that puts them at greater risk, it's how they live.

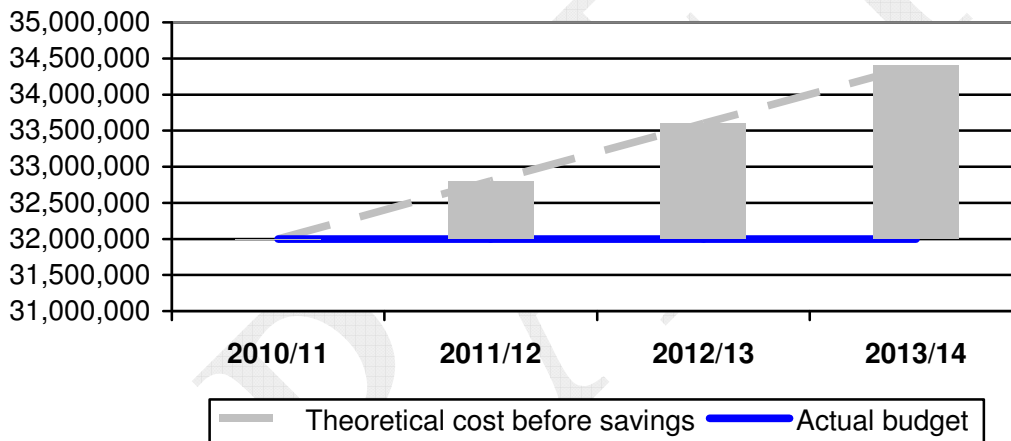
¹⁶ Age standardised percent of adults who smoke. Chief Medical Officer for Wales Annual Report 2011 "Our Healthy Future").

¹⁷ StatsWales Table 010797

FINANCIAL RISK PROJECTION

This section focuses on the risk of not being able to afford the cost of running the service or maintaining its assets such as its buildings and vehicles.

The national economic downturn together with the outcomes of the Comprehensive Spending Review in November 2010 gave an indication of the level of cuts to public services expected in the coming years. In December of that year, the Authority took the decision to freeze the annual budget for three years, which in real terms (taking account of predicted cost increases) meant cutting the annual budget by around £800,000 each year for three years.



Any future cuts to the budget will therefore be added to the £2.4 million per year already saved.

The financial outlook for the public sector in Wales will be challenging.

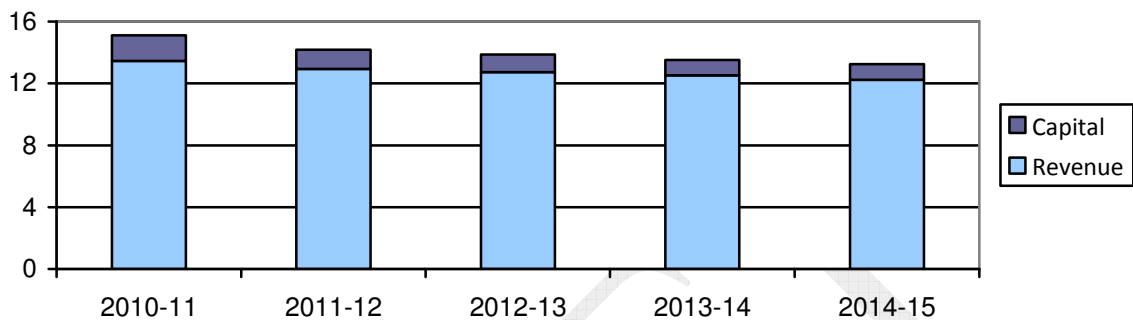
The Auditor General’s report “A picture of public services 2011” acknowledged that *“Welsh public services face change and tough choices as a result of budget cuts and other pressures over the next four years”*.

The report recognised that *“Overall, police and fire and rescue services in Wales are preparing well for the challenges they face, with clear plans and a good track record of financial management and delivering transformational change.”* However, the main point of the Auditor General’s message was that even though public services are prepared

for funding cuts, they will nevertheless be “*seriously tested as they move to actually delivering real cost reductions*”.

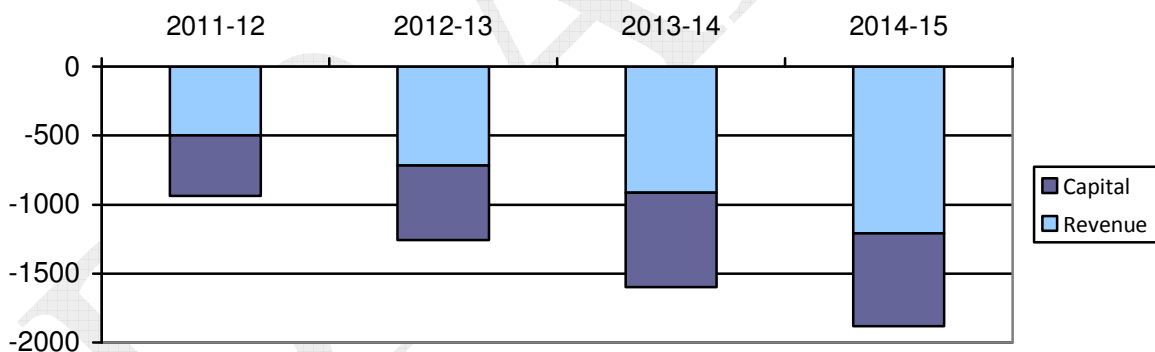
The Auditor General’s report presents clearly what the Welsh public sector can anticipate over the next couple of years, with reduced funding for the Welsh Government being reflected in real-terms cuts.

Welsh Government funding in real terms (£ billion)



Source: Wales Audit Office’s analysis of Welsh Government figures in “A Picture of Public Services 2011”.

Real-terms 'cut' using 2010-11 as a baseline (£ million)



Source: Wales Audit Office’s analysis of Welsh Government figures in “A Picture of Public Services 2011”.

Responding to the Auditor General’s report, the National Assembly for Wales Public Accounts Committee also acknowledged that the public sector in Wales would need “to make further savings and mitigate the impact that a reduction in budget will have on service users”.

Grants from the Welsh Government have also enabled the delivery of much of the Authority’s prevention work in recent years. If these were to cease, decisions would need to be made about the extent of, and funding of, future prevention work.

AREA-BASED RISKS

This section focuses on risks in the area that are difficult to plan for but that can result in attendances at sometimes long, protracted incidents. These have a dual impact of tying up resources, sometimes for long periods, and increasing costs, especially when the response includes Retained Duty System staff whose pay is linked to time spent at incidents.

- **WEATHER**

According to scientists, climate change is ‘irrefutable’ and ‘even with the most ambitious mitigation efforts, we are locked in to a further amount of climate change over the coming decades’¹⁸.

According to the Welsh Government’s 2011 policy statement on climate change:

*“The science indicates that Wales can expect hotter, drier summers, milder, wetter winters, and more intense rainfall events. The impacts of changes such as these may be drastic; we may experience more flooding, more heat waves, more droughts and water shortages, loss of important habitats for wildlife, more wildfires, and more disruption to our transport, energy and ICT networks.”*¹⁹

The UK 2012 Climate Change Risk Assessment noted Wales’s distinct exposure to weather and climate impacts where:

- *“20% of the population and one in six properties are at risk of coastal, river or some other form of flooding. Flooding is a greater threat in Wales than in the rest of the UK, with flash flooding and landslips a particular concern due to the steepness of much of the Welsh landscape.*
- *Groundwater resources are very limited, resulting in a reliance on surface water to meet the needs of homes and businesses. Despite*

¹⁸ Foreword by Professor Robert Watson, Chief Scientific Advisor, Defra in UK Climate Projections: Briefing Report published December 2010. <http://ukclimateprojections.defra.gov.uk>

¹⁹ Welsh Government Policy Statement: Preparing for a changing climate. Implementation of adaptation provisions in the Climate Change Act 2008. Published October 2011 Crown Copyright.

relatively high rainfall, Wales experiences significant pressure on its water supplies.

- *During the 21st century, as detailed in the UK Climate Projections published in 2009 (UKCP09), Wales may experience increasing average temperatures throughout the year, an increase in average rainfall in winter, a decrease in average rainfall in summer and rising sea levels.”²⁰*

Why is that relevant?

Because the fire and rescue service responds to many weather-related incidents. By their nature these types of incidents are hard to plan for as we cannot know when and where they are going to happen, or how long they will last. For that reason services have to be organised in order to be able to react to spate conditions including large countryside fires, widespread flooding, high winds and storms.

²⁰ UK 2012 Climate change risk assessment
<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/desh/publications/120126climaterisksummaryen.pdf>

• ROADS AND ROAD TRAFFIC

Around three-quarters of households in Wales have access to at least one car or van, with around 80% of households relying on private vehicles to travel for work and for access to basic services and facilities.

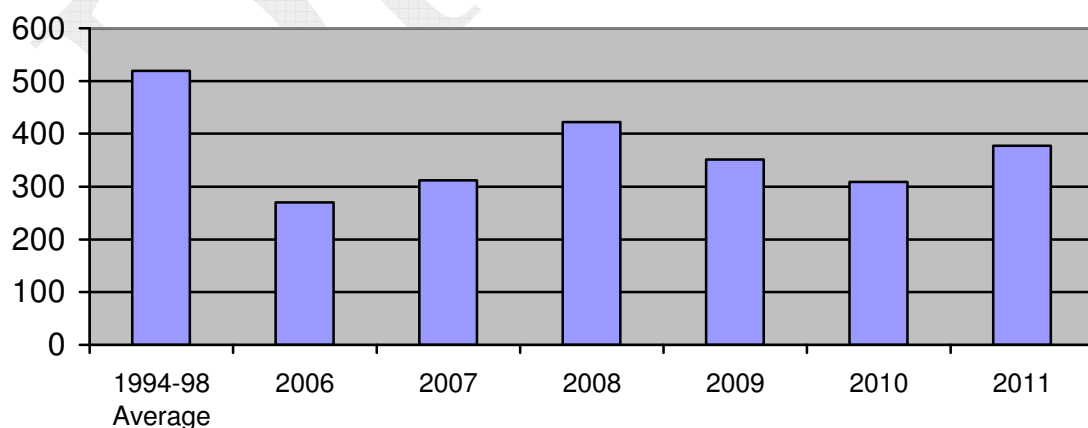
The Welsh Government's 2011 update²¹ reported between 0.61 and 1.64 billion annual motor vehicle kilometres travelled in the North Wales local authority areas in 2010.

The key road transport links are the A55 Expressway (which also acts as the North Wales section of the Euro Route 22), the A5, A487 and A470. The A55 Expressway (which has four road tunnels) experiences the highest volume of traffic, which increases significantly during the summer months.

• ROAD TRAFFIC CASUALTIES

Welsh Government statistics on road safety²² show an overall decrease in the number of road casualties in Wales in recent years, but it cannot be said that there is a definite downward trend in the number of people killed or seriously injured on the roads in North Wales.

People killed or seriously injured on North Wales roads



Source: Welsh Government Statistical Bulletin SB 75/2012, Table 18.

²¹ Monitoring the National Transport Plan, Update 2011. Published by Welsh Government 27 March 2012. <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2012/120327sb282012en.pdf>

²² Welsh Government Statistical Bulletin Road Safety 2011. <http://www.roadsafetywales.co.uk/statistics/info/RoadSafetyStatisticalBulletinAugust2012.pdf>

Also, the rate of casualties that have been killed or seriously injured is generally higher in rural areas, and the overall rate of decrease in casualties is reducing more slowly amongst the 60 years and over age group.

Why is that relevant?

Because the fire and rescue service responds to many RTCs where people have to be extricated from crashed vehicles. It does not have a legal duty to prevent RTCs, but it does play a part in seeking improvements in road safety. As with weather-related incidents, it is difficult to predict when and where RTCs will occur, but also the rurality and the anticipated increase in the number of older people indicate that serious RTCs could increase disproportionately in North Wales in future.

The rate of demand for some of the less predictable Services may increase or become more volatile.

Section 3

MAKING IMPROVEMENTS AND REDUCING RISK

Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales are classed as ‘Welsh Improvement Authorities’ and are subject to requirements of the Local Government Measure 2009 as regards following an annual process of setting and achieving local improvement objectives.

From its horizon-scanning and assessment of risk in North Wales, North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority has identified some strategic issues that it proposes to address through this improvement planning process.

In the meantime, of course, it will continue to improve what it does, placing a particular emphasis on collaboration, both in its own area and with the other Welsh fire and rescue authorities. An important recent innovation has been to establish a **Welsh Fire and Rescue Services’ National Issues Committee (NIC)** to further improve collaboration between the three. Details of its work are available on <http://www.nicwalesfire.org.uk>.

The following pages present the Authority’s planned Improvement Objectives for 2013-14, and outline where it proposes to target its Improvement Objectives in 2014-15.

[Insert diagram illustrating the three-way risk profile of:

- *Increasing local demand for services*
- *Increasingly unpredictable rate of demand for services*
- *Less money available to provide services with]*

IMPROVING AND REDUCING RISK IN 2013-14

The Authority adopted two primary improvement objectives in 2012-13, which it intends to continue to pursue in 2013-14.

The Fire and Rescue Service continuously implements improvements in its normal business plans, but the following two objectives are its very highest priorities for improvement during the year.

2013-14 Improvement Objective 1:

To help to keep people and communities safe by preventing deaths and injuries from accidental fires in living accommodation.

- **Why was this chosen as an objective?**

Because keeping people safe is at the heart of what the Authority does. The safety of people in North Wales is its primary concern, but also it makes much better sense to prevent incidents from happening than to simply react every time they do.

The Authority is committed to retaining its annual target of delivering 30,000 Home Fire Safety Checks to householders in North Wales, but the demographics of North Wales and the identified behaviours mean that prevention activity may need to increase in order to keep pace, and that response services will need to remain available to deal with failures and the unexpected or genuinely unpreventable accidents. For many years the Authority has been reminding people that prevention is better than cure, and it still believes that.

Furthermore, the Authority is very clearly mandated to work in this direction - the Welsh Government's Programme for Wales sets out its own commitment to improving community safety, which is reflected in its Fire and Rescue National Framework 2012 Onwards.

- **In what way will it improve outcomes for people?**

Fires in the home can be devastating. The trauma of losing a home and treasured possessions is bad enough, but seeing a loved one injured, permanently maimed or even killed can be utterly overwhelming. The

fewer dwelling fires that occur, the better. And if a fire does break out, then the fewer people injured or killed the better. It really is that simple.

- **What does the Authority understand by 'success' in relation to this objective?**

There is no way of guaranteeing that fires will not occur or that people will not be harmed but the Authority is committed to providing excellent prevention and response services and living up to the commitments it has made in the Dwelling Fires Response Charter.

The Authority will continue to monitor its performance in relation to those dwelling fires that did occur and to compare that against its own past performance and relevant external comparators. It will also ensure that there are sufficiently robust management processes to identify any weaknesses in internal procedures, and to learn from any perceived failure in order to reduce the likelihood of them happening again.

- **How will the Authority measure and monitor progress?**

Outputs

- The number of home fire safety checks delivered.
- The percentage of home fire safety checks delivered as a result of a referral from a partner agency.

Outcomes

- The number of deaths arising from accidental dwelling fires.
- The number of injuries (especially in the more serious categories) sustained at accidental dwelling fires.
- The percentage of people involved in accidental dwelling fires who were able to escape unharmed without needing assistance from a fire crew to do so.

Responding to Dwelling Fires

The Authority's commitments under the **All-Wales Dwelling Fires Response Charter** are that it will:

1. Take the lead in driving down the number of dwelling fires that occur and in reducing their impact on people.
2. React quickly and efficiently every time we receive an emergency 999 call to attend a dwelling fire.
3. Attend dwelling fires swiftly and properly equipped to deal with them.
4. Deal with dwelling fires effectively, efficiently and professionally.
5. Help to restore normality to communities in the aftermath of dwelling fires.
6. Investigate the causes of dwelling fires and hold relevant people to account when appropriate to do so.
7. Strive to maintain high standards and improve aspects of what we do.

The Welsh Government expects the three Welsh Fire and Rescue Authorities to have set dwelling fires response criteria suited to their area by April 2013. The overall aim should be to reduce the incidence of dwelling fires and associated casualties whilst simultaneously improving firefighter safety.

To this end, the three Welsh fire and rescue services have been working to develop a common set of performance indicators and measures that they can all use to monitor and account publicly for their own performance, and leaving individual targets as a matter for each Fire and Rescue Authority to define.

Dwelling Fires Response Criteria

Specifically in relation to the commitment to attend dwelling fires swiftly and properly equipped to deal with them, the Authority is proposing to set the following targets:

| Element | Affected by | Proposed Target |
|---|---|---|
| Time taken by the Fire and Rescue Service to answer a 999/112 call that has been passed to it by the call handling agent. | Control Room staffing levels and performance; effective technology; and the number of 999 calls being received simultaneously. | To answer 85% of all 999 calls within 7 seconds; 95% within 10 seconds; and 98% within 20 seconds. |
| Time taken to start to call a fire crew (i.e. to initiate a response) ²³ . | The Control Room Operator being able to get sufficient information from the caller or his/her location to identify the most appropriate fire appliance to send. | To initiate a response to a dwelling fire within 1 minute on 70% of occasions and within 2 minutes on 95% of occasions. |
| The number of fire appliances and firefighters mobilised to each dwelling fire. | The need to ensure that enough firefighters are transported to the dwelling fire with enough equipment available to them to deal safely and effectively with the fire according to guidance on safe systems of work for crew members. | At least two fire appliances and eight firefighters attending every dwelling fire ²⁴ . The officer in charge of the incident will assess whether to bring in additional resources, depending on the extent of the fire. |

²³ The Control Operator would have just enough information by this point to begin the process of mobilising a crew, although the call would not necessarily have concluded.

²⁴ Where the fire has not already gone out, and the dwelling is the primary location of the fire.

Evidently, whilst some aspects of the overall time to attend can be improved by managing performance, there are some that are strongly influenced by the nature of the area covered.

- In more rural areas, the longer distances to travel to dwellings will inevitably affect the overall time taken, although of course each response will be kept as short as is safely possible.
- In services with a higher ratio of retained and day crewed fire stations, the time taken to turn in to the fire station after receipt of an alerter signal will add to the total time.

Details of all incidents attended by fire and rescue services are captured in sophisticated computer systems. The time that has elapsed between each stage of attending an emergency incident is automatically recorded, so if a delay has occurred it is relatively straightforward to identify where the problem arose.

On the rare occasions where there has been a delay, the Service will continue to investigate to determine the cause, and to take appropriate action to minimise the chances of the same thing happening again.

A summary of these instances, the cause of the delay and the outcomes for the occupants of the dwelling will be regularly presented to the Authority and published in the annual performance report.

Similarly, the Service will continue to investigate every time a firefighter receives an injury whilst fighting a dwelling fire, and to take action where appropriate to try to avoid the same thing happening again. The rate of serious (RIDDOR reportable) injuries sustained by firefighters at operational incidents, and the number of working shifts/days lost as a consequence will continue to be monitored and reported publicly.

2013-14 Improvement Objective 2

To find ways of reducing the overall cost of running the Service each year in order to operate within the annual budget.

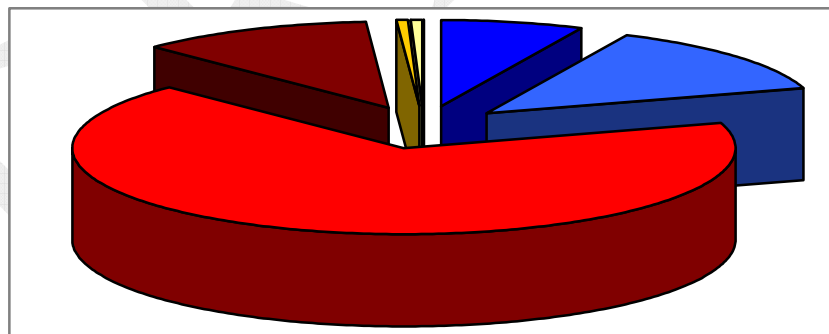
- Why was this chosen as an objective?

In 2010 the Authority took the decision to freeze the annual revenue budget for three years at £32 million. This was distributed equally across the three years, meaning that the annual budget would need to be lowered by around £800,000 every year for three years.

The financial outlook for public services indicates that despite the significant savings already made by the Authority, more savings will need to be made over the next few years. This will inevitably require innovation and careful introduction and management of any changes to the way services are provided.

As illustrated below, the main expenditure is grouped around prevention and operational response, with only a small percentage of the revenue budget being spent on corporate and democratic core costs.

Net Expenditure Distribution 2011-12



| | |
|--|--|
| ■ Prevention - Legislative | ■ Prevention - Community Fire Safety and Education |
| ■ Firefighting - Operational Response | ■ Firefighting - Communications and Mobilising |
| ■ Firefighting - Securing Water Supplies | ■ Corporate and Democratic Core Costs |
| ■ Non-distributed Costs (<1%) | |

Source: Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, Statement of Accounts 2011-12

- **What does the Authority understand by ‘success’ in relation to this objective?**

The challenge for the Authority will be to continue to deliver and improve services without spending beyond its means.

- **How will the Authority measure and monitor progress?**

The Authority’s funds are carefully managed and are subject to statutory regulations and audits. Regular reports from the Treasurer are also formally received and considered at Authority meetings.

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IMPROVING AND REDUCING RISK IN 2014-15

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority has a good track record of introducing improvements to offer better quality, better value and more efficient services to the population of North Wales.

It accepts, however, that there are some aspects that have not changed sufficiently - if at all - and which could potentially jeopardise the Service's capacity to deliver prevention and response services in future.

For this reason it is proposing to start looking into some specific areas with the overall aim of ensuring that fire and rescue services can be successfully sustained in North Wales over the next 20 years at least.

The Authority is therefore proposing to look into two specific issues over the coming months with a view to feeding this work into the Improvement Objectives for 2014-15 and beyond.

1. To complete a Sustainable Fire and Rescue Services Review

Many Fire and Rescue Authorities – but especially those that provide services in rural areas - are finding that it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract and retain staff who can provide fire cover and hold down a full time job with their primary employer.

The Retained Duty System is a recognised system of employing people to remain available to respond quickly to emergency fire and rescue incidents. They are paid an annual retainer and fees for attending incidents.

This duty system suited previous generations very well as people generally stayed within their communities without travelling far for either work or leisure. However, this is no longer the case and people find it increasingly difficult to commit to staying close to their local fire station for up to 120 hours per week just in case they are needed.

The review will look at a range of options for providing fire and rescue services in North Wales, particularly in rural areas, focussing on the long-term sustainability and affordability of services.

2. To devise a 3-year financial plan for 2014/15 to 2016/17.

Careful financial planning is vital to being able to provide fire and rescue services. The Authority has already reduced its budget by £2.4 million between 2011/12 and 2013/14, effectively driving out savings of £800,000 in the first year, another £800,000 in the second year, and a further £800,000 in the third year.

The public sector is facing a very uncertain period of reduced spending. Planning the delivery of fire and rescue services will become increasingly challenging if the money available to run the service does not keep pace with increased costs and increased demand.

The review will look at known and anticipated costs, and prepare the way for the Authority to set its annual budget for these three financial years.

Next Steps:

The Authority will draft its Improvement Objectives for 2014-15 and consult publicly on them during 2013. However, comments would be welcomed as part of this consultation in order to help shape these two pieces of preparatory work.

Section 4

REFERENCE

Useful external sources of information:

www.statswales.wales.gov.uk

<http://www.infobasecymru.net/IAS/>

Duties and Key Legislation

Fire and Rescue Authorities operate within a complex legislative and regulatory framework that includes:

- The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- The Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- The Local Government Measure 2009
- The Welsh Fire and Rescue National Framework 2012 Onwards

Financial contributions

Revenue spending is financed by contributions from the six constituent local authorities in proportion to their population. For 2011-12 the proportions were:

| Authority | 2011/12 Contribution | Proportion |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| | £ | % |
| Conwy County Borough Council | 5,240,568 | 16.41 |
| Anglesey County Council | 3,236,545 | 10.14 |
| Gwynedd Council | 5,588,685 | 17.50 |
| Denbighshire County Council | 4,549,039 | 14.25 |
| Flintshire County Council | 7,051,716 | 22.08 |
| Wrexham County Borough Council | 6,266,101 | 19.61 |
| TOTAL | 31,932,654 | 99.99 |

Staffing

| As at 31/03/2012 | Posts | FTE | HC |
|--|---------------|---------------|------------|
| Wholetime operational staff <i>76% of these posts are based on fire stations. The remainder are senior management posts (3%) and specialist posts including training and prevention work.</i> | 264 | 270 | 270 |
| Retained operational staff <i>All these posts are based on fire stations.</i> | 557 | 462.75 | 528 |
| Control staff <i>86% of these posts are entirely based in the control room. The remainder are middle and senior management posts including Control training and business continuity management.</i> | 28 | 28.5 | 31 |
| Non-operational staff <i>These posts cover a range of functions including fleet management, buildings maintenance, ICT, finance and payroll, training, human resources, corporate communications and administration. 31% are in fire safety and community fire safety.</i> | 149 | 140.64 | 154 |
| Totals | 988.04 | 901.64 | 983 |

FTE = Full Time Equivalent HC = Headcount of employees

Staff sickness and injuries

In 2011/12:

- A total of 1,276 days or shifts were lost due to short term sickness absence, and 2,693 days or shifts were lost due to long term sickness absence. This equates to 8.9 days or shifts per person (excluding Retained Duty System staff.)
- There were 11 ill-health retirements during the year.
- 31 firefighters were injured at operational incidents. None received fatal injuries, but two received major injuries reportable under RIDDOR. These 31 injuries accounted for a total of 216 normal duty days being lost to sickness absence.

Fire Stations

There are 44 fire stations in North Wales.

- 3 wholetime shift stations
- 5 day crewed stations
- 36 retained stations

Fire appliances

There is one retained fire appliance and crew at every fire station except Pwllheli where there are two (45).

There is also one wholetime fire appliance in each wholetime shift and day crewed station, except Wrexham where there are two (9).

Activity levels

In 2011/12 the service:

- Handled 17,190 calls for assistance of which 7,721 required an attendance.
- Attended 3,289 fires, 990 non-fire emergencies and 3,566 false alarms.
- Delivered 28,472 Home Fire Safety Checks, gave 491 safety talks in schools and 138 elsewhere, and attended 32 publicity events.
- Conducted 392 fire safety audits of premises.
- Extricated people from vehicles at 86 incidents.

Quality of service

In 2011/12 the service:

- Attended 15% of all primary fires in less than 5 minutes, 51% between 5 and 10 minutes, 23% between 10 and 15 minutes and 11% in over 15 minutes.
- Attended 20% of all dwelling fires in less than 5 minutes, 55% between 5 and 10 minutes, 18% between 10 and 15 minutes and 8% in over 15 minutes.
- Delivered 8,755 home fire safety checks to particularly vulnerable people, these having been specifically arranged following a referral from one of our partner organisations.
- Recorded that 91% of accidental dwelling fires were confined to the room where the fire started.

Outcomes

| | 2009/10 | 2010/11 | 2011/12 |
|--------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Fires | 3,370 | 3,289 | 3,156 |
| Primary fires | 1,485 | 1,346 | 1,296 |
| Dwelling fires | 545 | 535 | 530 |
| Non-domestic fires | 256 | 229 | 215 |
| Secondary fires | 1,538 | 1,623 | 1,609 |
| Fire deaths | 8 | 10 | 8 |
| Fire injuries | 69 | 97 | 64 |

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