



AGENDA ITEM: 7

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

2 December 2014

FURTHER REDUCTION OF OPERATIONAL OFFICER POSTS PROVIDING 24-HOUR COVER

Report by Richard Fairhead, Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Purpose of Report

- 1 To provide members with requested additional information on the potential implications of reducing the number of operational officer posts in North Wales Fire and Rescue Service.

Background

- 2 North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (NWFRS) operates the nationally recognised Incident Command System (ICS). This system defines the levels of command required to support safe and effective systems of work at operational incidents.
- 3 These levels are operated through three tiers of command – strategic, tactical and operational – that are deployed according to the scale and complexity of each incident. In NWFRS, senior officers provide the strategic elements, and officers at middle manager level provide the tactical and operational elements.

Information

- 4 In 2011, following an analysis of incident rates aligned to the general reduction in fire incidents, the number of officers required to operate the incident command system safely was reduced from 40 to the current 32. This provides for 2 tactical and 5 operational officers to be available at all times. Additional analysis in 2014 shows that this could be further reduced to 28 officers.

- 5 Officers who are employed to operate the incident command system are also allocated managerial roles within the organisation. All of the roles can be regarded as important to the day to day running of the Service. It necessarily follows that any further reduction in officers will not only reduce the number of officers able to operate the incident command system safely, but that there will be a need to address the capacity issues arising from the loss of their management roles too.
- 6 It may be possible to allocate the management roles referred to above to staff conditioned to a non-operational role but this would require the creation of new non-operational posts which would reduce the level of savings realised.
- 7 An analysis of the retirement profile of the existing officer cadre highlights that there is little possibility of making even a low level of reduction in the number of officers without having to consider compulsory redundancy. Members will be mindful that there is no existing voluntary or compulsory redundancy scheme for this staff group.
- 8 The Chief Fire Officer's advice is that, accepting that there are risks and fundamental issues for the Authority, it is possible to reduce the officer cadre from 32 to 28 and still maintain a viable incident command system. In moving forward in this way, every attempt would be made to make the move without the need for redundancies.
- 9 The Chief Fire Officer also advises that any further reduction in the number of officers below the figure of 28 would create an unacceptable risk to the Authority and to the safety of operational personnel involved at incidents.

10 The table below summarises three options available to members:

Option	Value of savings (per year)	Risk level	Potential for compulsory redundancies?
Retain 32 middle manager posts	£0	Medium	No
Reduce middle manager posts to 28	Around £250,000	Medium	Yes
Reduce middle manager posts to 24	Around £500,000	Extremely high	Yes

Recommendation

11 That members, in the context of setting the budget for 2015-16, decide whether they wish to reduce the number of operational officer posts on the Incident Command System rota from 32 to 28.