



## AGENDA ITEM: 13

### NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

19<sup>th</sup> June 2006

#### COMPLAINTS AND LETTERS OF APPRECIATION

Report by Colin Hanks,  
Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Support)

#### Purpose of Report

1. To inform and update Members in respect of the number of complaints and letters of appreciation received from the public

#### Information

2. Complaints Received April 2005 – March 2006  
The number of complaints received, investigated and resolved in accordance with the policy and procedures adopted by the Fire and Rescue Authority were:

Nature of Complaints Received	This Year	Last Year
Welsh Language issues	0	1
Human Resource procedures	2	0
Driving	6	2
Fire Safety: Enforcement	1	2
Community Safety	0	1
Operational Activities	6	3
Mobilising	0	0
Conduct	9	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>13</b>



## Information (continued)

Number of Complaints Substantiated	This Year	Last Year
Welsh Language issues	0	1
Human Resource procedures	0	0
Driving	4	2
Fire Safety: Enforcement	1	0
Community Safety	0	1
Operational Activities	2	3
Mobilising	0	0
Conduct	3	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>

## Summary of complaints

### 3. Human Resources Procedures

Complaint regarding wholetime recruitment application and the lack of feedback/debrief.	<i>Response explaining generic feedback to be published on service website. Individual feedback not possible due to numbers of applications/resources</i>
Complaint regarding time taken to receive application for wholetime recruitment and lack of feedback on unsuccessful applications.	<i>No delay identified from Service. Complainant informed that feedback not a requirement under law and that generic feedback will be placed on Service website.</i>



## Summary of complaints (continued)

### Driving

A complaint via Police regarding fire appliance driving wrong way on 'A' road.	<i>Explanation why action taken – seriousness of incident, risk assessed action assisted by attending police officer.</i>
Complaint regarding driving manoeuvre near fire station.	<i>Resolved locally between local manager and complainant who was satisfied with outcome.</i>
Complainant alleging misuse of blue lights and horns by fire appliance.	<i>Emergency driver training was taking place. However learning outcomes were identified and complainant assured improvements will be made.</i>
Complaint regarding dangerous driving by fire service vehicle causing physical damage.	<i>Driver formally disciplined for occurrence.</i>
Complaint regarding fire appliances driving on common land.	<i>Off road driving on private land with permission. Common land traversed for access only. Complainant assured that access tracks only will be used on common land.</i>
Complaint regarding fire service vehicle overtaking dangerously and using excessive speed.	<i>Apology made and assurance driver will be warned of consequence of any repeat of reported poor or dangerous driving.</i>



## Summary of complaints *(continued)*

**Fire appliances carried out 13,024 'Blue Light' journeys in responding to operational incidents between April 1<sup>st</sup> 2005 and March 31<sup>st</sup> 2006.**

### Fire Safety

#### Enforcement

Complaint from member of public regarding accuracy of fire investigation report and accessing information.	<i>Apology made on behalf of the Service for the confusion and explanation for delay given.</i>
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### Operational Activities

Complaint from premises owner regarding lack of water supplies at a fire on their property.	<i>Now being dealt with by North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (NWFRS) insurers, removed from complaint process.</i>
Complaint by member of public that forced entry to premises to investigate fire caused injury to a dog.	<i>Complainant unwilling to provide details to the investigator regarding the exact circumstances – not substantiated.</i>
Complaint from landowner that fire appliances were blocking access through being stuck after incident and gate padlocks broken.	<i>Apologised for inconvenience and liaised with gate owner to reinstate lock.</i>



## Summary of complaints (Operational Activities) *(continued)*

Complaint by member of public regarding operational activity at incidents specifically relating to hydrants and pace of activity.	<i>Letter of explanation to complainant regarding difficulties accessing most appropriate and effective hydrant at this incident and dynamic risk assessment process explained.</i>
Complaint from member of public regarding damage to their lawn by fire appliance whilst accessing a fire.	<i>Damage was slight, misunderstanding regarding ownership of property. Complainant satisfied with actions.</i>
Member of public complained that his land was used to access a fire incident.	<i>Access was required due to potential hazards at fire. Damage to land kept to a minimum. Complainant held firm opinions from previous unsuccessful claim for compensation.</i>

**NWFRS personnel attended 9,795 operational incidents in this period.**

### Conduct

Complaint from relation to member of staff regarding criminal conduct by member of staff.	<i>Complaint fully investigated and disciplinary investigation is now ongoing.</i>
Complaint that member of staff has caused deliberate physical damage to property.	<i>Established as a family dispute and confusion over similar names. Complainant satisfied with investigation.</i>



## Summary of complaints (Conduct) *(continued)*

<p>Complaint from member of public regarding dangerous driving manoeuvre and conduct of driver.</p>	<p><i>Dangerous driving refuted but possible misunderstanding resolved through a meeting. Complainant satisfied with outcome</i></p>
<p>Complaint by member of public regarding staff accessing private property without permission and leaving unsecured.</p>	<p><i>Full apology given and staff made aware of maintaining high level of conduct.</i></p>
<p>Complaint from member of public regarding offensive nature of Control operator whilst dealing with a 999 call.</p>	<p><i>Investigation did not substantiate claim. Complainant received personal visit, call management explained, complainant satisfied with outcome</i></p>
<p>Anonymous complaint regarding drink driving offence by member of staff.</p>	<p><i>Complaint could not be pursued as anonymous. (Related incident has gone through discipline process)</i></p>
<p>Complaint by member of public regarding conduct of member of staff and physical damage to vehicle.</p>	<p><i>Full apology made by staff member and verbal warning given to member of staff in accordance with discipline procedures.</i></p>
<p>Complaint by member of public regarding inappropriate use of fire service vehicle by member of staff.</p>	<p><i>Identified as a neighbourly dispute, complaint not substantiated. Staff concerned made aware of tensions.</i></p>



## Summary of complaints (Conduct) *(continued)*

Complaint from member of public regarding private transaction between member of staff and complainant.	<i>Private issue however assistance given to resolve. Complainant grateful for assistance offered.</i>
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## Letters of appreciation

4. It is worthy of note that 62 letters or e-mails of appreciation have been received expressing satisfaction with the Service this compares with 32 received in the preceding year. The expressions of appreciation received covered a wide range of Fire and Rescue Service activity but broadly fall into the following categories:

### Operational Incidents

16 expressions of appreciation were received for dealing with various operational incidents from Chief Fire Officers of neighbouring services, RSPCA, universities, private property owners and victims of car collisions.

### Community Fire Safety Initiatives and Visits

35 expressions of appreciation were received for a variety of activities. They included talks and visits to groups such as Young Farmers Clubs, Young Firefighters' Association branches, fetes, fairs and open days, visits to fire and rescue service premises. Provision of intervention equipment for vulnerable citizens. Speaking at conferences. Supporting tenants associations. Delivery of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Involvement in environmental clean-up days, impact road shows and hospital visits.



## **Letters of appreciation** *(continued)*

### Equalities

Appreciation from the Equal Opportunities Commission for hosting an equalities event.

### Visits to schools

2 letters of appreciation were received for educational visits, such as Crucial Crew to schools.

### Conduct

Letter of appreciation from a Chief Fire Officer for the conduct and professionalism of a member of staff whilst on secondment.

### Health and Safety

2 letters of appreciation for the Service's support to a further education college achieving an award.

### Home Fire Safety Checks

3 letters of appreciation were received from recipients of a home fire safety check.

### Training

Letter of appreciation for firefighting training given to a commercial body.

### Partnership Working

Letter of appreciation from the Police to NWFRS for its involvement in a Joint Action Group.

## **Recommendation**

4. That the Fire and Rescue Authority notes the number of complaints and expressions of appreciation received.