



AGENDA ITEM: 10

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

21st December 2009

REVISED WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME 2010-13

Report by Colin Hanks, Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Purpose of Report

- 1 To approve the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's revised Welsh Language Scheme for 2010-13 which builds on the last Scheme (2006-09), following public consultation.

Background

- 2 This is North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's third Welsh Language Scheme, which builds on our first two schemes which were published in 1999 and 2006. Since the last scheme was published, North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority has been making excellent progress in its drive towards improving the bilingual services we deliver. Significant milestones have been achieved in our objective of re-energising and adding new vigour to our activities and the profile of the Welsh language within the Service has been well and truly raised.

Information

- 3 The revised scheme outlines our Linguistic Skills Strategy which was launched earlier this year and which is based on a gradual approach to achieving our goals over the next three to five years. The Strategy provides a planned and strategic infrastructure for implementing our goals into the future. Crucially, this means staffing the Service in accordance with the Welsh Language Scheme in order to enable the provision of services of equal quality, facility and breadth in both English and Welsh.

It means satisfying service needs where there is a shortage of Welsh speakers within the workforce by adopting and implementing this strategy.

- 4 The Linguistic Skills Strategy requires all new members of staff and those successful in promotion to learn a basic level of Welsh. The Service, in conjunction with Coleg Llysfasi and advice from North Wales Police, designed and recorded two new CDs to guide Welsh learners through the process of learning basic greetings and pronunciations – and everyone being appointed or promoted within North Wales Fire and Rescue Service is required to take part in an oral test in Welsh to ensure that they are able to pronounce names and greet people correctly – Level 1 test from January 2009 and Level 2 test from January 2010.
- 5 This revised scheme also outlines how we aim to enhance our positive attitude towards the use of Welsh in our workplace - as well as in the community and the services we provide to the people of North Wales. In this way we hope to achieve an even higher standard of customer service and raise the skills level of our workforce by encouraging them to learn Welsh and use their skills when communicating. North Wales Fire and Rescue Service was recently pleased to learn that it was successful in being awarded a £4,500 grant from the Welsh Language Board to help promote Welsh within the Service.
- 6 The revised scheme details our overall aim to cultivate a Service which is completely in tune with its Welsh public and demonstrates a courtesy and empathy towards the language and culture of Wales which will ensure our communities receive a prompt, courteous, equal and complete service provided by a satisfied and confident workforce.
- 7 The public consultation on the revised Scheme began on 22nd September 2009 with a deadline for responses by 20 November 2009. Those consulted included the Welsh language officers at local authorities, other Welsh fire and rescue services, Mentrau Iaith, Coleg Llysfasi and North Wales Police. A press release was issued to the media announcing the start of the consultation, outlining the Service's commitment to the Welsh language and inviting comments and this resulted in favourable press coverage. The revised Scheme was also featured on the home page of the

Service website for the duration of the consultaiton period. Two responses were received (from South Wales Fire and Rescue Service and from Anglesey County Council), both of which were positive and supportive.

Recommendation

- 8 That following public consultation, members approve the revised Welsh Language Scheme for the period 2010-13 for publication.