



AGENDA ITEM: 8

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY EXECUTIVE PANEL

20th September 2010

RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE AUTHORITY'S DRAFT IMPROVEMENT AND RISK REDUCTION OBJECTIVES FOR 2011-12

Report by Dawn Docx, Deputy Chief Fire Officer

Purpose of Report

- 1 To inform Members of responses received to the consultation on the Authority's draft improvement objectives and risk reduction plan proposals for 2011-12.
- 2 To seek a recommendation to the full Fire Authority in relation to the Improvement and Risk Reduction Plan 2009-12.

Background

- 3 The 2008-11 Fire and Rescue National Framework for Wales requires Welsh Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) to prepare, publicly consult on, and publish for each financial year a Risk Reduction Plan/annual action plan by 31 October.
- 4 Welsh Assembly guidance issued to FRAs in June 2010 on compliance with Part 1 of the Local Government Measure 2009 reiterates the requirement for FRAs to consult on the arrangements they propose to put in place to secure continuous improvement and the improvement objectives they aim to achieve.
- 5 This same guidance enables FRAs to bring together the planning, consultation and publication process for RRP's and the requirements under Part 1 of the measure to consult on and

publish an improvement plan. The combined RRP annual action plan/improvement plan is to be published by 31 October.

Introduction

- 6 At their meeting of 21 June 2010, Members:
 - (i) endorsed the proposal to make the draft Improvement and Risk Reduction Plan available for reference as a work in progress on the Authority's website for the duration of the 2010 consultation; and
 - (ii) approved the content of the associated consultation document for publication and distribution.

- 7 In accordance with issued guidance, a period of 12 weeks was allowed for consultation and responses were received up to and including the closing date of 10 September 2010.

Information

- 8 3,500 bilingual paper copies of the consultation document 'Tell us What you Think' were printed and distributed, and e-mails were sent informing people that the document was also available electronically on the Authority's website.

- 9 A wide range of individuals and organisations were contacted including: Town and Community Councils, county councillors, MPs, AMs and MEPs, housing associations, voluntary sector organisations, other FRAs, insurance companies and brokers, selected RDS employers and a range of organisations who might have an interest in this year's specific RRP topics.

- 10 All members of the Authority and all members of staff received their own individual copy.

- 11 Copies of the document were sent to libraries throughout North Wales, and distributed to members of the public in the Anglesey, Meirionnydd and Denbigh and Flint Shows.
- 12 A press release was issued by the Corporate Communications department, and a letter from the Chair was sent with each mailed consultation document to explain the process and to encourage participation.
- 13 The consultation document and the draft plan were made available on the Authority's website which has a 'read speaker' facility for people who have difficulty reading. Information was also made available through the Service's Facebook site.
- 14 Responses were accepted via the provided questionnaire, by letter and e-mail, and electronically via the link provided on the Authority's website.
- 15 22 written responses were received in total:
 - 21 came from within North Wales (all counties except Anglesey)
 - 16 were received by post/by hand, with the remainder by e-mail or via the website
 - 9 respondents stated that they were either service employees or their relatives (8 were not, and 5 did not answer this question). No responses were received from representative bodies.
- 16 All responses have been read and analysed – a summary is provided in attachment 1.
- 17 The majority of responses received this year supported the proposed improvement objectives and the arrangements the Authority proposes to put in place to secure continuous improvement.
- 18 Some responses sought additional clarification and explanation on the proposals, while others offered suggestions for additional or alternative measures.

19 None directly disagreed with what the Authority is proposing, although some expressed views about relative priorities if finances are squeezed.

Recommendations

20 That Members

- (i) note the responses received to the consultation on draft objectives; and
- (ii) in light of the responses received, recommend to the full Fire Authority at its next meeting that the proposed improvement and risk reduction objectives form the basis of the Combined Improvement and Risk Reduction Plan in 2011-12.

Question 1: Do you think that the Authority is right to have confidence in its ability to keep on improving what it does?

Yes	13
No	4
Unanswered	5

Added Comments

1. View that financial constraints may make this hard to achieve, and seemed to think that the Authority was proposing to employ all firefighters on the Retained Duty System.
2. View that financial constraints will make improvement difficult if not unattainable. Concern that the service would be forced to retrench rather than improve.
3. Concerned about budget cuts.
4. Agreeing that the objectives listed would lead to improvement.
5. View that the intention to keep on improving was 'over confident', and blaming this on senior management's 'over inflated opinion that they know best'. Complaining that the objectives are already being done, that there is no explanation of what will be done differently or improved, and that there was insufficient information provided to make a comment.
6. Acknowledging importance of rapid response to emergencies, and wanting to know how detailed plans for realigning resources to achieve a 'swift and even more effective response' might impact on own local 24 hour station and those in surrounding areas.
7. Wishing to remind that the Authority 'still needs to make the workforce feel valued'.

Question 2a:

Do you agree with Improvement Objective 1 – preventing deaths and injuries from accidental fires in living accommodation?

Yes	17
No	0
Unanswered	5

Question 2b:

Do you agree with our proposed actions for achieving Objective 1?

Yes	14
No	0
Unanswered	8

Added Comments

1. Concern about older B&B properties now that the old inspection regime has been replaced.
2. View that effective emergency response must take priority if there has to be a choice due to financial constraints.
3. View that this should not be limited to accidental fires only.
4. Complaint about insufficient information.
5. View that this would not reflect an improvement but only a continuation of the existing prevention programme. Suggests including a definition of people who are considered to be vulnerable or disadvantaged. Suggests adding specific number of key agencies and organisations with whom to enter into information sharing agreements to protect people they deem to be vulnerable.
6. View that sufficient staff should be available to answer calls for assistance as the details recorded at this stage are vital and impact on resources sent.
7. View that the needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people need to be taken into account and that homophobic and biphobic incidents can result in deliberate fires with different impacts on LGB people than such incidents would have on other people. Suggest multi-agency approach to identifying households at particular risk from such events, and emphasising the need for training of staff who deal sensitively with such incidents.

Question 3a: Do you agree with Improvement Objective 2 – ensuring that non-domestic premises are safe to visit and work in?

Yes	16
No	1
Unanswered	5

Question 3b: Do you agree with our proposed actions for achieving Objective 2?

Yes	16
No	0
Unanswered	6

Added Comments

1. Question about how local intelligence is going to be used, recorded and obtained.
2. View that effective emergency response must take priority if there has to be a choice due to financial constraints.
3. Pointing out that knowing beforehand what materials were at the premises would help crews know which method of firefighting was best (water, foam, CO₂, etc.).
4. Lack of information about what special computer technology will be used. Pointing out that fire risks are not reduced by improved response.
5. Support for the Service's existing targeted programme of audits of non-domestic properties, and commending the Authority on its work.
6. Agreeing that a swift response is essential, and wanting to know how the proposed improvement will actually be achieved and measured, given the Service's already rapid and effective response.
7. Reminding that employees need to be aware of risks that may be present, and need to have been appropriately trained before taking up their role.

Question 4a: Do you agree with Improvement Objective 3 – minimising the risk from non-fire emergency incidents?

Yes	16
No	1
Unanswered	5

Question 4b: Do you agree with our proposed actions for achieving Objective 3?

Yes	16
No	0
Unanswered	6

Added Comments

1. Wishing to know which actions will be taken if equipment / appliances are located in the wrong area.
2. View that this is very important as more people are killed or injured at RTCs than at fires, and that climate change is contributing to more frequent serious floods.
3. View that this is rather general. Repeating that database of materials/chemicals present at premises could be useful for the Service. Comment that vehicles are required to carry signage for hazardous cargo. Supporting research into hazards of materials and how to mitigate ill effects.
4. View that it is not possible to make constructive comments when the document provides insufficient detail to explain what is meant by effective management, technical procedures and communications systems. There are no details of training, information or equipment provided either.
5. Suggesting intelligence-led targeting that has proven very effective for other services such as the RAC, the AA and the ambulance service. Endorsing the approach to improving and increasing the Service's electronic knowledge database.
6. Expressing concern about an increase in road traffic accidents in own area, and would welcome any prevention work (singly or collaboratively) alongside the rapid response.
7. Concern at the difficulty in ensuring that people are adequately trained across a wide range of possible responses, and wishing to see a commitment being made in this area.
8. Wish to see commitment to ensuring that staff training is sufficient in this difficult area.

Question 5a: Do you agree with Improvement Objective 4 – tackling the problem of deliberate fire-setting?

Yes	16
No	1
Unanswered	5

Question 5b: Do you agree with our proposed actions for achieving Objective 4?

Yes	16
No	0
Unanswered	6

Added Comments

1. Not wishing to see funds allocated to this by cutting front line services.
2. View that people who start fires deliberately should be made to tidy up the area and be put on a training course.
3. Questioning how this could be achieved ‘with the removal of the Arson Reduction Team’. View that projects such as Phoenix and the Princes Trust are costly but ineffective.
4. Support for the excellent proactive work already undertaken in this area and fully endorsing its continuation. Reiterating interest in learning how the Authority intends to measure its success.
5. Concern for the particular vulnerability to deliberate fires of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people and heterosexual people who are presumed to be LGB. Wish to see the Authority ensuring that hate crimes and homophobic/biphobic events are properly recorded in order to assist in identifying and reducing households at increased risk.

Question 6a: Do you agree with Improvement Objective 5 – sustainable development?

Yes	17
No	0
Unanswered	5

Question 6b: Do you agree with our proposed actions for achieving Objective 5?

Yes	14
No	1
Unanswered	7

Added Comments

1. Encouraging the Authority to engage more with the local community and address social issues at an early stage. Suggest joint working with council officials to identify areas that are likely hazard areas.
2. View that funds should not be directed from core services towards meeting this objective - may need to postpone if that is the case.
3. View that the statement of intent is too generic, and suggesting more specific statements such as considering fuel consumption of vehicles purchased, assessing the environmental impact of chemicals used in firefighting, using data to determine best location of Fire stations, vehicles, etc.
4. Dissatisfied with the level of detail provided regarding the agreed action plan and who agreed it.
5. Expressing support for the Authority's focus on environmental management.
6. View that sustainable communities are inclusive and safe for everyone, free from underlying prejudice and discrimination.

Question 7a: Do you agree with Improvement Objective 6 – single equality scheme?

Yes	14
No	3
Unanswered	5

Question 7b: Do you agree with our proposed actions for achieving Objective 6?

Yes	12
No	3
Unanswered	7

Added Comments

1. Pointing out that the Service has already signed up to a set of core values and questioning the need to waste more money running out a new inclusion policy when adapting the core values would suffice.
2. Questioning whether this objective falls into the Service's remit, and view that unless additional funding is made available for this purpose it can not be justified.
3. View that 'fire-fighters are not social workers' and pointing out that the Service already has an equality and diversity policy.
4. Not sure what direct impact the Service has on socio-economic determinants, but view that data collection on incidents attended could influence policy development.
5. View that some of the people would be willing to help in some other way.
6. Unconvinced that people are actually being disadvantaged unfairly on account of the reasons referred to, and wanting evidence to support the view that they are. Doubting whether such evidence exists. Pointing out lack of detail regarding how a deeper understanding of diversity will be achieved.
7. Supporting this objective, and linking it to objectives 1 and 4. Wishing to see clear results of how this scheme supports safety, reduces anti social behaviour against these groups of people and adds value to their lives and their communities
8. Pleased that the Authority refers to its Single Equality Scheme in the improvement plan. Reminding that the scheme itself should involve people from the protected strands in its drafting, and should include a detailed action plan once published.
9. View that targeting minority groups can disadvantage those in the majority groups in some circumstances – like recruitment.
10. Delighted to see the Authority's commitment to developing a Single Equality Scheme, and urging the Authority to ensure that it takes account of the needs of each equality group, but specifically lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Suggesting ways of increasing engagement (e.g. attending Stonewall Cymru consultation events). Encouraging sufficient staff training in equality and diversity issues.

Question 8a: Do you agree with Improvement Objective 7 – business continuity management?

Yes	16
No	0
Unanswered	6

Question 8b: Do you agree with our proposed actions for achieving Objective 7?

Yes	15
No	0
Unanswered	7

Added Comments

1. View that insufficient information provided to reach an informed decision.
2. View that insufficient detail provided about how the objective will be achieved, and suggesting that these be placed on the website.
3. Support for this objective, seeing it as a core activity where plans are systematically and routinely reviewed to ensure that environmental scanning is undertaken to reduce risk to the service and thereby ensure 'business as usual'.
4. View that business continuity is entirely, or almost entirely dependent on information technology, and pointing out that IT staff are not available to respond 24/7.
5. Encouragement to ensure that equality budgets are not reduced during time of budgetary constraint, as disproportionate impact on certain minority sections of communities.

OTHER COMMENTS MADE
1. Fundamentally challenging the Authority's approach and suggesting that it is written to express its own self-satisfaction. Wanting the Authority to ask more searching questions of the public such as whether the service is effective in the local community, what else the Service could do to assist the local community through education and awareness, whether levels of fire cover sufficient to make people feel safe, even during the summer months when populations grow. And whether people have concerns about their area such as the number of large buildings, flats, B&B, hostels, hotels?
2. View that increasing amounts of budget are spent on support staff, and suggesting that the number of people employed in each staff category should be published.
3. Suggesting that for the purpose of overcoming recruitment difficulties, details of station non-availability due to insufficient crew should be published, together with details of how long it would take for a fire engine to attend an incident in that area from another station.
4. Wish for consultations to address the concerns of local communities, and to 'ask questions that will at times hurt' as a way of moving the Service forward.
5. Encouragement to increase the number of home fire safety checks, if finances allow.
6. Encouragement to work closely with other organisations.
7. Encouragement to monitor continuous improvement.
8. Encouragement to continue with prevention messages.
9. Wish to see the Authority encouraging the council and the police to involve local youths in delivering fire safety training.
10. Complaint at not having received a copy of the consultation document until mid August. View that the document is at best poor and at worst designed to cover up that the Service is not in 'safe hands'. View that something more open, honest and professional should have been produced and that the Service and the Authority should seriously assess their own ability to manage effectively
11. View that the seven objectives under consideration reflect the Authority's focus on helping to improve the safety and sustainability of communities and on safeguarding the Authority's own arrangements for delivering its service. Wishing to collaborate with the Authority, and wishing it every success in the delivery of these objectives.
12. Commending the Authority on the consultation document's clarity and layout, but noting that a little more detail in some areas would have enhanced it and helped to understand exactly what the Authority's ultimate aims are.
13. Hoping that the money will still be available for the Authority to 'keep up the good work'.
14. View that the Authority is one of Britain's best, always on its toes and really does relate to its communities. Belief that the Authority is well set to advance to the achievement of its objectives.