



## **AGENDA ITEM: 17**

### **NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**17 June 2013**

#### **PRISON IN NORTH WALES**

**Report by Simon Smith, Chief Fire Officer**

#### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1 Members are asked to endorse the Authority's support for the Regional Leadership Board's commitment for a prison to be located in North Wales. This issue was discussed at the Executive Panel meeting in May and Members supported the proposal.

#### **BACKGROUND**

- 2 The Regional Leadership Board has been in existence for a number of years and consists of Leaders and Chief Executives from the six North Wales constituent authorities, the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Chief Constable of North Wales Police, the Chair and Chief Fire Officer of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority, the Chair and Chief Executive of Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and the Chief Executive of WLGA.
- 3 Its purpose is to promote more effective partnership working and collaboration in service delivery and in sharing information between public services as well as identifying and seeking solutions to issues of regional concern. A recent example includes a desire to improve employment opportunities in the region.
- 4 Such an opportunity, to strengthen the local economy and employment, arose recently when the Justice Secretary Chris Grayling made a commitment to examine the feasibility of building a new prison with a capacity of 2000 places or more in the North West, London or North Wales; this would be the largest prison in the UK.

## **INFORMATION**

- 5 Members will be aware from their own constituent authorities of the Board's work in lobbying for a prison in North Wales since 2007. The Board reaffirmed its commitment to this ambition following the Justice Secretary's ministerial statement regarding Prison Capacity Management on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2013.
- 6 A prison is sought regionally because of the significant economic benefits that have been identified including a substantial annual revenue to the local economy, stable employment and a supply chain covering a range of services from education, health, catering and building maintenance. It is recognised that North Wales is the only area in the UK not to have a prison in the region, and the establishment of such a facility would enable prisoners to communicate in Welsh under the provisions of the Welsh Language Measure 2011.
- 7 In terms of community safety, it is anticipated that a local prison would improve rehabilitation and reduction of re-offending rates through enabling closer contact between families and support professions by improving access. North Wales Police has been asked to produce a business case quantifying the potential benefits to community safety from reduced re-offending in North Wales should a prison be located in North Wales.
- 8 Wrexham is the only local authority in North Wales known to have submitted sites at the invitation of the Ministry of Justice, although private landowners are known to have submitted sites in North Wales though their identity is not known.
- 9 Carwyn Jones AM, First Minister of the Welsh Government has publicly given his support to the Firestone site in Wrexham. As the Authority is part of the Board it is considered prudent that the Authority also demonstrates its support to the project.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- 10 Members are asked to endorse the Authority's support to the Regional Leadership Board's commitment to have a prison located in North Wales.