

Report to	Executive Panel
Date	13 May 2019
Lead Officer	Shân Morris, Assistant Chief Officer (Corporate Policy and Planning)
Contact Officer	Pippa Hardwick, Corporate Planning Manager
Subject	Improvement and Well-being Plan 2020/21



PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. In December 2018 North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the FRA) agreed that a Planning Working Group comprising all members of its Executive Panel would undertake the detailed work associated with developing its improvement and well-being objectives for 2020/21.
2. This report summarises the progress of the Planning Working Group and seeks a formal recommendation from the Executive Panel for presentation to the FRA on 17 June 2019.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3. The FRA has already adopted two long-term well-being objectives (see appendix 1) but its short-term planning for achieving these objectives will necessarily develop and change as appropriate.
4. In order to have an annual Improvement and Well-being Plan in place by April 2020 for the 2020/21 financial year the FRA will need to have consulted the public on its intentions for that Plan over the summer and set its draft budget for next year by December 2019. The draft 2020/21 Plan will then be compiled for final approval by the FRA in March 2020.
5. The FRA's Planning Working Group met three times to consider next year's Plan and decided to recommend to the Executive Panel that the Authority's public consultation this year should focus on the development of an Environmental Strategy for adoption by the FRA from April 2020 onwards. This would be in accordance with its second well-being objective.
6. Before finalising this new Environmental Strategy, however, the FRA must allow time for the public and other stakeholders to have their say on its contents. The results of the consultation can then be considered by the FRA in the autumn and taken into account by Members when setting the 2020/21 budget in December 2019 and when preparing its Improvement and Well-being Plan 2020/21 for publication in March 2020.

RECOMMENDATION

7. That the Executive Panel recommends to the FRA at its June 2019 meeting a draft consultation proposal based on developing a comprehensive Environmental Strategy for adoption by the FRA from April 2020 onwards.

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE EXECUTIVE PANEL/AUDIT COMMITTEE

8. This report has not previously been considered by Members.

BACKGROUND

9. The FRA is required to publish annual improvement objectives in accordance with the Local Government Measure 2009. It must also publish long-term well-being objectives in accordance with the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 and take all reasonable steps (in exercising its functions) to meet those objectives.
10. The FRA is expected to involve other people in the process of determining its future objectives and to consult *before* making final decisions. A consultation period of 12 weeks is generally considered appropriate in the majority of cases, although this can be varied. There is also an expectation that public consultations will be undertaken according to certain principles (see appendix 2).
11. A summary timetable (see appendix 3) details the stages of producing the FRA's Plan for 2020/21.

INTRODUCTION

12. The FRA's Planning Working Group met on three occasions between January and March 2019 to undertake the detailed work associated with developing its improvement and well-being objectives for 2020/21.
13. At its meeting on 28 January 2019 Members reviewed the FRA's budget position for 2019/20 and noted the areas of uncertainty that could have a significant impact on the FRA, including the outcome of the Welsh Government's White Paper on the reform of fire and rescue authorities in Wales and also the results of national negotiations on firefighter pay.
14. Members also reviewed the response to the FRA's public consultation in 2018, which clearly showed appreciation of, and support for, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service but also indicated that there was an expectation that efficiencies would continue to be made but without reducing front line services.

15. In looking forward, Members considered the impact on the Service of climate change and extreme weather conditions, and of future population trends and the level of demand for preventative services in the community.
16. The Working Group's meeting on 25 February 2019 focused on the Home Safety aspects of the Service's community safety work, especially the Safe and Well Visits delivered to people in their own homes. Having considered in detail the total costs and in view of the combined value of this work, Members decided not to pursue the possibility of outsourcing the current provision of Safe and Well Visits.
17. At the meeting on 25 March 2019, Members considered the benefit of developing an environmental strategy comprising, for example:
 - resource planning for dealing with extremes of weather-related activity such as widespread flooding and increased grassland fires;
 - public education and collaboration with other organisations to lessen the impact of weather-related incidents on local communities;
 - monitoring and managing the Service's own energy and fuel usage and waste management;
 - revised procurement policies and accounting arrangements;
 - making positive contributions to biodiversity.
18. Members acknowledged that having adopted Environmental and Energy Policy Statements several years ago, the FRA's Sustainable Development Plan and Action Plan had lost momentum during the introduction of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015. However, they also recognised the benefit of reinvigorating this work now through the development of a new Environmental Strategy to run from April 2020. It was also noted that each of the North Wales Public Services Boards had identified priorities that have an environmental focus, and that there might therefore be an opportunity to align the FRA's strategy to some of those priorities.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	Direct implication for agreeing the steps towards the Authority's long-term well-being objectives.
Budget	There is a clear relationship between the Authority's plans for 2020/21 and the level of financial resources available. The draft budget for 2020/21 must be agreed in December 2019 and confirmed by mid-February 2020.
Legal	Supports compliance with improvement planning and well-being legislation.
Staffing	Impact on staffing levels will depend on the eventual decision of the FRA, but no direct implications identified from this report.
Equalities/Human Rights/Welsh Language	The impact on these aspects will be fully assessed according to the eventual decision of the FRA, but no direct implications identified from this report.
Risks	Potential risks have been considered in the body of the report, but further assessment will be needed as part of the final decision-making process by the FRA.

Well-being Objectives

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's long-term well-being objectives are:

- A. To support people to prevent accidental dwelling fires and stay safe if they do occur;
- B. To facilitate high quality, responsive and better integrated fire and rescue services so that prevention activity and emergency response can continue to be available when and where required, affordably, equitably and on the basis of risk.

Consultation: The Gunning Principles

Whether or not there is a legal duty to consult, where consultation is carried out it must be done fairly. What is fair will depend on the circumstances of the case and the nature of the proposals under consideration.

Subject to the overall requirements of fairness, the decision-maker will have a broad discretion as to how consultation should be carried out, and what should be consulted upon.

The consultation must also comply with the following principles (termed the Gunning principles after the case in which they were set out, or the Sedley requirements after the barrister that suggested them in that case):

- Consultation must take place when the proposal is at a formative stage. Public authorities must have an open mind during consultation and must not have already made the decision, but may have some ideas about the proposal.
- Sufficient reasons must be put forward for the proposal so as to allow for intelligent consideration and response. Consultees must have enough information to be able to make an informed input to the process.
- Adequate time must be given for consideration and response. The timing and environment of the consultation must be appropriate, sufficient time must be given for people to develop an informed opinion and then provide feedback, and sufficient time must be given for the results to be analysed.
- The product of the consultation must be conscientiously taken into account.

It is prudent for a decision-maker to show in its decision that it has undertaken consultation and has given proper weight to the representations received. This may involve the decision-maker showing that it has understood the points being made by the responses and has considered them.

Acknowledgment: <http://law.gov.wales/constitution-government/public-admin/intro-admin-law/welsh-government-guidance-on-making-good-decisions/has-any-consultation-been-carried-out-fairly-and-properly/what-are-the-requirements-for-any-consultation-that-is-carried-out/?lang=en#/constitution-government/public-admin/intro-admin-law/welsh-government-guidance-on-making-good-decisions/has-any-consultation-been-carried-out-fairly-and-properly/what-are-the-requirements-for-any-consultation-that-is-carried-out/?tab=overview&lang=en>

Summary timetable for producing the FRA's 2020/21 Plan

DATE	MEETINGS	ACTION
January – March 2019	Planning Working Group	To undertake the detailed work associated with developing draft objectives for 2020/21 onwards for approval by the full FRA.
13/05/2019	Executive Panel	To agree recommendations to the full FRA in June 2019 for a draft consultation proposal.
17/06/2019	FRA	To consider recommendations from the Executive Panel and agree the basis of stakeholder and public consultation over the summer.
July – October 2019	Stakeholder and public consultation.	
21/10/2019	Executive Panel	To consider the response to the public consultation and agree recommendations to be presented to the full FRA in December 2019.
16/12/2019	FRA	To agree the FRA's draft budget 2020/21 and the objectives to be incorporated into its draft 2020/21 Plan.
February 2020	Executive Panel	To consider the near final draft 2020/21 Plan for approval by the full FRA at its March meeting.
15/02/2020	Last day for notifying the constituent authorities of their financial contributions for 2020/21.	
March 2020	FRA	Final approval of the draft 2020/21 Plan for publication.
31/03/2020	Last day for publishing the FRA's 2020/21 Plan.	