

## NORTH WALES FIRE &amp; RESCUE SERVICE

## FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY EXECUTIVE PANEL REPORT

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| <b>DATE:</b>              | 25 <sup>th</sup> July 2005  |
| <b>REPORT BY:</b>         | <b>CHIEF FIRE OFFICER</b>   |
| <b>PURPOSE OF REPORT:</b> | To seek Members' approval for the Authority's revised Welsh Language Scheme for the period 2005 – 2010. |

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This is North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's revised Welsh Language Scheme, which builds on the first scheme published in 1999.
- 1.2 The revised document is intended to be both a public statement of policy and a practical, accessible handbook for staff and Members. Although it is targeted mainly at the Service itself, it is important to ensure that members of the public can easily access straightforward information about what they can expect from the Fire and Rescue Service.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 According to the 2001 census, the number of people with Welsh Language skills is increasing, particularly within the 3 – 15 year age groups. As a Service, therefore, there is a need to anticipate the increased demand for bilingual services.
- 2.2 That first scheme was produced primarily as a policy document, and although it served its purpose well, it has become increasingly clear that its rather formal style tends to dampen its effectiveness as a means of driving improvement in service delivery.
- 2.3 The primary objective in compiling the revised Scheme has been to re-energise and add vigour to Welsh Language issues. The new scheme concentrates on the 5 main themes of Policies, Service Delivery, Public Image, Workforce Issues and relationships with Third Parties.
- 2.4 In developing the new Welsh Language Scheme the Service will be developing a linguistic skills strategy which will include audits of existing language skills and reviewing the requirements for bilingual skills throughout all posts within the Service.
- 2.5 The document seeks to give an honest and realistic account of how the Authority proposes to make a significant contribution to a truly bilingual Wales, where people can choose to live their lives through the medium of either Welsh or English.
- 2.6 In accordance with Section 14(1) of the Welsh Language Act 1993 the Revised Scheme will be submitted to the Welsh Language Board for approval.

## 3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That Members approve the Revised Welsh Language Scheme.