

NORTH WALES FIRE AUTHORITY

EXECUTIVE PANEL

25 APRIL 2005

FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR HANDLING BEST VALUE

Report by the Clerk

Purpose of Report

- 1 To consider a recommendation from the Best Value Committee that its responsibilities should be transferred to the Executive Panel.

Background

- 2 Since the implementation of the legislation on best value, the authority has had a dedicated committee to deal with responsibilities under the Local Government Act 1999 including approving the annual improvement plan, considering best value studies and reports, monitoring performance indicators etc.
- 3 Devolution of responsibility for the fire and rescue service to the National Assembly for Wales means that the authority will be brought within the Wales Programme for Improvement. Since assuming responsibility in November 2004, the Welsh Assembly Government has yet to issue legislation or detailed guidance for fire and rescue authorities in Wales. Therefore the precise requirements for 2005-06 and subsequent years are not yet known. However a central element of the annual Integrated Risk Management Plan is consideration of how best the authority should deliver services to improve community fire safety. This is bound to involve challenging what the authority does and questions of efficiency, cost effectiveness, quality of service etc. – in other words the very things that the best value legislation also covers. The Executive Panel leads work on the IRMP, prior to its adoption each year by the full authority.
- 4 At its meeting on 10 March, the Best Value Committee considered the situation and recommended that its responsibilities should be transferred to the Executive Panel. Such a change would require the agreement of the fire authority at its meeting in June and an amendment to the terms of reference of the Panel.

Advice

- 5 Given the new constitutional and legal framework within which the authority operates, and that best value has developed and matured since the introduction of the original legislation, it is opportune to review whether the responsibilities under the 1999 Act should in future be dealt with by the Executive Panel. As a result, the Best Value Committee would be wound up. This would produce modest savings for the authority in terms of costs associated with holding separate meetings of two committees, such as travel costs of members.

Recommendation

- 6 That the Panel recommends to the fire authority that the Best Value Committee should be wound up and that the Panel's terms of reference should be amended accordingly.