


Report to	<b>North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority</b>	
Date	<b>16 January 2023</b>	
Lead Officer	<b>Stewart Forshaw, Deputy Chief Fire Officer</b>	
Contact Officer	<b>Stewart Forshaw, Deputy Chief Fire Officer</b>	
Subject	<b>Chief Fire Advisor's Thematic Review into Operational Training</b>	

## PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 This report presents an update following the publication of the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor (CFRA) for Wales' review into training in the Fire and Rescue Service, entitled 'Fire and Rescue Service Operational Training: Thematic Review'.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 On the 10 October 2022, the Deputy Minister for Social Partnership, Hannah Blythyn MS, made a statement to the Senedd following the publication of the CFRA's review into training in the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) in Wales.
- 3 The primary objective of the CFRA's review was to examine the methodology adopted by the three Welsh FRS to determine allocation of time for skills maintenance training and exercising during the time on fire stations and across all duty systems.
- 4 A substantive component of the review included visits by the CFRA to fire stations in North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service), and also the examination of information and documentation.
- 5 The review concluded with six recommendations. The Deputy Minister then wrote to the Chair of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) requesting details of our plans to address the recommendations. A detailed response was provided to the Deputy Minister which was acknowledged in her oral statement to the Senedd on the 22 November 2022 entitled: 'Fire Service Training and Capacity to Broaden the Role'.
- 6 The recommendations have since been included in an action plan that will be considered and managed through the Service's Organisational Learning Committee, chaired by Assistant Chief Fire Officer Millington.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- 7 That Members:
- (i) Note the contents of the report; and
  - (ii) note the action plan that has been put in place, to consider the recommendations of the CFRA's review within reasonable timescales.

## **BACKGROUND**

- 8 The Fire and Rescue National Framework 2016, includes the provision for the CFRA to undertake reviews and provide information and findings to Welsh Ministers, Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRA) and Auditor General for Wales.
- 9 On the 10 January 2022, the CFRA wrote to the Chief Fire Officer advising of his intention to carry out a thematic review of training, setting out the methodology of how he intended to conduct the review along with the rationale.
- 10 He had chosen this theme because the role of a firefighter is highly technical and has evolved significantly over time as the complexities of the built environment have increased. In addition, the breadth of incidents that firefighters are required to respond to now extends well beyond fires.
- 11 Acquiring, developing and maintaining core competencies is of fundamental importance to achieve safe systems of work in the operational environment. This is especially important as the number of incidents have declined in recent years, resulting in fewer opportunities for firefighters to apply their skills and be exposed to the hazards associated with complex incidents.
- 12 The importance of operational training and providing firefighters with live-fire training facilities is therefore self-evident. A failure to train firefighters at a consistent high standard against evidence based operational guidance and learning, can compromise both firefighter and public safety.

## **INFORMATION**

- 13 On the 10 October 2022, the Deputy Minister for Social partnership made a statement to the Senedd following the publication of the CFRA's review into training in the FRS, entitled 'Fire and Rescue Service Operational Training: Thematic Review'.

- 14 The review includes an examination by the CFRA into a number of areas regarding operational training. It starts with a consideration of the current arrangements and future options for the consideration of a strategic assessment of community risks, to inform capability development, which will in turn inform a training needs analysis in the FRS's in Wales.
- 15 The review also focuses on the methodology adopted by the FRS's in Wales, primarily for determining the allocation of time for training and exercising within fire station work routines, and for firefighters working the retained duty system (RDS).
- 16 The initial acquisition of firefighting skills and the maintenance of those core skills and other additional skills areas were reviewed. The eight core skill areas the CFRA has considered in his review include:
  1. Breathing Apparatus
  2. Casualty Care
  3. Command and Control
  4. Hazardous Materials
  5. Pumps, ladders, knots and lines
  6. Road traffic collision
  7. Safe working at height
  8. Water incidents.
- 17 The balance between theoretical training and the use of short films known as microteaches and practical training was also considered across the full range of likely incident types in any given area of Wales.
- 18 The review also looks at the training venues and the impact of travel distances for firefighters when attending training events. With regards to North Wales, the live-fire and breathing apparatus training facility at Dolgellau was considered to be some considerable distance from all of the large population centres in North Wales.
- 19 The CFRA also observed that, in his opinion, current compartment fire behaviour training does not reflect real-life fire conditions and the tactics and techniques included in compartment fire behaviour training should be reviewed and incorporated in light of international research.
- 20 The section on training facilities concludes the most appropriate solution to be a hub and spoke approach to combine existing facilities at stations with a new live-fire training facility. It was recognised that this would require substantial capital investment by Fire Authorities.

- 21 The amount of time available for training on all of our duty systems, and in particular the RDS, is also included with a recommendation subdivided into two areas on this theme, which will be considered in collaboration with the other two FRS's in Wales.
- 22 The report concludes with six recommendations which include the areas discussed in this report. The recommendations have been included in an action plan that will be considered and managed through the Service's Organisational Learning Committee, chaired by ACFO Millington.
- 23 The CFO has also provided a detailed response to the review to the Deputy Minister, as requested, with our plans for addressing the recommendations and a copy of our action plan included. This was acknowledged in the DM's oral statement to the Senedd on the 22 November 2022.

## IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	This paper is aligned to all of the Well-being and Corporate Objectives 2022/23 as it includes firefighter safety, support of operational preparedness and ensures sustainability over the longer term.
Budget	N/A
Legal	The role of the CFRA is included in chapter 7, points 7.12 and 7.13 of the Fire and Rescue National Framework 2016 and Section 28 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.
Staffing	N/A
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	N/A
Risks	All risks associated with the recommendations will be included in an action plan managed by the members of the Service's Organisational Learning Committee.