


Report to	Executive Panel	
Date	16/07/2018	
Lead Officer	Shân Morris, Assistant Chief Officer (Corporate Policy and Planning)	
Contact Officer	Pippa Hardwick, Corporate Planning Manager	
Subject	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's Public Consultation 2018	

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To summarise the progress being made in relation to North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority)'s forthcoming public consultation on its budget-setting intentions for 2019/20.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. This report outlines the work being undertaken to prepare materials for this summer's public consultation. A further update of progress will be provided at the meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. That members note the contents of this report and the additional information provided at the meeting.

BACKGROUND

4. The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 places a duty on the Authority to act "in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".
5. This Act also aims to provide for better decision-making by public bodies by ensuring that they: take account of the longer-term; focus on preventing problems occurring or worsening; take an integrated and collaborative approach; and consider and involve a wide range of people in designing and planning services.

6. The Authority has adopted two long-term well-being objectives:
 - A. To support people to prevent accidental dwelling fires and stay safe if they do occur; and
 - 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.
7. To support those objectives, the Authority's Planning Working Group undertook detailed work at the beginning of 2018 to start the process of developing the Authority's Improvement and Well-being Plan 2019/20.
8. That work necessarily focused on an anticipated shortfall of £1,893,000 in the Authority's budget in 2019/20. Members were reminded that the shortfall was largely the product of past decisions to seek financial contributions from the constituent authorities that were not enough to fund the true cost of providing fire and rescue services, and relying on the Authority's financial reserves to secure a balanced budget.
9. Having formally considered the available options, members decided to consult publicly on whether a balanced budget in 2019/20 should be achieved by increasing contributions from the constituent authorities to meet the whole cost of providing fire and rescue services, or by slightly less than that amount.
10. Members recognised that any amount less than £1,893,000 would inevitably mean making savings, but they were not minded to pursue a strategy that would require savings on such a large scale as to require, for example, station closures or firefighter redundancies. The rationale for this will be explained in the public consultation.

INFORMATION

11. At the Executive Panel meeting of 14 May 2018 members endorsed a public engagement and consultation strategy that comprises:
 - a stakeholder analysis to identify who to engage with and to help decide on the most appropriate means of engaging with the people identified;
 - adopting a variety of communication methods to encourage participation and response from stakeholders;
 - adopting approaches that encourage both qualitative and quantitative responses;
 - avoiding language that is difficult to understand, explaining clearly and avoiding over-complication.

12. Mailing lists are being updated and a consultation document and easier read summary leaflet, a bilingual video and an on-line questionnaire are all being prepared.
13. The use of social media will be extended to include signposting to the online questionnaire.
14. Presentations and meetings are also being arranged so that officers can discuss the Authority's intended strategy in more detail.
15. The outcome of the consultation will be considered by the Authority in the autumn and taken into account when setting its 2019/20 budget in December 2018 and when preparing its Improvement and Well-being Plan 2019/20 for publication in March 2019.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	Ensuring a balanced budget is aligned to the affordability of prevention activity and emergency response (part of the Authority's second well-being objective).
Budget	The output from the consultation will be taken into account when setting the 2019/20 budget.
Legal	The Authority is required to set improvement and well-being objectives and a balanced budget. It is also expected to consult widely on its proposed actions whilst its plans are still at a formative stage.
Staffing	No direct impact arising from this report.
Equalities/Human Rights/Welsh Language	The consultation will give anyone with an interest an opportunity to contribute. Specific questions about particular aspects (e.g. opportunities to promote the use of Welsh) will be included.
Risks	Failing to consult in accordance with the Gunning Principles would risk legal challenge.