



AGENDA ITEM: 10

**NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
EXECUTIVE PANEL**

4th February 2013

**COMMISSIONER'S FEEDBACK ON WELSH LANGUAGE ANNUAL
MONITORING REPORT**

Report by Dawn Docx, Deputy Chief Fire Officer

Purpose of Report

- 1 To report on the feedback received from the Welsh Language Commissioner in relation to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service Welsh Language Monitoring Report 2011-12.

Background

- 2 Each year, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service is required to produce a detailed report on its Welsh Language Scheme – previously presented to the Welsh Language Board but now regulated by the Welsh Language Commissioner. The Monitoring Report details progress made towards meeting the targets outlined in the Service's Welsh Language Scheme 2010-13. Executive Panel Members approved the report at the meeting last September and North Wales Fire and Rescue Service has since received formal feedback on this year's report and met with the Commissioner's representatives to go through the feedback in detail.

Information

- 3 The Commissioner welcomed many aspects of our work in relation to the Welsh language and the general progress achieved in the implementation of the Welsh Language Scheme during 2010-11.

- 4 In relation to technology and software, the Commissioner welcomed our use of Welsh language software and the speech enabling facility on our website and was reassured that we operate a useful database to aid our understanding of the level of Welsh skills and learning for all our staff
- 5 In relation to home fire safety checks and presentations, the Commissioner was keen for us to maintain the proportion of home fire safety checks provided through the medium of Welsh (which increased from 6% to almost 20% over the last two reporting periods) and welcomed the number of children receiving fire safety advice in Welsh.
- 6 In relation to qualifications and training, the Commissioner welcomed our investment in training and in simultaneous translation equipment and understood that the levels of those achieving levels 1 and 2 Welsh language skills has fallen as recruitment also fell during the year, but welcomed the increase in those achieving level 3-5 skills.
- 7 In relation to staffing and recruitment, the Commissioner understood that we are undergoing a period of relatively rapid change as a consequence of funding pressures. This is leading to the need to revisit our strategy to achieve our commitment to delivering a bilingual service.
- 8 In relation to promotion, awareness and language skills the Commissioner welcomed the fact that we present two awards to our staff in recognition of their achievement in learning Welsh and their contribution to the language. The recently established Welsh Language Forum was recognised as an effective way to strategically manage Welsh language development within the Service. A recently developed online Welsh awareness session is currently being piloted within the Service and the Commissioner is keen to hear how this progresses. Our Welsh Language Champions scheme was welcomed, together with our plans to further enhance this scheme.
- 9 The Commissioner requested further information on a number of specific aspects of our work in relation to the Welsh language – this was provided in detail to the Commissioner’s satisfaction.

- 10 In 2011, the Welsh Language (Wales) measure was introduced, which sets the legal framework in place in order to introduce duties whereby organisations comply with statutory Standards relating to the Welsh Language. These standards are not expected to be legally adopted for some time yet but the Service is already working towards meeting the requirements of draft standards and is doing so in collaboration with the other two Welsh fire and rescue services. In this way we hope to be fully prepared towards meeting the standards once they are finalised. The Commissioner has indicated that our current Welsh Language Scheme 2010-13 will now extend until the new standards come into effect.

Recommendation

- 11 That Members note the progress made in relation to the Welsh Language Scheme and the Service's commitment to ensuring we continue to monitor progress in this area.