



AGENDA ITEM: 12

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

16th March 2009

SPECIAL APPLIANCE REVIEW

Report by Bill Murphy, Senior Operations Manager

Purpose of Report

- 1 To inform Members of the progress made following the Authority's decision in 2006-07 to review the type, disposition and effectiveness of the range of Special Appliances (those vehicles whose primary role is rescue or support in a non-fire environment) operated by the Service.

Background

- 2 The three year plan, which resulted from the Review, has now reached the phase where a significant number of benefits are being realised. These benefits will, consequently, enhance the delivery and effectiveness of operational service to the communities, businesses and infrastructure of North Wales and provide more robust and developed safe systems of work for the Service's firefighters.

Information

- 3 All major pumping appliances within the Service have now been upgraded to Rescue Pumps by the introduction of enhanced hydraulic rescue equipment. This enables firefighters to release persons trapped in vehicles and other situations more quickly and effectively than ever before. An investment of £600,000

- over the last three years in this equipment has enabled the Authority to demonstrate its commitment to ensuring that the increasing demands on resources in attending road traffic collisions are met with an ability to ensure the latest, state of the art technology is used to deal with the challenges offered by its statutory obligations.
- 4 As a result of the superior equipment now available on Rescue Pumps, the four existing Emergency Tenders, which were predominantly used for road traffic collision rescues, are now in the process of being withdrawn from service. Two of these vehicles will be modified and re-introduced as Technical Rescue Units, one at Caernarfon and the other at Wrexham. The purpose of these vehicles will be to attend large goods vehicle, train and aircraft incidents where heavy duty rescue and lighting equipment will be required. This approach will ensure that an optimum number of skilled staff are continuously available with specialist equipment to meet the challenges these types of incidents may present. An investment of approximately £125,000 over the last two years has ensured staff training, provision of specialist equipment and vehicle modifications will be completed in time for both appliances to be operationally available by April 2009.
 - 5 The Emergency Tender, currently based at Colwyn Bay, will be modified and re-introduced as a Special Rescue Unit, concentrating on Large Animal Rescue and Rope Rescue. Staff at that station will receive additional training to ensure specialist skills are developed to deal with those types of incident. An investment of approximately £40,000 during the current financial year will ensure that staff training, specialist equipment and vehicle modifications are complete in time for this appliance to be operationally available by July 2009.
 - 6 Plans are currently being developed to establish the feasibility of converting the remaining Emergency Tender into a Welfare Unit, which will be mobilised to a range of incident types and durations to ensure that operational staff have sufficient

changing, toilet and showering facilities. This provision will enhance the arrangements for staff health and welfare.

- 7 During 2007-08, the Authority took the decision to increase the number of Dual Role Appliances (small firefighting vehicles which can deal with compartment fires in restricted access properties as well as off road heath and moorland fires) from the four vehicles currently in place, to a total of ten. A number of factors have prevented the Service from implementing this directive within the timescale originally planned. These include the current monetary exchange rate, body building timeslots and the protracted contractual process. It is now envisaged that these vehicles will be received by the Service around March 2010. As such, the current vehicles provided for this purpose will be maintained to continue providing this service.

Conclusion

- 8 The operational benefits realised as a result of the Special Appliance Review and subsequent investment, which included £28,000 from Welsh Assembly Government, are significant. The Review has positioned the Authority in a way in which the challenges of an increasingly changing and demanding operational environment can be met with assurance.

Recommendation

- 9 That Members note the progress made with the Special Appliance Review.