

**REPORT TO: FIRE AUTHORITY**DATE: 12<sup>th</sup> March 2007**SUBJECT:**

Validation review of process relating to crewing changes at Haverfordwest Fire Station.

**SUMMARY:**

Members will be aware of the ongoing discussions with the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration and Assembly Officials regarding an independent review into the Authority's rationale and evidence in support of its decision to change the crewing arrangements at Haverfordwest Fire Station.

This paper gives some background to these discussions and includes terms of reference agreed at officials level should Members decide that such a review should go ahead.

**IMPLICATIONS:**

OPERATIONAL RISK	High
COMMUNITY RISK	High
TRAINING	Low
H.R	High
FINANCE	High
I.T/COMMS	None
EQUALITY & DIVERSITY	None
HEALTH & SAFETY	None
LEGAL	Low

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- ◆ That Members consider the Terms of Reference of the review and resolve whether they will accept such a review taking place.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT**

Suggested Terms of Reference  
Risk Reduction Plan 2007/2010

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Members have previously received a verbal report from the Chairman concerning discussions with the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration and Assembly Officials regarding the Minister's expressed concerns over changes to crewing arrangements at Haverfordwest Fire Station.

On 1<sup>st</sup> February 2007, the Chair, Vice Chair and Chief Fire Officer met with the Minister. The meeting was at the request of the Minister following correspondence received by the Chair in January 2007. In this correspondence, the Minister expressed her "*continued concern*" regarding "some of the proposals" contained within the Authority's 07/10 Risk Reduction Plan although the letter did not specify the exact nature of these concerns.

At the meeting, the Minister was clear that her concerns related to the Authority's proposal to change the crewing arrangements at Haverfordwest Fire station. The Minister outlined that her concerns related mainly to the public perception of the proposal.

The Chairman stated that this proposal had already been debated for almost 4 years, and had been previously deferred once at the request of the Minister. He stated the changes are backed up by robust evidence and had received unanimous support from the full Authority when the plan was approved in October 2006. Furthermore, the plan underwent a detailed period of consultation last summer and the 2007/08 budget had been set, based upon it.

The Chair/Vice Chair stated that the Authority had fully considered and debated the issue and that implementation would go ahead as planned from April 2007.

The Minister has subsequently published a consultation document on a proposed Intervention protocol for FRA's in Wales and changes to the Fire & Rescue National Framework for Wales. A response has been prepared, considered and submitted by the Authority.

This position was reported to the Fire & Rescue Authority on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2007 where Members agreed that any further deferment of implementation should not take place given that implementation plans were well advanced and relocation arrangements for displaced staff were agreed in principle.

The Chief Fire Officer was subsequently contacted by the Head of the Community Safety Directorate within WAG suggesting a formula for review which would recognise both the Authority's and the Ministers respective positions in relation to the Haverfordwest proposal.

Terms of reference for a review have been discussed and agreed at officials level that, subject to Members approval, allow for an independent review with the implementation at Haverfordwest going ahead as the Authority has determined. Costs associated with any review would be met by WAG.

The terms of reference were considered by the Policy and Performance Review Committee on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2007. At this meeting, Members of the committee were

concerned that a matter as important as this necessitated consideration by the full Authority.

### **Terms of reference for review**

*In view of concerns expressed to the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration concerning the implementation of new crewing arrangements at Haverfordwest Fire Station, the Mid and West Wales Fire Authority have agreed with the Minister that there will be an independent review undertaken of the rationale and the evidence on which the decision has been taken. This review will run alongside the peer review of the FRA's operational effectiveness that is already underway, and actions being taken forward as part of the Wales Programme for Improvement.*

*The review will aim to provide external validation to the Welsh Assembly Government, other stakeholders, and the wider public that the Fire Authority has acted in accordance with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for Wales, and that in drawing up and implementing the proposal for Haverfordwest Fire Station they have acted in accordance with the guidance issued by the assembly Government on risk reduction planning.*

*The validation exercise will seek to ensure that in considering the proposal affecting Haverfordwest Fire Station the Authority has:-*

- Acted in accordance with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for Wales*
- Complied with the guidance on service standards to fires in the home*
- Complied with the guidance covering the preparation and consultation on the plan*
- Undertaken the planning process in such a way that takes account of known and expected major development in the wider area that could impact on public safety more generally*

*The review will be undertaken by representatives of HMFSI Scotland and will include a health check of the utilisation made of the Fire Services Emergency Cover (FSEC) model in the context of its application to service standards developed in Wales. The health check will be undertaken by appointed consultants.*

*A representative of Fire Service trade unions will be offered the opportunity to observe the process.*