

REPORT TO THE: RESOURCES COMMITTEE	
DATE: 29th SEPTEMBER 2008	REFERENCE:

SUBJECT: NEW TELEPHONE NUMBER FOR SERVICE HQ

SUMMARY

The Service will shortly introduce a new administrative telephone number for its Carmarthen HQ and that will utilise a low-rate tariff. This change is made possible following the introduction by the UK regulatory body of additional telephone number ranges specifically for public sector authorities.

The new telephone number for Service HQ is intended to improve our relationship with the public and other partners by allaying some concerns that had previously been expressed regarding the cost of calls made to the existing number.

OBJECTIVES		IMPLICATIONS	
More than an Emergency Service		Operational Risk Management	
Trusted & Respected by our customers	Yes	Community Risk Reduction	
Saving Lives, Protecting Communities		Learning & Development	
Managing within Budget	Yes	Service Control	
Allocate Resources to Priorities		Civil Contingencies & Resilience	
Efficiency savings	Yes	Finance & Procurement	
Alternative funding & resources		H.R.	
Managing People		ICT	Yes
Risk Reduction Planning		CCMS	Yes
Partnership Working		Transport	
Effective & Empowered People		Health & Safety	
		Premises	
		Sustainability & Environment	
		Welsh Language	
		Legal	
		Governance	
		Equality & Diversity	
		Representative Body Consultation	

COMMENTS/OBSERVATIONS ON THE ABOVE OBJECTIVES/IMPLICATIONS:

Although there is a small revenue implication associated with this change, there will be no overall budgetary implication as it is being introduced in conjunction with efficiency savings secured from enhancements to other elements of the Service's telephony infrastructure.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

This paper is submitted for information purposes only.

BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT:

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New Telephone Number for Service HQ

OFCOM the regulatory body for communications matters within the UK recently announced an alternative range of telephone numbers principally for central government, local authorities and related non-profit organisations.

It had become apparent that some public authorities have purposefully utilised numbers with higher call charges as a mechanism to generate income. Considering such tactics to be inappropriate for the public sector and to respond to growing criticism, the Government directed OFCOM to introduce a new telephone number range.

All of the new eleven digit numbers will begin with "03". The number that has been selected by the Mid and West Wales Service being **0370 6060 699**. This is deliberately similar to the existing number in order to make it easier to remember etc.

Calls to the new 0370 number will cost much less than those to the existing 0870 alternative and will be the same as calls to numbers starting 01 or 02. Furthermore, call charges will also be included as a part of any discount or inclusive call minute schemes callers to the Service may have access to. The old 0870 number currently used will be phased out gradually so as to afford a reasonable opportunity for the public and partner organisations etc to be made aware of the change. (In order to promote awareness a comprehensive communications plan is being developed.)

Whilst the existing number for Service HQ has generated a small amount of income (circa £1k per annum), this has always been used to fund the free-phone bilingual fire safety advice lines and it was never intended to be a meaningful income generating mechanism. The use of such a single non-geographic number is required by the Service in order to maintain a single national point of contact throughout the large operational area that it serves.

Although the **0370 6060 699** number will result in a small additional revenue cost, this will be more than offset by savings made in changes to other elements of the Service's telephony infrastructure as were reported to Members during the recent efficiency review of the ICT function.