

# WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME PREPARED UNDER THE WELSH LANGUAGE ACT 1993

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 STATEMENT

Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority has adopted the principle that in the conduct of public business in Wales, it will treat the English and Welsh languages on a basis of equality. This scheme sets out how the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority will give effect to that principle when providing services to the public in Wales.

This revised Welsh Language Scheme received the approval of the Welsh Language Board under Section 16 of the Welsh Language Act 1993 on 27th April 2007.

The Authority is committed to treating the Welsh and English languages on a basis of equality when providing services to the public whether they are individuals, groups or communities, or the public in general. In doing this the Authority will provide a service of

equally good quality whether through the medium of Welsh and English.

The Authority recognises that individuals have a right to use the language of their choice and that it has a responsibility to facilitate to use of Welsh wherever and whenever possible.

The Authority is conscious that it has a role in sustaining and fostering the Welsh language heritage. Its task is to implement a Welsh Language Scheme which will provide a package of quality services for the Welsh speaking population to use.

## **1.2 MID AND WEST WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

The Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service covers some 4,500 square miles and makes-up almost two thirds of the landmass of Wales . A wide variety of risks are found within our operational area ranging from the petro-chemical industries in Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire and Briton Ferry, Neath, to the risks associated with heavily populated conurbations such as Swansea, Port Talbot and Llanelli. There is an extensive farming community and many other light industries throughout the area. These, together with an extensive coastline and inland waterways are some of the specialised risks within the Mid and West Wales region.

Since April 2003, the Service has been organised into six County Commands , which mirror the unitary authority areas of **Carmarthenshire** , **Ceredigion** , **City and County of Swansea** , **Neath and Port Talbot** , **Pembrokeshire** and **Powys**. Service Headquarters is located in Carmarthen and Community Risk Reduction and Swansea County Command HQ are based in Morriston.

The Service is comprised of a mixture of wholetime, day crewed, retained and volunteer stations, which number 57 in all. The current complement of staff, both operational and support, is approximately 1,400.

Elected Members are nominated from each of the six unitary authorities and they collectively form the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority which is the main policy making body. The Fire Authority meets on a quarterly basis and its work is supported by three main committees namely, Resources, Personnel, and Performance and Policy Review which meet regularly to consider matters within their areas of responsibility.

The Service is funded directly by its six constituent Unitary Authorities on a basis commensurate with population.

The organisation has agreed the following vision, mission and aims:

### **Vision**

Safer communities, where avoidable deaths, injuries , damage from fire and other emergencies are minimised.

## **Mission**

To build safer communities

## **Aims**

To reduce the incidence of fires and other emergencies and to minimise the risk of fire through proactive measures designed to promote a safer environment.

To provide an effective emergency response to fire and other emergencies.

To work with our communities, our partner organisations and other stakeholders to achieve our vision.

To continually improve our service delivery and adapt to the demands placed upon us by society's changing expectations.

To provide a high quality and effective service to all those living, working and visiting Mid and West Wales and securing value for money.

To deliver this service with consistency, dignity and respect for the diversity of our staff and our communities.

## **Welsh Speakers**

The number of welsh speakers within the Service area varies considerably and the last census results recorded the following percentages of people with either speaking, reading or written Welsh skills in the wards of our constituent authorities:

Carmarthenshire: 47.1%  
Ceredigion: 58.9%  
Pembrokeshire: 27.2%  
Powys: 25.7%  
Neath & Port Talbot: 20.4%  
Swansea: 14.3%

### **1.3 The Context Within which we Work**

The Fire and Rescue Service in England and Wales is governed by various pieces of legislation and regulatory guidance but the one law that is of particular importance is the *Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004* (the Act).

The Act requires all fire authorities to make provision for fire fighting purposes, which means not only putting out fires but also protecting life and property in case of fire. It also makes provision for attending road traffic collisions and other emergencies as well as providing a statutory footing for undertaking community safety activities.

Responsibility for the Fire and Rescue Service in Wales is devolved to the Welsh Assembly Government. In accordance with the Act the Assembly has produced a National Framework which sets out priorities and objectives for Fire and Rescue Authorities and contains guidance to enable the discharge of their functions.

The National Framework requires each Fire and Rescue Authority to produce a risk reduction plan which must focus on community and corporate risk in a holistic way. It is a blueprint for how we manage risk within our area. The objectives of the risk reduction plan must link to the Assembly's objectives for reducing deaths and injuries resulting from fire and road traffic collisions.

### **laith Pawb**

In February 2003 the Welsh Assembly Government published 'laith Pawb', the first national action plan to create a truly bilingual Wales. According to 'laith Pawb', "the Welsh language is an essential and enduring component in the history, culture and social fabric of our nation. We must respect that inheritance and work to ensure that it is not lost for future generations." The Authority agrees with these sentiments and considers that its Welsh Language Scheme has a contribution to make on a local level towards achieving the aims and objectives described in 'laith Pawb.'

### **Wales Programme for Improvement**

The Authority will ensure that the commitments described in this scheme will be incorporated within its Performance Management Framework. The aim will be to continuously improve the delivery of public services in line with the principles governing the Wales Programme for Improvement. In order to understand whether or not its commitments are meeting the needs of the Welsh speaking public in Mid and West Wales, the Authority will periodically consult with the public in a bilingual format about the quality and range of Welsh medium services.

The Authority will publish results relating to its performance as and when required and will compare the quality of services delivered through the medium of Welsh with those provided in English.

Delivering services through the medium of Welsh will be a consideration within service reviews.

### **The Equality Standard for Local Government in Wales**

The Equality Standard for Local Government in Wales is a tool designed to help local authorities in Wales to mainstream their approach to equalities when planning and providing services. The Standard aims to ensure that a common approach is taken by all authorities when dealing with Welsh language, race, gender and disability equality issues.

The Authority is committed to working within the framework of the Equality Standard and progressing through its five levels. This scheme is an important element of the Authority's work in this area as it aims to reflect the five key ideas that form the basis of the five levels of the Standard:

- § it is a part of the Authority's wider equality policy;
- § it includes commitments to assess and consult on the Authority's performance in providing an equally high quality service in Welsh and English;
- § the action plan sets objectives and targets for the standard of bilingual services provided by the Authority;
- § it describes the system in place to monitor performance in this area;
- § the results of the monitoring process will be reviewed in order to measure achievement, before a new round of target setting.

### **The Welsh Language and Equality**

Providing services through the medium of Welsh is an equal opportunity matter, and the language is a part of the equality agenda in Wales .

Public bodies are also expected to promote the language and to try to ensure a growth in its use – this means doing more than just meeting the needs of Welsh speakers; it means working to create more Welsh speakers, as well as encouraging greater use of Welsh language services by those who already speak the language.

In addition, the presence of the language, seeing and hearing it, in public life in Wales should be presented by the Authority as something that all people – Welsh speakers and non Welsh speakers – can feel proud about.

## **1.4 Achievements and New Challenges**

During the life of the previous Language Scheme the Authority's main achievements in terms of providing services through the medium of Welsh were:

- § Provision of all information for the public bilingually
- § Identifying where our Welsh speakers are based
- § Welsh Language Awareness Training.
- § Publication of Guidance for implementing the Scheme
- § Strong Bilingual Corporate Image
- § Bilingual Internal Newsletter
- § Risksmart Partnership
- § Positive Bilingual Image at Service HQ

New Challenges facing the Authority in implementing this scheme include:

- § Mainstreaming the Welsh language.
- § Ensuring that appropriate procedures are in place for Welsh language arrangements in Partnership Schemes.
- § Increasing the number of staff who are able to work through the medium of Welsh and implementing a linguistic skills strategy.
- § Working collaboratively with North Wales and South Wales Fire and Rescue Authorities on Welsh language issues.

## **2. PLANNING AND PROVIDING SERVICES**

### **2.1 Mainstreaming the Welsh Language**

As a public service the Authority has an important role to play in the development of the Welsh Language. When planning, providing and reviewing policies and services the Authority must consider the Welsh Language and take every possible opportunity to support and promote it, and encourage more use of the language by staff and members of the public. In this way the Authority will increasingly mainstream the language on its policies and service.

The Government's definition of mainstreaming the Welsh language is,

*“to consider the Welsh language in all aspects of your work and in everything that you do, with the aim of ensuring that every opportunity is taken to:*

- i. promote and support the Welsh language*
- ii. contribute to the Assembly Government's vision of a truly bilingual Wales*
- iii. plan, provide and evaluate services in Welsh and English.”*

The Authority will assess the impact of all new policies and initiatives on the use of the Welsh language. New policies and initiatives must comply with this scheme – and any new services introduced should be as equally accessible and available in Welsh as in English.

New policies and initiatives should aim to promote and facilitate the use of Welsh whenever possible, in order to give effect to the principal to treat Welsh and English on a basis of equality.

Directors, Heads of Departments and County Commanders have a responsibility to ensure that staff who are involved with policy formulation are made aware of the contents and the aims described in the above paragraphs are fully taken into account when planning new initiatives and policies.

The principal to treat the Welsh and English languages on a basis of equality should be a consideration at the earliest possible stage when planning new policies. The requirement to deliver services in both Welsh and English should be mainstreamed throughout the process of planning and providing new and existing services.

The Authority will consult beforehand with the Welsh Language Board concerning any proposals which will affect this Scheme and it will not alter the Scheme without the agreement of the Board.

The ways in which services are to be provided in Welsh will be a consideration during service reviews and the business planning process. Directors, Heads of Departments and County Commanders have a responsibility to ensure that staff consider the need to provide services in Welsh as a part of these processes.

The Authority is committed to ensuring that staff and advisers involved in policy formulation are aware of the scheme and the organisation's responsibilities under the Act and that the measures contained in the scheme are applied to new policies and initiatives when they are implemented. An important step in mainstreaming the Welsh Language is to ensure that all personnel receive appropriate Welsh Language Awareness Training. The Welsh Language Board and others have defined Language Awareness Training as:

“Structured training which conveys the ethics and status of the Language, and offers basic principles to individuals living in Wales , or working for an institution which offers services to the public in Wales ”.

The Authority will seek therefore to develop its Language Awareness training the elements of which will be fully consistent with guidelines issued by the Welsh Language Board.

### **3. DEALING WITH THE WELSH SPEAKING PUBLIC**

#### **3.1 Service Delivery**

In delivering its service to the public the Authority is committed to ensuring that the public may choose their preferred language in their dealings with Service personnel.

It will undertake to do this by:

- ensuring a positive bilingual image at public reception points
- proactively advising the public
- making Welsh speaking staff available to assist others whenever necessary or requested
- adopting procedures and systems, outlined in the scheme which facilitate service provision in the language chosen by the service user
- employing professional external translators
- encouraging personnel to learn Welsh

Directors will be fully aware of the requirements of the scheme and will have a duty to ensure that all the requirements are implemented within their departments.

Where services are not immediately available through the medium of Welsh they will be covered by the timetable for action which will be formulated according to priority needs and demand.

The Authority is committed to encouraging and supporting the use of Welsh in its relationship with other public bodies, for example in delivering community fire safety education in schools, and in undertaking consultation meetings with representatives of community councils and in partnership working.

### **3.2 Partnerships**

The Authority works in partnership with public bodies, organisations from the voluntary sector and other agencies and works on many levels ranging from the strategic focus to front line delivery.

- i)** When the Authority is the strategic and financial leader within a partnership, it will ensure that the public service provision is compliant with its Welsh Language Scheme.
- ii)** When the Authority joins a partnership in which another public service body is leading, the Authority input to the partnership will comply with the Welsh Language Scheme of that body and the Authority will encourage other parties to comply.
- iii)** When the Authority is a partner in a consortium, it will encourage the consortium to adopt a bilingual policy. When acting publicly in the name of the consortium, the Authority will act in accordance with its Welsh Language Scheme.
- iv)** When the Authority joins or forms a partnership, it will ask prospective partners about their Welsh Language Schemes, language policies or the means by which they will operate bilingually. Within any partnership, the Authority will gladly receive and offer advice and support to the other partner organisations.

The Authority will prepare guidance for officers who are involved in partnership working, outlining the Authority's responsibilities in accordance with the language scheme and stating how officers should apply the requirements of the language scheme to the partnership's work.

### **3.3 Standards of Quality**

The Authority is committed to delivering an equally high standard of service through the medium of Welsh and English in all geographical localities that it serves, and will notify the public of this intention in documents where statements on equal opportunity action and service delivery are made.

#### **Provision of Written Welsh**

With regard to written services the Authority will secure its translations from external translators who will be expected to be either members of the Association of Welsh Translators, or be working towards membership.

The Authority will ensure that software, reference books and training are available for staff who work bilingually.

The Authority will adopt a human resources policy to develop a bilingual workforce skills including support procedures for bilingual staff and will continue to develop its linguistic skills strategy.

The Authority will work with North Wales Fire and Rescue Service Authority, South Wales Fire & Rescue Authority, the Welsh Language Board and the Welsh Assembly Government to establish a consistent Fire and Rescue terminology in Welsh.

### **Verbal Communication Services**

A bilingual reception service will be available for visitors and telephone callers at Service HQ and at Swansea County Command and Community Risk Reduction HQ. The ability to speak Welsh will therefore be an essential skill for those frontline posts.

All other reception staff based in the County Commands will receive regular ongoing Welsh language awareness training. In its reception areas the Authority will maintain an image that positively encourages the use of the Welsh language through the adoption of the “Iaith Gwaith” scheme at all locations.

The Authority will seek to ensure that all public reception areas convey a positive and welcoming bilingual image.

### **3.4 Information Technology**

The Authority will work towards adopting the Welsh Language Board’s e-Government Standards and agrees with the Welsh Language Board that high quality IT systems should be developed to support the use of the language. The Authority will consider the implications for the Service as set out in the action list.

### **3.5 Correspondence**

The Authority welcomes correspondence through the medium of Welsh and English and is committed to ensuring that:

corresponding through the medium of Welsh will not lead to a delay.

all letters received through the medium of Welsh will receive a signed Welsh reply.

correspondence will be in Welsh following face-to-face or telephone communication in Welsh.

correspondence will be initiated through the medium of Welsh for those who are known to prefer corresponding through the medium of Welsh.

all information circulated to the public and displayed for public attention will be bilingual or in separate forms of Welsh and English.

all circulars and standard letters issued to the public will be bilingual.

guidance is available to all departments / locations on dealing with correspondence received through the medium of Welsh which includes advice on translation facilities. a database of members of the public who are known to prefer to correspond through the medium of Welsh – this will be available to staff on the Internal Business Information System and regularly updated.

In order to ensure that staff are aware of these arrangements, they will be described during induction sessions for new staff, and will be included in guidelines distributed to staff and available on the Business Information Server.

### **3.6 Telephone Communication**

The Authority is committed to welcoming telephone calls through the medium of Welsh and English to all offices / stations and will ensure that:

receptionist posts at Service HQ and Swansea County Command and Community Risk Reduction HQ will be deemed to be Welsh essential.

all receptionists at each of the administrative centres and county commands will receive regular training on the provisions contained with the Scheme.

in the County Commands the telephone greeting will be given bilingually and training along with refresher training will be provided to non-Welsh speaking receptionists.

callers who wish to pursue their calls through the medium of Welsh will be redirected to Welsh speaking personnel, if the receptionist is non-Welsh speaking.

an internal directory of Welsh speaking personnel is available on the Business Information System for use by Service personnel.

if Welsh speakers are not available then the name and telephone number of the caller will be taken and the caller informed that a Welsh speaking member of staff will return their call within 30 minutes.

the use of bilingual greetings will be extended to voice mail and answer machines of Welsh speakers.

members of staff when answering the telephone will be encouraged to use a standard bilingual greeting.

### **3.7 Formal Public Meetings**

The Authority is committed to ensuring that when public meetings are held, members of the public will be welcomed to contribute through the medium of Welsh and English.

Notices advertising public meetings will be bilingual and will note that members of the public will have the right to contribute through the medium of Welsh or English.

Members of the public will be invited to indicate in advance to the Authority their preferred choice of language which will enable arrangements to be made for a simultaneous translation service. The Authority will strive to enable these arrangements to be made with the minimum of notice but would seek ideally at least two working days notice.

Procedures and guidance will be drawn up to ensure that simultaneous translation equipment is considered in conjunction with the making of all practical arrangements in advance of a meeting, along with the role and responsibilities of the meeting organiser.

Guidance will also be developed in outlining the role of the Chair in facilitating the use of Welsh, factors to consider when selecting speakers for meetings or bilingual events and guidance on using translation equipment.

When members of the public indicate that they wish to contribute through the medium of Welsh, at least a part of the presentations will be bilingual and steps will be taken to ensure that Welsh is spoken at the meetings informally when welcoming members of the public.

The Authority however in addition to the above will ensure that there is a Welsh speaking member of staff present at all public meetings.

### **3.8 'Other' Meetings with Members of the Public**

The Authority is committed to ensuring that it will give effect to the principle of equality set out in the Act in relation to all its meetings with the public.

The Authority will inform the public of its right to exercise this choice of language prior to any meetings for example, Home Fire Safety Audits, Crucial Crew events, thereby ensuring that appropriate provision may be made.

When organising a meeting with a member of the public, the choice of language will be established. If Welsh is the chosen language the Authority will ensure that a Welsh speaking officer meets with the public.

If the meeting occurs without adequate time to arrange for a Welsh speaking officer to be present, then the client will be given a choice of:

Arranging a further meeting with a Welsh Speaking Officer

Having a Welsh Speaking third party present

Holding the discussion in English

The above principles will apply equally to meetings in external premises and meetings held in the home of a member of the public.

Written guidelines on ensuring that appropriate procedures are followed will be provided.

Employees who are Welsh speaking will be encouraged to make their linguistic ability known to members of the public by participating in the Working Welsh Scheme which will identify them as Welsh speakers.

### **3.9 Services Provided by Other Parties**

The Authority does make arrangements with third parties to provide services, directly to the public. In order to ensure that the Authority's expectations are clear the following measures will be undertaken:

Provision of written procedures for staff for dealing with agents and contractors, and processes for ensuring that the requirements of the scheme are observed.

Specific monitoring of the implementation of the relevant aspects of the Welsh Language scheme by agents and contractors.

Obtaining regular performance reports from contractors and agents.

## **4. OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

### **4.1 Emergency Fire & Rescue Response**

In all emergency operational functions where the Service is responsible for delivering its emergency services to the communities within Mid and West Wales the official language will be English.

The nature of a firefighter's work, with the risks inherent to his/her own safety and their responsibilities for the safety of others, entails a more rigorous discipline than is necessary in most occupations. The need for one language to be used to deliver clear, concise and unambiguous instructions is crucial in order to provide an effective operational service to members of the public. The safety of personnel and the public is of paramount importance and the language policy position set out above is deemed by the Authority, whilst striving to give full effect to the principle of equality, to be appropriate in these circumstances.

Historically, therefore, there has been little imperative to consider the linguistic make-up of operational crews. However since the enactment of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 the role of the firefighter has been enhanced to incorporate community fire safety work as a statutory provision. Firefighters are now required to deliver community safety to the community and it is essential therefore that these services are delivered in the language choice of the recipient.

Consideration of the linguistic make-up of crews is now undertaken by the Human Resources Department when new firefighters are appointed to posts so as to ensure that appropriate provision is made and will be a core element of the Linguistic Skills Strategy.

#### **4.2 Control Room Services**

Within the Mid and West Wales Fire And Rescue Service Control Room the Authority will ensure that 50% of staff on each watch will be bilingual.

Familiarisation training on place-names throughout the Service is incorporated within a comprehensive training programme for Control personnel.

#### **4.3 Community Risk Reduction**

The Authority is committed to ensuring that the principle of equality is implemented in the delivery of Community Risk Reduction Services as it works to reduce the occurrence of fire, other emergencies and resultant deaths, injuries and property damage by the protection and promotion of the community safety interests of people living, working in or visiting the Mid and West Wales area.

##### **Legislative Fire Safety**

Legislative Fire Safety advice is provided by a core of specialist fire safety officers based at the County Commands who provide a comprehensive fire safety advice service, particularly in relation to the Regulatory Reform (fire safety) Order 2005.

Legislative Fire Safety Officers will implement the principle of equality by ensuring that:

Fire Safety Information Sheets will be available and offered to all in Welsh and English as separate documents or bilingually.

The Fire Safety advice service will be available in Welsh and English.

Site visits for the purposes of inspection will be available in Welsh or English.

##### **Community Safety**

Similarly, community safety advice is provided by a core of specialist community safety officers and operational personnel based within the County Commanders and Community Risk Reduction HQ who provide a comprehensive community safety service. The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 places a statutory duty on all fire and rescue authorities to promote community safety. Community safety officers will implement the principle of equality by ensuring that, for example, all fire safety publicity information and education materials will be produced bilingually or through the medium of Welsh and English.

All services offered to the public, such as Home Fire Safety Audits, Crucial Crew, FACE scheme, and Young Firefighters will be offered to recipients in their preferred language choice.

## **5. THE FIRE AUTHORITY'S PUBLIC FACE**

### **5.1 Corporate Identity**

The Authority has adopted and is fully committed to maintaining a fully bilingual corporate identity throughout its area of operation.

The Mid and West Wales Fire Authority has adopted a bilingual name and address which is always displayed as such on headed paper, compliment slips, fax paper, business cards, uniform badges, on any part of the uniform where the name of the Fire and Rescue Service appears, and on identity badges and vehicles. When the term 'FIRE' is placed on new vehicles/appliances, this will also appear bilingually, subject to this being consistent with the provisions of appropriate Road Traffic Regulations. Signs on Fire and Rescue Service premises and buildings and any other goods or materials to be issued to the public will be bilingual. All name badges will also be bilingual.

The Welsh language name will always appear on all documentation above and to the left.

### **5.2 Signs**

The Fire Authority is committed to ensuring that:

Signs within the curtilage of the Fire and Rescue Service's property, including areas to which the public has access, will be bilingual.

All other signs for which the Fire and Rescue Service is responsible will be bilingual.

The size, quality, legibility and prominence of the text will be equal for both Welsh and English signs.

The Welsh language will appear above and to the left on all bilingual signs.

### 5.3 Publications

The Authority is committed to ensuring that:

All material directed at the public for example, the Risk Reduction Plan, Annual Report, Customer Care information, Complaints procedures, Invitations, Posters, Receipts, Invoices, Job Descriptions, Person Specifications will be published bilingually, with a presumption in favour of single bilingual documents rather than separate Welsh and English versions.

On the rare occasions when Welsh and English versions are published separately, they will be issued simultaneously, distributed together, and be equally accessible.

When priced documents are issued in a bilingual format their price will be no greater than a single language version of that document.

The price of a Welsh version of a document will not be greater than the price of the English language version.

Written guidance will be provided for members of staff who prepare documents for the public.

When it is decided to issue separate documents, arrangements for producing the two publications will be the responsibility of the officer originating the document.

Staff, consultants, designers, publishers and translators will be expected to work within the guidelines produced by the Welsh Language Board for bilingual design along with guidelines produced by the Mid and West Wales Fire Authority for dealing with the Authority's corporate identity.

All documents for publication will be translated and proof-read by professional translators or trained Fire and Rescue Service personnel.

### 5.4 Forms

The Authority is committed to ensuring that:

§ all forms such as "What next" and explanatory material such as Fire Safety Information Sheets will be available and offered to all in Welsh and English as separate documents or bilingually.

§ where Welsh and English forms are published separately they will be issued simultaneously and be equally available at all distribution points and distributed together in the post or over the counter. The documents will carry a message noting that they are available in Welsh and English.

§ all other various materials printed for the public shall also appear bilingually and will include such items as invitations, posters, cheques, licenses, cards, news, timetables, receipts, invoices and maps.

§ the Authority will formulate a policy of using everyday Welsh on forms.

## **5.5 Press and Media Relations**

The Authority recognises that official press releases and notices to the media are very much part of the public face of the Fire and Rescue Service and are a principal means of communicating with members of the public.

The Authority is therefore committed to ensuring that press releases and notices to the press and media are bilingual and that all interviews to the Welsh press and media will be given by Welsh speaking staff.

## **5.6 Advertising and Publicity Activities**

The authority is committed to ensuring that:

§ advertising and publicity materials including videos, and tapes or materials produced to promote, publicise or explain the Fire and Rescue Service's schemes, policies, procedures, legislation or other services will be produced in Welsh and English.

§ any press, media or poster advertising campaigns will be undertaken through the medium of Welsh and English.

§ public surveys and response mechanisms undertaken by the Fire and Rescue Service will be bilingual.

§ all exhibition and public information stands will be bilingual.

§ publicity and marketing campaigns will be undertaken through the medium of Welsh and English.

§ all electronic messages and all messages displayed on information boards will appear bilingually.

§ information for the public will be produced bilingually.

§ all public activities will be conducted bilingually, for example, conferences, seminars.

§ full consideration will be given as to how the Authority will make use of the Welsh language press and, the local Welsh papers, “papurau bro”.

## **5.7 Consultation**

All public consultations conducted by the Authority will be conducted bilingually or in English or Welsh, according to the preference of the consultee.

This includes consultation with external stakeholders e.g. residents, service users, businesses, voluntary organisations, partner organisations, Town and Community Councils.

Where the preference is not known, questionnaires, consultation documents and associated information will be published bilingually and be equally accessible to consultees.

Stakeholders will also be given the choice of participating in interviews, discussion groups or interactive forums in English or Welsh.

When planning consultation consideration will be given to whether Welsh speakers or English speakers should be consulted as a specific target group.

## **5.8 Official and Public Notices, Staff Recruitment Advertising**

The Authority is committed to:

ensuring that all official notices, public notices and recruitment advertisements will be published bilingually and be equal in terms of format, size quality, legibility and prominence. The Welsh will appear above and to the left hand side.

where Welsh is deemed to be essential for a particular post, Welsh only adverts will appear in the Welsh language press and will appear as Welsh only advertisements in the English language press within Wales with an explanatory statement in English explaining the purpose of the advertisement. If no suitably qualified individuals apply, the post in question, will be re-advertised in English stating that the successful candidate would be required to learn Welsh.

In posts where Welsh is desirable, the advertisement will appear bilingually in the English language press within Wales .

All applications from Welsh speakers are welcomed by advertising all job advertisements bilingually and English publications printed in Wales .

Posts advertised in journals and periodicals published outside Wales but which are circulated throughout the United Kingdom will be advertised bilingually.

## **6.0 LINGUISTIC SKILLS, STRATEGY AND TRAINING**

### **6.1 Staffing**

The Authority is committed to ensuring that:

- § workplaces which have contact with the public seek access to sufficient and appropriately skilled Welsh speakers to enable those workplaces to deliver a full service through the medium of Welsh.
- § members of the public needing to gain access to senior management personnel will be able to conduct business through the medium of Welsh or English.
- § workplaces consist of 57 stations, Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Swansea County Command and Community Risk Reduction HQ, Ceredigion HQ, Pembrokeshire County Command HQ, Powys County Command HQ, Neath Port Talbot County Command HQ, Carmarthenshire County Command HQ.
- § ongoing long term consideration will be given as to how the Fire and Rescue Service will ensure that a full service through the medium of Welsh is to be made available, irrespective of linguistic differences in the various workplaces.
- § the Fire and Rescue Service will identify, in an objective manner, those workplaces and posts where an ability to speak or write in Welsh is an essential and desirable skill, and the level of proficiency required.
- § appropriate team descriptions, job description and person specifications will be drawn up which will reflect the requirements at each workplace and a linguistic staffing strategy to achieve this will be devised. In considering the Welsh language skill requirements of posts, the following factors will be taken into consideration : job specific skills, skills required by the individual, cultural and environmental factors linked to the nature of the post.
- § the language skills audit will be reviewed to establish the number and departmental/station location of Welsh speakers and those learning to speak Welsh within the Fire and Rescue Service along with proficiency and confidence levels of staff in speaking and writing in Welsh.
- § it will encourage and actively support staff to learn to speak Welsh and will establish those members of staff who are learning Welsh into those posts which are deemed to be Welsh essential, wherever this is practicable.

§ all personnel responsible for recruitment will implement the linguistic staffing strategy in which priorities are specified and will monitor its progress.

§ action will be taken to remedy any reduction in the number of bilingual staff where this is necessary to ensure continued compliance with the Authority's language policy.

## **6.2 Learning Welsh**

The Authority is committed to ensuring that:

§ existing members of staff who wish to learn Welsh will be encouraged and supported to do so with resource priority given to staff who come into frequent contact with the public.

§ All applications from staff for individual training and development will be considered sympathetically, within the requirements of the post. This will very much apply to individuals wishing to learn Welsh and applications will be sympathetically considered for release during working hours, subject, as with all other post entry training, to the exigencies of the service.

§ Learning/training programmes that focus on the workplaces and individual posts will be arranged for those where it is a requirement that they speak Welsh.

§ Welsh speaking staff will be encouraged to speak Welsh with those members of staff who are Welsh speaking and those who are learning Welsh

§ All members of staff learning Welsh will have access to the Fire and Rescue Service's Welsh speaking directory which will be updated by the Corporate Services Department.

§ Cysill, the Welsh spell check and CysGair will be provided for members of staff who produce Welsh language documents on word processors.

§ Consideration will be given to training Welsh speaking staff as mentors for those who are learning Welsh.

§ All of the above factors will be incorporated into a Fire and Rescue Service Welsh Language Training Strategy.

## **6.3 Recruitment**

The Authority is committed to ensuring that:

§ Where linguistic ability is considered to be essential or is desirable for any post, this will be specified in the advertisement for the post.

“essential in this context will mean that the ability to speak Welsh is absolutely necessary.

“desirable” – in this context will mean that it would be desirable to appoint a Welsh speaker but not absolutely necessary. In a situation where two candidates are applying for a post for which the ability to speak Welsh would be “desirable”, and have equal qualifications, experience and interview performances, the level of bilingual skills will be considered an additional skill.

§ All applications from Welsh speakers are welcomed by advertising all job advertisements bilingually in English publications printed in Wales .

§ When a non-Welsh speaker is appointed to a post where the ability to speak Welsh is considered to be essential, it will be a condition of his/her employment to learn Welsh to the required standard within an agreed timescale, which will be structured and monitored appropriately. In such cases the full support of the Fire and Rescue Service will be given.

#### **6.4 Vocational Training**

The Authority is committed to ensuring that:

That the need for vocational training through the medium of Welsh will be assessed.

§ The need for vocational training to facilitate the implementation of this scheme will be assessed and gaps in training and staff development procedures will be identified.

§ members of staff who are Welsh speaking will be encouraged to attend seminars and courses through the medium of Welsh in their respective fields.

This measure will be reinforced within the Fire and Rescue Service’s Personnel Development policies.

#### **7.0 ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS**

The Authority has approved this scheme and is committed to ensuring that its implementation is successful by taking the following steps:

The Press and Public Relations Officer will be responsible for co-ordinating the application of the scheme throughout the Fire and Rescue Service ensuring that :

§ guidelines and written instructions are available to all personnel;

§ the implementation of the Scheme is monitored;

§ consideration of complaints and ways to resolve difficulties;

§ preparation of an Annual Report to the Authority and Welsh Language Board.

All members of staff will be issued with either a copy of the Welsh Language scheme **or** a summary of the Welsh Language Scheme highlighting its requirements when the Scheme has been approved. The Scheme will also be published on the Fire and Rescue Service's Business Information System and its Web Site.

Existing computer systems currently enable the staff to produce bilingual material. All future systems installed will also need to be capable of producing material in a bilingual format.

## **8.0 MONITORING AND REPORTING ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHEME**

### **8.1 MONITORING**

The monitoring of the scheme will be overseen by the Press and Public Relations Officer who will ensure that it is a structured and continuing activity extending to those who provide or administer services on behalf of the Authority.

The Scheme will be monitored against the targets as set out in Appendix A focussing on the following areas:

#### **MAINSTREAMING**

The Authority will mainstream Welsh into the Authority's key policies by drawing up a structured Welsh language mainstreaming programme to be completed during the lifetime of this scheme.

#### **PARTNERSHIPS**

The Authority will communicate the requirements of the Welsh Language Scheme clearly and ensure that the language is an integral part of the service delivery by others.

#### **FACE-TO-FACE SERVICES**

The Authority will set out to encourage greater number of face-to-face services through the medium of Welsh.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

To implement the Board's Information Technology standards in order to ensure that services provided electronically, or those that require the use of IT for their administration, are of the same quality in Welsh and English in agreement with the Board.

## **STAFFING**

To increase the number of staff in the workplace who are able and who do work through the medium of Welsh in order to meet the requirement needed to provide quality services.

## **COMPLAINTS**

The number of complaints received in relation to the implementation of the Language Scheme and the % dealt with in accordance with the Authority's corporate standards.

## **8.2 REPORTING**

An annual report in a format agreed by the Welsh Language Board will be submitted and will outline the progress made in the implementation of the scheme against the timetable and standards set.

## **9 PUBLICITY FOR THE SCHEME**

The Authority is committed to publicising its Welsh language services to the public on continuing basis by adopting the following measures:

- Providing information leaflets for public distribution at locations and events including libraries, county councils, hospitals, public information centres, annual shows etc., regarding the extent to which the public can deal with the Authority in Welsh, what services are available and where and when they are available.
- Ensuring that staff are familiar with the measures included in the scheme by providing a summary of the scheme to each member of staff along with guidelines on implementing the scheme and by placing a copy of the scheme at each station and within every department, in addition to its publication on the computerised Business Information System.
- Members of staff dealing with the public on a regular basis will receive basic training on the content of the Fire and Rescue Service's Language Scheme, together with the expectations and requirements.

- Displaying signs at all Headquarters reception points that members of the public are welcome to deal with the Fire and Rescue Service through the medium of Welsh or English.

## **10 COMPLAINTS**

Complaints or suggestions for improvement about the Authority's Welsh Language Scheme should be sent to:

Corporate Services Manager

Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service

Service Headquarters

Lime Grove Avenue

Carmarthen

SA31 1SP

Complaints will be acknowledged within two working days and complainants will be advised of the outcome of the investigation within ten days or to advise the complainant of any delay.

Dealing with complaints promptly and specifically is part of the Service's commitment to good customer care.

## **11 INVESTIGATION UNDER SECTION 17 OF THE WELSH LANGUAGE ACT**

If the Board is required to carry out an Investigation Under Section 17 of the Act, the Authority will be prepared to fully co-operate by providing information - reports, documents or clarification – to the Welsh Language Board.

The Authority will be prepared to do this in both written and verbal forms and the Board will be able to have discussions with:

Elected Members

Fire and Rescue Service Employees

Contracted Service Providers and their Employees

Any individual that assists the Authority