

Report to	<b>North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority</b>
Date	<b>21 July 2025</b>
Lead Officer	<b>Anthony Jones, Assistant Chief Fire Officer</b>
Contact Officer	<b>Mike Plant, Head of Planning, Performance and Transformation</b>
Subject	<b>Emergency Cover Review</b>



## PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To provide Members of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) with an update on the work of the Emergency Cover Review (ECR) Task and Finish subgroup. This was set up in response to the recommendation from the 20 January 2025 meeting for officers to continue to devise and test alternative solutions with representative bodies, within the agreed budget, to address emergency cover in rural locations.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 Since April 2025, the ECR Task and Finish subgroup has been rearranged into the “Collaborative Agreement Implementation Group” (CAIG). This is due to the successful completion and sign-off of the collective agreement by the CFO and FBU, at regional and national levels.
- 3 The CAIG continues to consist of FBU officials and officers from the transformation team but has extended to include personnel from most functions to ensure that the deadlines for implementation and expressions of interest for future crewing projects amongst others are met successfully.
- 4 The CAIG continues to work together to implement the agreement and put measures in place to improve the self-resilience within the current duty system across the 8 Wholetime/Day crewed stations. Once implemented this will allow for other posts within the establishment to then be incorporated into pilots to provide a more effective and efficient model of emergency cover across the whole of North Wales.
- 5 The CAIG continues to work for the Collective Agreement to be implemented from 1 September 2025 on a pilot basis.
- 6 The Collective Agreement is attached as Appendix a.

## OBSERVATIONS FROM EXECUTIVE PANEL/AUDIT COMMITTEE

- 7 This report has not been presented to Executive Panel or Audit Committee.

## RECOMMENDATION

- 8 That Members:
- i) **Note that officers have continued to work with representative bodies in social partnership to develop a way forward with the ECR;**
  - ii) **note that progress has been made by the signing of the Collective Agreement by the Fire Brigades Union;**
  - iii) **note the continued efforts of all parties to progress a solution and introduce a pilot to demonstrate the self-sufficiency of the staffing levels at the current wholetime fire stations; and**
  - iv) **note that by demonstrating this self-sufficiency that there is scope to introduce pilots to utilise existing establishment budgets to improve emergency cover model across rural North Wales.**

## BACKGROUND

- 9 During the period of July to September 2023 the Authority consulted the public on three viable options for the future delivery on its emergency response to the communities of North Wales. A decision was taken by the Authority in December 2023 not to implement any of the proposals at that time but to continue to work on variations to the proposals. The proposals in the consultation do, however, remain live.
- 10 A Task and Finish Group comprising of 16 colleagues working at various levels, stations, and departments throughout NWFRS, including representatives of the Fire Brigades union (FBU) met on 12 occasions between February and November 2024, during which time they discussed and researched several emergency response models.
- 11 Several options were scoped by the Task and Finish Group including different models for rostering staff differently to release the posts required to base them in additional locations to support the provision of a more efficient and effective emergency cover model. This included how the current rostering arrangements could be more self-resilient. The basis for the Collective Agreement is therefore not a new idea but one that has been revisited by the subgroup before proposals from the public consultation are reconsidered.

- 12 On 17 December 2024, the Chief Fire Officer and Deputy Chief Fire Officer met with the workstream leads and the FBU Chair to confirm this position and to thank all those involved for their hard work and diligence.
- 13 At its meeting on 28 April 2025, the Authority reaffirmed its commitment to providing a more effective and efficient emergency cover model across the whole of North Wales to address the risks identified during the emergency cover review that recognised the challenges of providing emergency cover in rural areas and how the use of resources needed to be adapted with no increase to the budget.

## **INFORMATION**

- 14 The Collective Agreement has amended the start and finish times for all 24hr and Day-Crewed stations. This would commence on 1 September 2025, subject to some further collective work around associated roster and leave policies and procedures. The first full 12-month pilot of an 08:00 start with a 10-hour day shift will start on 1 January 2026. This would coincide with the start of the leave year and would run for 24 months.
- 15 An internal memorandum was sent to all operational personnel in June 2025 detailing the changes to start and finish times in line with social partnership principles to allow personnel as much notice as possible to make any necessary arrangements. A central repository of information and guidance documents including Frequently asked questions (FA) has been created by the CAIG on the service Hwb for the benefit of all affected personnel.

## IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	The ECR outcomes must meet the Authority's obligations under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
Budget	Any solution must be within the approved budget.
Legal	Na
Staffing	The Service has continued to work with staff and their representative bodies and will continue to do so. Regular updates are provided at the JCNC and via the Weekly Brief as well as via visits to stations by officers.
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	The Service's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) Officer engaged with ED&I groups throughout the consultation. The ECR is within the Community Risk Management Implementation Plan (CRMIP) with feedback also gathered on this.
Risks	The ECR and the work of the resultant CAIG seeks to reduce the risks of not being able to respond to emergencies effectively and efficiently in the communities of North Wales.