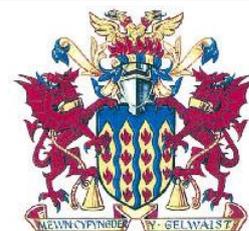


Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	17/06/2019
Lead Officer	Kevin Roberts, Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Contact Officer	Gavin Roberts (01745 535 264)
Subject	Complaints, public interest disclosures and expressions of appreciation



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To inform Members of the numbers and types of complaints, public interest disclosures and expressions of appreciation received by the Service between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019, and the numbers of complaints resolved during that same period.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 During 2018/19 the Service received 30 complaints (of which nine were substantiated) and 240 messages of appreciation.
- 3 Of ten complaints relating to conduct, one was substantiated.
- 4 Of nine complaints relating to policy and procedure, four were substantiated. Three of those four related to newly installed floodlighting at two fire stations which had initially affected local residents.
- 5 Of nine complaints relating to driving, three were substantiated. Two of those three related to the handling of insurance claims.
- 6 For the second year in succession, no complaints were received relating to Welsh language issues.
- 7 No qualifying disclosures were received during the year under the Service's whistleblowing arrangements.
- 8 Expressions of appreciation about "Operational incidents and exercises" increased significantly, with the majority of the 174 received arising from the Service's response to wildfires over the summer period.
- 9 It is also pleasing to note that expressions of appreciation in the category of "Partnership working" increased by nine compared with the three-year average.

RECOMMENDATION

10 That Members note the contents of this report.

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE EXECUTIVE PANEL/AUDIT COMMITTEE

11 This report has not previously been considered by Members.

BACKGROUND

- 12 Complaints received by the Service from organisations, groups or members of the public are subject to formal management and monitoring procedures. This promotes consistency in complaints handling and supports learning and continuous improvement.
- 13 Reportable complaints are those brought to the attention of the Service regarding the standard of service provided or the actions or inaction of staff or anyone else acting on the Service's behalf.
- 14 The total number of complaints does not include those received from concerned members of the public about the fire safety provision at premises for which North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority would be the enforcing or a consulting authority for safety legislation and regulations applicable to those premises.
- 15 The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, as amended, provides protection for employees who raise legitimate concerns (whistleblow) in the public interest about specified matters. Any such "qualifying disclosures" are subject to formal procedures for investigation.
- 16 Expressions of appreciation received by the Service are similarly subject to a standardised management procedure as these can indicate good practice and ensure that particular achievements or actions by members of staff do not go unrecognised.

INFORMATION

17 The tables below detail the number of complaints and expressions of appreciation in recent financial years.

Table 1. Reportable complaints received, investigated and resolved:

Complaint categories	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	3-year average*	2018/19	Comparison with 3-year average	
Welsh language	0	1	0	0	0	↔	0
Policy and procedure	3	6	7	5	9	↑	+4
Driving	8	3	4	5	9	↑	+4
Operational activities	3	7	4	5	1	↓	-4
Conduct	6	8	13	9	10	↑	+1
Business/Community safety delivery	5	5	3	4	1	↓	-3
Total	25	30	31	29	30	↑	+1

*The average number received in the previous 3 years, rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 2. Reportable complaints substantiated during the year (some of which may have been initiated in previous financial years).

Complaint categories	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	3-year average*	2018/19	Comparison with 3-year average	
Welsh language	0	1	0	0	0	↔	0
Policy and procedure	0	3	1	1	4	↑	+3
Driving	2	2	1	2	3	↑	+1
Operational activities	1	1	3	2	1	↓	-1
Conduct	2	0	6	3	1	↓	-2
Business/Community safety delivery	2	2	2	2	0	↓	-2
Total	7	9	13	10	9	↓	-1

*The average number received in the previous 3 years, rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 3 Qualifying disclosures

	2018/19
Disclosure categories	
Criminal offence	0
Miscarriage of justice	0
Act creating a risk to health and safety	0
Act causing damage to the environment	0
Breach of any other legal obligation	0
Concealment of any of the above	0
Total	0

Table 4. Messages of appreciation received by letter, card, e-mail, social media and in person:

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	3-year average*	2018/19	Comparison with 3-year average	
Appreciation categories							
Community safety initiatives, events and visits to/by NWFRS	25	26	27	26	16	↓	-10
Home safety checks, home safety interventions (including by Community Assistance Team)	12	19	20	17	12	↓	-5
Partnership working (including Phoenix and Arson Reduction)	11	1	7	6	15	↑	+9
Charitable support (including community bonfire donations)	9	34	8	17	8	↓	-9
Operational incidents and exercises	29	37	37	34	174	↑	+140
Conduct	6	12	16	11	15	↑	+4
Total	92	129	115	112	240	↑	+128

*The average number received in the previous 3 years, rounded to the nearest whole number.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	This report links to NWFRA's long-term well-being objective which is "To facilitate high quality, responsive and better integrated fire and rescue services so that prevention activity and emergency response can continue to be available when and where required, affordably, equitably and on the basis of risk."
Budget	Complaints and public interest disclosures can potentially result in actions that have budgetary implications. Conversely, improvement action can help reduce financial risk.
Legal	All relevant legislation considered when dealing with complaints or public interest disclosures received.
Staffing	Not considered relevant.
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	All protected characteristics considered and the appreciation/complaint will be dealt with bilingually or as requested by the individual.
Risks	Effective management of complaints and public interest disclosures can assist in reducing legal and financial risk to the Authority.