

## **Cyngor Gwynedd's response to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority Consultation - "Emergency Provision Review - Have Your Say".**

The Council welcomes the opportunity to submit views and feedback to the review on the future of fire and rescue services in North Wales.

We fully support the aim of being "in the right place, at the right time with the right skills", as well as the fact that your modelling work is based on "being able to respond" within 20 minutes during the day to any location across the North (especially so when considering wildfire incidents and accidents on rural roads). Within this context, it is clear from the consultation document that the three options under consideration are trying to address this aim.

However, the Council opposes the proposal put forward in option 3, which recommends the closure of on-call stations in Abersoch and Llanberis, as well as Beaumaris, Cerrigydrudion and Conwy. In this respect, we support the Chief Fire Officer's statement which has already indicated that implementing this option would go against her professional advice.

Closing two on-call stations within the County would be a huge loss and, in the Council's opinion, would undermine the aim of being able to respond promptly to emergency calls at some locations in Gwynedd. This is particularly true when you consider that the greatest pressure on the Service is in the late afternoon and early evening at which times it is more likely to have on-call staff available to respond to the calls received.

On the other hand, the intention, within each of the three options, to establish day staff fire stations in Porthmadog and Dolgellau is considered a key step that would strengthen the ability to realise the aim of responding quickly to calls in the areas concerned. Option 1 and 2 help to realise this without closing local on-call stations and, from a service improvement point of view, the Council is clearly supportive of both proposals. However, there are higher costs involved in realising those options (as well as job losses associated with option 2) and the Council is concerned about the impact of this on the level of rates' increase that would be necessary to implement the change.

In the context of cost, the Council notes that the number of officers at senior management level within the regional Fire and Rescue Authority appears high compared to other Fire and Rescue Authorities across England and Wales. From the point of view of the taxpayer in Gwynedd, the Council believes that it would be sensible for the Fire Authority to weigh up that management cost alongside its ability to provide the front-line service it seeks to achieve.

You will be aware of the extreme pressure being predicted on local authority budgets in the next financial year and beyond. The required contribution from the six local authorities would represent an approximate 14% increase in order to realise option 1 and around 10% to realise option 2 and this would mean that some of our local services as a Council would be under greater threat than would otherwise be the case.

In summary, the Council is supportive of the aim to improve emergency response services and is keen to see day staffed fire stations in Porthmadog and Dolgellau being established, but not at the expense of closing the on-call fire stations in Abersoch and Llanberis, whilst further proposing that there is scope to consider reducing the foreseen increase in the levy for the 2024-25 tax year by reviewing senior management requirements and administrative arrangements within the Fire Authority.

The Council is also aware of proposals that have been submitted by the Fire Brigade Union, in addition to the options included in the consultation. We take the opportunity to declare support for

your intention to continue discussing other possibilities with union representatives following the public consultation.