

Enterprise and Learning Committee

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Pwyllor Menter a Dysgu Enterprise and Learning Committee

29 January 2009

Draft Road Policing Manifesto

Purpose

This paper is presented to assist the committee in considering the merits of the draft Road Policing Manifesto. The evidence provided has been restricted to the areas of potential collaboration and support that the Fire & Rescue Service's (FRS's) of Wales could provide in improving the current conditions on the roads of Wales.

Background

Since the adoption of the Fire and Rescue Service's Act 2004 there has been a statutory duty placed on all Fire & Rescue Service's to rescue people in the event of road traffic collisions.

The Welsh Assembly Government has, in accordance with Section 21 of the 2004 Act, prepared a National Framework outlining its priorities, objectives and expectations for FRS's in Wales and how it will support them in achieving them.

The most recent National Framework (2008-2011) recognises the devastating impact on the lives of those involved in serious incidents and the significant workload road traffic collisions impose on the FRS's of Wales and that a reduction in road casualties is achievable only through collaborative working.

The National Framework identifies key stakeholders in the road safety arena and gives clear guidance that Fire and Rescue Authorities are expected to work in partnership to reduce road casualties across Wales.

Given these statutory duties, the Welsh Assembly Government expectations and the traditions of the FRS, it is clear that there are areas of the Road Policing Manifesto that directly impact on the FRS's of Wales.

The following sections are intended to advise the committee of current activity and, where appropriate, briefly outline opportunities for improvement in current practices and procedures.

The committee will be aware of the Manifesto's proposal to employ six tactical areas. As a willing partner the FRS's of Wales believe that there are four tactical areas where our involvement and support could be valuable in bringing about substantial improvements in both the safety of road users and the operational efficiency of traffic movements on the road network.

The areas are namely:-

Enforce the law

Education is perhaps the first step in enforcement. Road safety initiatives facilitated in partnerships with Police Authorities and Road Safety Wales have indicated that behavioral and attitude change is successfully achieved by raising the awareness of drivers to the consequences of inappropriate driver behaviour.

Working through established groups, such as Safety Camera Partnerships and Local Authority Road Safety Officers, Fire & Rescue Service staff can provide dedicated youth services, children service and partnership officers to support the aims of the Manifesto. These dedicated and highly professional teams can access high risks groups to facilitate education programmes as a supplement to, or an alternative to prosecution.

Vehicle crime is an issue that has a detrimental effect on all our communities and is a major concern with Local Authority Community Safety Partnership groups. It creates inconvenience, environmental damage, personal injury and in some tragic cases, loss of life.

To contribute to resolving such issue the Fire & Rescue Services of Wales have developed initiatives such as Car Crime Awareness Days. These multi agency partnerships events are aimed at offenders with a history of vehicle crime. Working in partnership exploits the strengths of each participating agency.

Working together under the strategic guidance of an over-arching Road Policing Manifesto would add a much needed co-ordinating framework in which all road safety professional could work to the benefit of the people who live, work or visit Wales.

Rescue Casualties

Road risk is dependent on several factors including the amount of travel, the level of traffic, driver behavior and the resources available to protect road users from injury. Whilst Fire and Rescue Services are able to exercise little control over the amount and level of traffic, we have very clearly defined responsibilities, obligations and skills in prevention, education, casualty care and the traditional role of extrication of entrapped people.

Education, training and publicity have their place alongside short-term measures, but over the long term assume even greater importance. Our continued support of other road safety agencies compliments various educational campaigns and promotes innovation to explore new initiatives.

Through the sharing of intelligence recorded at incidents with partners, education campaigns and refined operational responses can be targeted in the areas of greatest need and at user groups that require focused intervention action.

The Roads Policing Manifesto has the potential to provide a structure under which all contributing agencies can work toward the shared aim of reducing the number and severity of collisions and increasing the survivability of those involved in the most serious road traffic collisions.

I believe the Wales Assembly Government must do all it can to compel key stakeholder groups, especially those in the public sector, to engage fully in the work of the various sub groups that will be established to seek improvements in the areas outlined in the six key themes of the Manifesto.

Tackle anti-social road use

Anti-social road use is primarily promoted amongst the harder to influence high risk-taking road users. Through effective engagement techniques, with suitably qualified personnel, the Fire & Rescue Services of Wales believe that we can play our part in accessing and educating groups and individuals of the consequences of their behaviour and the effects they have on local communities.

In much the same way as highlighted in section 1.3 above the consequences of such driver behaviour is clear. This type of anti-social behaviour is an issue that has a detrimental effect on our communities and is a major concern with Local Authority Partnership Groups. It creates inconvenience, damage, injury and in a few tragic cases, loss of life.

Developing partnerships with a range of Road Safety specialists presents all agencies with an opportunity to combine resources and to address what is seen by many as a growing problem within our communities. I believe that there is an exciting opportunity presented to us all involved in the Road Safety agenda to unite under the Road Policing Manifesto.

Reduce Congestion and Delay

In 2007 the Fire & Rescue Services of Wales responded to slightly over 3000 Road Traffic Collisions. As a result of these collisions approximately 600 people required extrication from their vehicles.

In our desire to relieve the congestion caused by these most serious incidents we should not lose sight of the fact that each one presents a difficult and potentially dangerous situation to those that attend in an operational capacity and add further risks to the travelling public.

We must also not lose sight of the fact the overriding priority lies in saving the lives of those involved in collisions and in protecting the emergency responders however, there is potential to achieve all of the humanitarian aims of the rescue services and to return the road network to a free flowing state if all responding agencies regularly review their operational practices and procedures and see the incident from an holistic perspective.

While all the blue light services operate to an established Association of Chief Police Officer (ACPO) good practice guide in the co-ordination and management of emergency incidents on the road network, there is a potential to implement further improvements in Wales.

In 2007 there were a total of over 12,270 collisions on the road network, each one having some degree of impact on the efficient movement of goods and people. These delays impact heavily on the economy of Wales and all stakeholders should work towards reducing this impact, the Manifesto would again be an ideal forum in which to tackle this issue.

To take advantage of the already well established partnership approach adopted in Wales there needs to be a demonstrable desire and commitment on the part of all the emergency responders to engage in a fundamental review of current practices when dealing with Road Traffic Collisions. This review, in my opinion, should be undertaken within the framework of the Roads Policing Manifesto.

Summary/Recommendations

In summary, I consider the adoption of the Road Policing Manifesto to be an opportunity to bring even greater synergy to the issues of road safety and road network efficiency here in Wales.

Within Wales we are faced with the challenge of making our road infrastructure both safe and efficient yet there is no road safety intelligence forum in place to support real improvements in service provision.

Wales enjoys the services of a wide range of Road Safety agencies and professionals, all with a huge amount of enthusiasm and commitment to improving road safety and transport efficiency. The Road Policing Manifesto provides an opportunity to bring together

all such bodies under a much needed national framework where all can contribute to achieving a safe and efficient road transport network.

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