

NORTH WALES FIRE AUTHORITY

These are the minutes of the Special Meeting of the North Wales Fire Authority meeting held on Monday 27th October 2003 at County Hall, Mold. Meeting commenced at 2pm.

Present:

Councillor

Representing

T Roberts (Chairman)
M LI Davies (Vice-Chairman)

Gwynedd Council
Denbighshire County Council

J A Roberts
W T Roberts
S C Jones
W E Jones
J A MacLennan
D Jones MBE
D M Morris
A R Cattermoul
E F Evans
R Hill
R P MacFarlane
D G Parry
C Shone
D B Evans
E Morgan Jones
E C George
F A Nichols
J G S Roberts
M Williams
H T Williams

Isle of Anglesey County Council
Isle of Anglesey County Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Denbighshire County Council
Denbighshire County Council
Flintshire County Council
Flintshire County Council
Flintshire County Council
Flintshire County Council
Flintshire County Council
Flintshire County Council
Gwynedd Council
Gwynedd Council
Wrexham County Borough Council
Wrexham County Borough Council
Wrexham County Borough Council
Wrexham County Borough Council
Wrexham County Borough Council

Also present:

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); I R Miller (Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority); K W Finch (Treasurer to the Authority); P S Coles (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); C Hanks (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Service Support); P S Claydon (Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Service Delivery); P L Slee (Assistant Chief Officer, Corporate Services), S Morris (Projects Officer) and Rh Evans (Member Liaison Officer).

PART I

1) Apologies

Councillor

J R Hughes
M Griffith
W T Owen
W J Chorlton

Representing

Conwy County Borough Council
Gwynedd Council
Gwynedd Council
Isle of Anglesey County Council

2) Notice of Urgent Matters

No items received.

3) "Our Fire and Rescue Service" - The Government's White Paper on the Fire Service

The Chief Fire Officer introduced this item of business, deferred from the Fire Authority meeting on 29th September 2003, and advised the Authority that the purpose of the report was to set out the proposals contained in the Government's White Paper and detail its implications for North Wales. It also sought to determine if Members wished to lobby the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) or the National Assembly for Wales (NAfW) on any of the issues contained within the White Paper. In reply to a question raised on whether there was a move to create a single fire authority for Wales the Chief Fire Officer advised that the Assembly's Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration had reiterated, on numerous occasions, that no such plans existed. To date, all discussions which had taken place between Service officers, the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and Assembly civil servants had been based on there being three fire authorities in Wales.

The Clerk advised that the White Paper contained a suggestion, so far as regional fire and rescue management boards in England were concerned, that some of the members who would serve on these boards might be nominated directly by the Secretary of State rather than being elected members nominated by their own constituent authorities. It was not yet clear whether such a management board would be established in Wales. The Clerk suggested that the Authority may wish to lobby the relevant authorities on this point and emphasise its objection to any similar method being extended to fire authorities. It was:

Resolved: -

- i. to note the publication of the White Paper and the progress to date on the devolution of fire service responsibility in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales; and***

- ii. to lobby the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the National Assembly for Wales with a view to seeking an assurance that all members serving on Welsh fire authorities would be elected members nominated by their own constituent authorities, and that no members would be nominated by the Secretary of State or Assembly to serve on any of the fire authorities in Wales**

4) Draft Integrated Risk Management Plan

The Chief Fire Officer introduced his report (previously circulated), presented Members with the Authority's Draft Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), sought their approval to submit the Plan for public consultation and asked the Authority to approve the change of name. Members were advised that the Executive Panel, sitting as a Working Group, had held eleven meetings during the preceding few months in order to draw up the Integrated Risk Management Plan which had been presented to them. The Chief Fire Officer expressed his appreciation to the Press, especially the "Daily Post" for the fair coverage they had given the Plan in that day's issue of the newspaper. Both the Chairman and the Chief Fire Officer expressed their gratitude to Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery) Paul Claydon, the lead officer on the IRMP process, for all the hard work he had undertaken on the Plan. Congratulations and best wishes were also extended to Ms Shân Morris, Projects Officer, who had played a major role in the preparation of the document, who would shortly be commencing a secondment period with the Audit Commission, piloting the new Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) framework for Fire Brigades.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Claydon then gave Members a presentation on the draft Plan and the process which had been followed in order to compile the Authority's IRMP. He explained that under the IRMP the emphasis would change; the service would move from being an "intervention service" to being more of a "prevention service". The process itself would be an ever evolving one, as the Authority would be required to produce an action plan on an annual basis. The Working Group was of the opinion that the Plan document needed to be visual, user friendly, easily understood by the general public and formatted in a way that would encourage the ordinary person to read it.

He then proceeded to give Members a detailed page by page analysis of the document, its contents and answered the questions which were raised. In reply to various questions both the Chief Fire Officer and Assistant Chief Fire Officer Claydon advised that the safety of fire crews had been paramount when drawing up the proposals contained within the Plan; all figures contained within the document had been based on facts collated via the Geographic Information System (GIS), a system which had proved invaluable during the IRMP process; developing closer working relationships with all stake holders would be an integral part of the IRMP; and a multi level entry system would open up opportunities for more people to join the Service. The feasibility of a shared emergency services control room would be one of the issues for investigation in the near future. It was also confirmed that the communications infrastructure for

all emergency services was being looked at on a national basis; the proposed new radio system which should be operational by 2008 would be funded by central government. On the issue of the number of deaths attributed to fires in North Wales, Assistant Chief Fire Officer Claydon said it was sad to report that this year to date it seemed that the number of deaths was still averaging approximately one per month. Members were assured that the published document would be in bilingual format and that the front cover would be slightly modified.

As part of the consultation process, which would end on the 31st January 2004, copies of the document would be sent to all libraries and council offices in North Wales; copies would also be sent to the Wales Association of Town and Community Councils for distribution to their members. In addition the Authority's Chairman, Vice-Chairman and a team of Principal Officers had arranged meetings with members and officers of the six unitary authorities in North Wales with a view to discussing the Plan and its proposals, its implications and gathering their views upon it.

Under the modernisation process for the fire service, rescue work would become a statutory duty; it was therefore recommended that the Authority endorse the change of name to North Wales Fire and Rescue Service. Both the other fire authorities in Wales had already taken this decision and changed their names accordingly. Members thanked all the Officers and fellow Members who had been involved with the process for all their diligent work and:

Resolved: - to

- i. note the contents of the report;***
- ii. approve the draft Integrated Risk Management Plan***
- iii. authorise the Chief Fire Officer to publish the report and consult on its proposals; and***
- iv. approve the change of name to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service***

5) Urgent Matters

No items received.

PART II

No business

Meeting concluded at 2:55pm.

The above minutes, pending any inclusions shown, are approved as a true and correct record of proceedings.

Signed: T Roberts

Dated: 15 December 2003