

**NORTH WALES FIRE AUTHORITY**

These are the minutes of the meeting of North Wales Fire Authority held on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> December 2004 at the Council Chamber, Anglesey County Council Headquarters, Llangefni. Meeting commenced at 10:30am

**Present:**

Councillor

Representing

T Roberts (Chairman)  
M Williams (Vice-Chairman)

Gwynedd Council  
Wrexham County Borough Council

P C Evans JP  
W E Jones  
R D Peacock  
J M Vaughan  
G C Evans  
D Jones MBE  
J A Smith  
D Barratt  
D Clayton  
E F Evans  
R G Hampson  
J Ovens  
C Shone  
M Griffith  
E Morgan Jones  
W T Owen  
G O Williams  
E C George  
N S Colbourne  
G M Craddock  
W J Chorlton  
J A Roberts  
W T Roberts

Conwy County Borough Council  
Conwy County Borough Council  
Conwy County Borough Council  
Conwy County Borough Council  
Denbighshire County Council  
Denbighshire County Council  
Denbighshire County Council  
Flintshire County Council  
Gwynedd Council  
Gwynedd Council  
Gwynedd Council  
Gwynedd Council  
Wrexham County Borough Council  
Wrexham County Borough Council  
Wrexham County Borough Council  
Ynys Môn County Council  
Ynys Môn County Council  
Ynys Môn County Council

**Also present:**

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); J Kennedy (Deputy Monitoring Officer to the Authority); K W Finch (Treasurer to the Authority); C Enness (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); C Hanks (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Service Support); P S Claydon (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

S C Jones  
S Frobisher  
P M Shone

#### Representing

Conwy County Borough Council  
Denbighshire County Council  
Wrexham County Borough Council

I R Miller

Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority

### **2) Notice of Urgent Matters**

The Chairman advised that following the Authority's previous meeting he had received a letter from Councillor Cliff Shone requesting that a visit be arranged for members to Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service's International Training Centre at Chorley or, alternatively, to the Fire Service College at Moreton on the Marsh. He was of the view that a visit to one of these establishments would be of benefit to all members, especially new members. The Chief Fire Officer reminded the Authority that, when a similar fact finding visit had been undertaken the previous year, members had taken a strong view that it would be more beneficial for a visit to be arranged to Chorley rather than to the College. Members were asked for their views by the Chairman. Councillor David Jones was of the opinion, due to the tight financial constraints facing the Authority during the coming years, that a visit should be arranged for new members only to the establishment at Chorley. It was:

***Resolved: - that a fact finding visit be arranged for new Fire Authority members to Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service's International Training Centre at Chorley during the summer of 2005***

### **3) Chairman's Announcements**

- i. Councillor Ron Peacock, who had replaced Councillor Darren Millar as one of Conwy County Borough Council's representatives on the Authority, was welcomed to his first meeting
- ii. Congratulations were extended to Dave Greene, Watch Manager at Bangor Fire Station, on being awarded the Prince's Trust Cymru Coach of the Year Award 2004.
- iii. Future Committee meetings were scheduled to be held on the following dates: the Executive Panel would meet on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2005 – an invitation was extended to all fire authority members to attend a working demonstration by the Incident Response Unit (IRU), which was to be held immediately following the Panel's meeting. The Best Value Committee would hold its next meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2005. Both meetings would be held at Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters, Rhyl at 10:30am. The next Fire

Authority meeting was scheduled for 21<sup>st</sup> March 2005 at 10:30am, the venue being County Hall, Mold

- iv. Members were reminded of the urgent need to return the relevant forms submitting their bank/building society account details to facilitate the payment of their allowances and expenses

#### **4) Minutes**

The following minutes were submitted:

- i. Fire Authority meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2004

**Resolved: - to approve the minutes as a true and correct record of proceedings**

The following minutes were submitted for information purposes:

- ii. Executive Panel meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2004

#### **5) Matters Arising**

The following matters arose from the minutes submitted:

##### **Fire Authority Minutes 20<sup>th</sup> September 2004:**

**Page 2, Chairman's Announcements (v):** The Authority was advised that the surplus fire appliance donated to the International Fire and Rescue Association which had been destined to go to Bosnia had, in actual fact, now been sent to the Turks and Caicos Islands instead.

**Page 3, Chairman's Report:** the fifth word of the first sentence should read "report" and not "reported".

**Page 4, Chairman's Report, first paragraph:** The meeting of the Wales Fire Services' Forum with the Assembly Government's Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration, scheduled for 30<sup>th</sup> September 2004, had been cancelled and to date no further meeting had been arranged.

**Page 5, Pensions Review:** Councillor David Jones enquired about the number of anticipated personnel retirements during the next few years. The Chief Fire Officer advised that he did not have the numbers to hand but undertook to provide members with the information by way of correspondence.

#### **6) Chairman's Report**

The Chairman introduced his report (distributed at the meeting) which provided members with a brief update on the meetings and events attended by him, in his capacity as Chairman, since the Fire Authority's last meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2004. He then proceeded to detail the events and the activities, listed in his

report and answered members questions on various aspects of the information presented.

The Authority was informed by the Chairman that he had now been confirmed as the Welsh fire and rescue authorities' representative on the Welsh Local Government Association's (WLGA) Coordinating Committee and had also recently been elected as the WLGA's representative on the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services' Employers.

The Chairman informed the Authority of his intention to present to its next meeting a full report on the Young Firefighters' Association (YFA) in North Wales. In reply to an enquiry from Councillor W J Chorlton regarding the availability of 'fire kits' for the Holyhead YFA branch, Assistant Chief Fire Officer Paul Claydon advised that he was aware of the problem and that the Service's Stores Department was currently dealing with it. Councillor E C George advised that town and community councils might also be in a position to assist with funding for these types of youth initiatives whilst the Chairman advised that help might also be available from the "Communities First" fund. Councillor D Jones commented that it might also be useful to forge links with school councils.

Referring to his recent visit to the "Protecting Our Historic Town Centres" conference in Chester the Chairman remarked that it may prove beneficial for North Wales Fire Authority to host a similar conference in future, particularly in view of the fact that the area had so many buildings of historic and architectural merit.

Congratulations were conveyed by the Chairman to everyone who had been involved with the arrangements for the medal presentation ceremony at the Oriol House Hotel, St. Asaph on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2004. The Chief Fire Officer stated there had been a conscious decision to move the ceremony, this time, out of the Service's Headquarters so that it could be held in a less formal, more family friendly atmosphere. Owing to their budgetary implications he was of the view that the reasons for this decision required to be explained. The Chief Fire Officer agreed to the Chairman's request that all fire authority members be invited to future ceremonies.

At the Local Government Association's (LGA) Fire Forum meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2004 a discussion had taken place on the circumstances surrounding Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority's prosecution by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) following the death of one of its firefighters. The Chairman was of the view that the Authority should be advised of its position regarding the provision of indemnities for members and officers. The Deputy Monitoring Officer agreed to make further enquiries with the Clerk and it was:

***Resolved: - that a report be submitted to the Authority on its position regarding the provision of indemnities for members and officers***

Councillor P C Evans enquired whether the programme of visits to neighbouring and cross-border fire and rescue authorities, which had commenced during his chairmanship, were still taking place. The Chairman advised that such visits were not currently taking place, but that he would restart them in the near future. He agreed with Councillor Evans that these visits were a valuable and effective way of building close working relationships with neighbouring authorities.

The Chairman agreed to a request from Councillor D Barratt that all local fire authority members would, in future, be invited to a fire station during a visit by an AM or an MP.

Councillor E C George enquired on the progress to date regarding widening and developing relationships with the WLGA and the other fire authorities in Wales. The Chairman advised that discussions had recently been held between him and the Director and Leader of the WLGA and that they were now confident that a joint meeting between their Officials and the Chairs, Vice-Chairs and the Chief Fire Officers of the three Welsh fire and rescue authorities would be held in the near future. Councillor WJ Chorlton expressed the view that the new look Wales Fire Services' Forum should consist of not only the Chairs from each authority but also representation from amongst the members. Councillor Chorlton was concerned that, due to the current lack of existence of an effective all-Wales forum for the fire and rescue services, important meetings and decisions affecting fire authorities were taking place without members and authorities being properly consulted. He was afraid that this could result in authorities losing out on vital decision making and opportunities. The Chairman advised members that two out of the three Welsh fire and rescue authorities had been in agreement throughout, but were firmly of the view that it was important at this crucial time that they present a united front to both the Assembly and the WLGA. Fire Service related nominations from the WLGA to outside bodies were required to be made on a collaborative basis. The Chairman was pleased to report that as a result of a considerable amount of discussion, including a letter from the Clerk of North Wales Fire Authority about the matter, the outcome was that the WLGA had called a meeting to iron out differences. He sincerely hoped that he would be in a position to report the latest situation to the Executive Panel at its next meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2005.

Members were also advised by the Chairman and the Chief Fire Officer that the revised Fire and Rescue National Framework for Wales document, recently presented and approved by the Assembly's Social Justice and Regeneration Committee, stated clearly that the Minister would be responsible for appointing the members of the Wales Fire and Rescue Service Strategic Committee (WFRSSC). Members then:

**Resolved: - to note the information contained in the report**

## **7) Communication concerning Financial Statements to those charged with Governance**

The Chairman welcomed Mr David Jones from the Audit Commission in Wales (ACiW) to the meeting to give members a presentation on this item of business. Mr Jones explained that the "Statement of Auditing Standards 610 (SAS610) – Reporting to those charged with governance" required the Commission to report to those charged with governance all elements relating to the audit process prior to giving an opinion on the financial statements of that body. The relevant elements being: any relationships that may have a bearing on the auditors independence; audit planning information; and the findings following the audit, including the auditors views on the qualitative aspects of the body's accounting and reporting.

Mr Jones informed members that no relationships which may have a bearing on the Commission's independence had been identified and that there were no issues relating to misrepresentations. The audit had concluded that the Authority had retained quite a substantial amount of reserves in order to assist with future liabilities. Although this practice did not conform with CIPFA's Statement of Recommended Practice (SoRP), of which the Authority was well aware, Mr Jones advised that he understood the reasons behind the strategy being followed and confirmed that all reserves were transparent and that the constituent authorities were aware of their existence. Members:

**Resolved: - to accept the report**

## **8) Annual Audit Letter 2003/04**

Mr David Jones from ACiW conveyed Mr Anthony Barrett's, District Auditor, apologies to members for not being able to be present in person to deliver his report (previously circulated) detailing the key messages for the Authority contained in the Annual Audit Letter for the 2003/04 financial year. Mr Jones explained that the Annual Audit Letter was, by nature, an historic document which summarised the more important matters that had arisen out of the 2003/04 audit process. The Commission was required to pay particular attention to three aspects of the Authority's work whilst conducting its audit, these being: the Authority's accounts, its Performance Management and the Financial Aspects of Corporate Governance. Members were informed that the Commission had come to the conclusion that no matters required to be brought to the Authority's attention in relation to its accounts. The Authority had an excellent record of publishing its accounts promptly. Regarding its Performance Management the Commission was of the view that the Authority's Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) for 2004/05 complied with the statutory requirements and that the performance indicators were consistently and accurately calculated. Although some areas of performance were in need of improvement, it was pleasing to report that none of these areas related to life risk. The Commission was also of the opinion that the Authority had appropriate governance arrangements in

place to conform with the financial aspects of corporate governance requirements of the audit process. As a result, in accordance with the statutory timetable, the Commission anticipated issuing an unqualified opinion on the accounts by the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2004.

The Treasurer in reply to a question from Councillor D Clayton gave a broad outline of the Basic Credit Approval (BCA) system and advised that since April 2004, following the introduction of Prudential Borrowing, the Authority was no longer bound by the constraints of the old credit approval system. In reply to members' questions Mr Jones advised that, whilst the Authority had procedures in place to uphold the standards of financial conduct and to prevent fraud and corruption, it did need to promote and heighten awareness amongst staff of the provisions of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. The Chief Fire Officer informed members he had not been aware of any problems relating to this matter until he had read the report, but undertook to take steps during 2005 to redress any shortfall. Councillor E C George enquired how the Wales Programme for Improvement (WPI) would correlate with the Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) in identifying risks. Mr Jones advised that the IRMP would identify service delivery risk whereas the WPI would have a slightly broader agenda and should also highlight internal risks. Members:

**Resolved: - to note the Annual Audit Letter 2003/04**

#### **9) Letter of Representation**

The Treasurer introduced his report (previously circulated along with copies of correspondence between him and the District Auditor) with a view to seeking the Authority to formally acknowledge the Letter of Representation sent to the District Auditor in accordance with Regulation 8 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 1996. Members were also advised by the Treasurer that he would endeavour to answer any questions they wished to raise on the report and letters. It was:

**Resolved: - to formally acknowledge the Letter of Representation sent to the District Auditor in relation to the 2003/04 Statement of Accounts**

#### **10) Audit Plan 2004/05**

The Chairman invited Mr David Jones from ACiW to present his report (previously circulated) which detailed the audit work to be undertaken during the 2004/05 financial year. He explained that the production of an audit plan was a prime requirement of the Code of Audit Practice. With the exception of the work on the Authority's financial statements the Commission expected to complete the remainder of the work, listed in the report, by June 2005. Mr Jones proceeded to explain all areas contained in the report in detail. He apologised that the fees quoted for the work in the report, circulated to members, were incorrect: the correct total fee amount was £46,149, slightly lower than the figure shown. He

also informed members that every auditor involved with the Authority's audit process was required, annually, to sign a declaration stating that he/she did not know of any relationships or any other matters that may in any way compromise or jeopardise their independence in undertaking the audit work. It was:

**Resolved: - to note the report and the Audit Plan for 2004/05**

The Chairman thanked Mr Jones for attending the meeting and presenting the three reports to the Authority.

#### **11) Statement of Accounts 2003/04**

The Treasurer introduced his report (previously circulated) which presented the audited version of the Statement of Accounts for 2003/04 to the Authority. He explained that the Authority had already approved the accounts at its meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2004 prior to their submission to the Audit Commission. The Commission had requested that a few minor presentational amendments be made to the accounts. Therefore, having made these amendments the Treasurer was now presenting the revised version to members for approval. It was:

**Resolved: - to note the amended Statement of Accounts for 2003/04**

#### **12) Scheme of Members' Allowances**

In the absence of the Clerk, the Deputy Monitoring Officer introduced his report seeking the Authority to approve the scheme of members' allowances annexed to the report. She explained that during the Authority's last meeting she had given a verbal update to members on the revised draft Regulations that would make provision for the payment of allowances to members, prior to their imminent approval by the Assembly. The Executive Panel had considered North Wales Fire Authority's draft scheme, drawn up by Officers, at its meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2004 and had recommended that the Authority approve its adoption as its own scheme. Members attention was drawn by the deputy Monitoring Officer to paragraphs 4.1 and 4.2 of the Clerk's report. They referred to the possible tax implications of the Scheme and the responsibility of members to ensure that any such liabilities were appropriately discharged, and to an amendment that had been incorporated into the Scheme since its approval by the Executive Panel relating to the use of a car for some journeys. Councillor E F Evans was of the view that Schedule 2 to the Scheme should specify that the definition of "public transport" should stipulate the use of a bus for the journey; a taxi could only be used as a last resort or in cases of extreme urgency. Members agreed with this view and:

**Resolved: - to approve the scheme of allowances included in the annex to the report and, pending an inclusion in Schedule 2 that the definition of "public transport" specify the use of a bus for the journey and that a taxi could only be**

***used as a last resort or in cases of extreme urgency, to adopt the Scheme as North Wales Fire Authority's own scheme of allowances for members with effect from 29<sup>th</sup> September 2004 (1<sup>st</sup> October 2004 in respect of travel and subsistence allowances)***

### **13) Draft Budget 2005/06 and Forecast for 2006/07 and 2007/08**

The Treasurer introduced his report (previously circulated) which required the Authority to consider a list of proposals in respect of the draft budget for 2005/06, the forecast for 2006/07 and 2007/08. Annexed to the report were details of the draft revenue budget, the provisional contributions required by the constituent authorities, a list of prudential indicators as required by the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management, the Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Plan for 2004/05 and the draft capital programme.

Members were reminded by the Treasurer that it was the Authority's statutory duty to notify the constituent authorities of its estimated net expenditure for the next financial year by 31<sup>st</sup> December. By the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2005 the Authority was required to confirm to the constituent authorities the contribution amount required by each one to the Combined Fire Service Fund. He proceeded to explain that the wording of the current report was more direct than usual, this was due to the disappointing Revenue Support Grant (RSG) settlement local authorities in North Wales had received from the Assembly Government. The Treasurer then gave a detailed explanation of all the elements included in his report and of each option presented to members. He explained that the report listed a number of things that they needed to bear in mind when deciding on the budget increase they were going to set. The initial draft budget increase for 2005/06 had been calculated at 9.53% above the approved budget for 2004/05. Contained within the report were a number of options for members to consider in order to mitigate the effect of an overall budget increase of 9.53%, along with the element of risk attached to utilising each option. Members were advised that under current projections, as a result of a lower level of operational activity being experienced than had originally been anticipated, the Authority may be presented with an underspend of approximately £670,000 at the end of the current financial year. However, caution was needed when dealing with this figure as extreme weather conditions or a high number of operational incidents could see this figure diminish quite considerably. It would therefore be more prudent to project an underspend in the region of £500,000. Members were of the view that the Authority, due to the disappointing local government funding settlement and the impact of the council tax property rebanding exercise, had to be seen to be cost effective and set the lowest possible budget increase without affecting service delivery. Having taken account of the advice and risks identified it was:

**Resolved: - to**

- i. set the budget increase for 2005/06 at 4.09%;***

- ii. **advise the constituent authorities of the provisional contributions required for 2005/06, as set out in Appendix B, by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2004;**
- iii. **delegate powers to the Executive Panel to consider and approve how efficiency savings of £294,123 can be determined and implemented for the 2005/06 budget;**
- iv. **make representations to the WLGA and the National Assembly for Wales about implementing the provisions in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 in respect of charging for services;**
- v. **approve the set of Prudential Indicators set out in Appendix C;**
- vi. **approve the Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Plan for 2005/06 set out in Appendix D;**
- vii. **approve the draft capital programme for 2005/06 and associated methods of financing, in Appendices E and F to the report; and**
- viii. **if any changes transpire before 31<sup>st</sup> January 2005, to delegate the powers of setting a lower budget level to the Executive Panel or, if any such announcements or savings transpire after this date but before 15<sup>th</sup> February 2005, that this power be delegated to the Treasurer in consultation with the Chairman, Chief Fire Officer and Clerk**

#### **14) Proposed Changes to Standing Orders**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer introduced the Clerk's report (previously circulated) listing the proposed amendments to the Authority's Standing Orders in accordance with the recommendations of the Executive Panel following its meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2004. The amendments, in accordance with Standing Orders, had been moved and seconded at the previous Fire Authority meeting and had therefore been adjourned for debate until the current meeting. The amendments provided, in line with current arrangements, that the Chairman of the Fire Authority also be the chair of any of the Authority's committees of which he or she was a member; and that the Standards Committee be permitted to regulate its own procedures subject to meeting the requirements laid down by legislation. It was:

**Resolved: - to approve the amendments as detailed in the annex to the report**

#### **15) The Presentation of Fire Authority Official Shields to Retiring Members**

The Chief Fire Officer introduced his report (previously circulated) requesting members to discuss a request that all retiring Fire Authority members be presented with the Fire Authority's official shield. Members were advised that the report, containing proposals on the parameters and criteria to be met and the protocols to be adhered to for the presentation of shields to retiring Authority members, had been compiled at the Executive Panel's request following its meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2004. Councillor M Griffith was of the view that members stood for office out of a sense of public duty and not for personal glory. She also felt that the Authority, at this moment in time, needed to be seen to be making effective use of taxpayers' money not spending it on unnecessary items

such as shields for members. Councillor D Jones supported this viewpoint. Councillor Griffith, seconded by Councillor D Jones, proposed an amendment to the recommendation: that the Fire Authority should not present official shields to retiring members. On being put to the vote the amendment was carried. The original recommendation, detailed in the report, on being put to the vote was defeated. Members therefore:

***Resolved: - that official Fire Authority shields should not be presented to retiring members of the Fire Authority***

## **16) Call Statistics at Day Crewed Stations**

The Chief Fire Officer introduced his report (previously circulated) with a view to updating members on the issue of the working day of wholetime firefighters at day crewed stations. Annexed to the report was the relevant part of the Authority's IRMP upon which the original decision had been based and a letter from Councillor W J Chorlton requesting discussion of the item at the current meeting and referring to a letter all Authority members had recently received from the Fire Brigades' Union (FBU). Prior to the start of the meeting copies of data graphs were distributed to members. The graphs detailed the number of calls received for the years 2000/01, 2001/02 and 2002/03, the times the calls were received, how the times of these calls fitted in with the current shift times at the stations and with the new shift times which were due to become operational from 6<sup>th</sup> January 2005; the same information was provided for each of the five day crewed stations within the North Wales area. Members were advised by the Chief Fire Officer that information contained in a letter distributed to them, immediately prior to the commencement of the meeting, by the Union, incorrectly stated that an NJC Disputes Panel would, on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2005, be hearing an appeal from the Union against the Authority's decision to change the shift times. He informed members that both he and the Clerk would be attending a meeting of the NJC Joint Secretaries on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2005 to discuss this and other issues. He emphasised that the meeting was not a Disputes Panel hearing. The Clerk had advised that, under the terms of the 2003 Pay and Conditions of Service Agreement, any change implemented by the Authority following the completion of the statutory IRMP process could not be registered as a "dispute". Members were advised that the meeting with the Joint Secretaries had already been deferred from its original date of 17<sup>th</sup> December 2004 at the request of Union officials.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Paul Claydon then gave the Authority a presentation supporting the information shown on the graphs distributed to members. He emphasised that the change to be implemented did not in any way lengthen shift times, it only changed the start and finish times. The graphs illustrated how call patterns replicated themselves year on year. The highest number of calls received peaked immediately following the end of the current shift. As a result a delay was being encountered on the response times due to the crews not being available on station. Graphs for each station demonstrated the same overall

pattern: a low number of calls received during the early morning, increasing steadily throughout the day, reaching a peak during late afternoon and early evening before reducing again from approximately 10pm onwards. Assistant Chief Fire Officer Claydon emphasised that the same trends were being shown in the data for this year to date.

In reply to various questions Assistant Chief Fire Officer Claydon emphasised to members that every station profile showed the same pattern of calls and that the graphs illustrated the number of calls received in relation to each fire station area. The Chief Fire Officer reminded members that these were figures used by the Authority during its IRMP process. They had formed the basis on which the decision to change the shift times had been made, nothing had therefore changed. As part of the verification process the IRMP had been submitted to the Audit Commission and consequently audited. Although possible efficiencies of approximately £75, 000 had been identified as a result of implementing the change in shift times, the change was not about saving money but about reducing the risk to life and property. By aligning the shift times with the Service's busiest times the Authority would make more effective use of its resources, the result of which should be the provision of a high quality public service to the taxpayer when it was most needed.

Some members were of the view that the Authority should show goodwill and ensure an amicable working relationship with the Union by delaying the introduction of the new shift times until after the meeting with the NJC Joint Secretaries on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2005. Councillor E C George was of the view that the purpose of the meeting scheduled for 9<sup>th</sup> February was to iron out a few minor issues. He was firmly of the opinion that the Authority had already debated the change approximately 18 months earlier and had undertaken the proper legal process by consulting on the proposed change as part of its first IRMP. It was now time for it to recognise its commitment to the modernisation agenda and to the general public by implementing the change in shift times. The effect of the changes implemented through the IRMP process would be constantly analysed and evaluated. Councillor George's views were echoed by Councillor D Jones, he emphasised that the Authority had received the legal opinion, the facts were before them, therefore they should accept that the information presented to them was correct.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer drew members' attention to the legal considerations listed in the report and emphasised that it was her firm and unequivocal view that it would be foolhardy for the Authority not to proceed with the change as it had originally intended. The statutory 90 day notice of the change in shift times had been served to all personnel working the 'day crewed shift system' for the change to take effect from 6<sup>th</sup> January 2005.

Following an in-depth debate a request was made that a recorded vote be taken. On being put to the meeting, an insufficient number of members indicated their support for the requisition of a recorded vote.

Councillor WJ Chorlton, seconded by Councillor W T Roberts, proposed an amendment to the original recommendation, that the change of shift times at day crewed stations be suspended from 6<sup>th</sup> January 2005 until the 10<sup>th</sup> February 2005, when the outcome of the meeting with the NJC Joint Secretaries was known. On being put to the vote the amendment was lost.

The original proposal, that the Authority should proceed with the change in shift times at day crewed stations effective from the 6<sup>th</sup> January 2005, was put to the vote, and by a majority vote it was:

***Resolved: - that the Authority should proceed with the change in shift times at day crewed stations as proposed in its original IRMP with effect from the 6<sup>th</sup> January 2005 on expiry of the statutory 90 day notice of change to the relevant personnel, and respond to the FBU's letter accordingly***

#### **17) Freedom of Information Act 2000**

The Chief Fire Officer introduced his report (previously circulated) advising members of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the arrangements the Authority had in place to ensure compliance with the Act's requirements from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2005, the date on which the Act would come into force in its entirety. Members:

***Resolved: - to note the contents of the report***

#### **18) Tenders**

The Chief Fire Officer introduced his report (previously circulated) informing members of the tenders accepted for the construction of accommodation to house the Incident Response Unit (IRU) at Bangor, the construction of a training house at Colwyn Bay and for refurbishment work at Johnstown. He explained that, in accordance with the Authority's Financial Standing Orders and as each tender exceeded £40,000, he was required to report their acceptance to the Authority. It was:

***Resolved: - to note the decisions of the Chief Fire Officer in consultation with the Chairman in accepting the tenders for:***

- i. the facility at Bangor for the amount of £96,080.14***
- ii. the training house at Colwyn Bay for the amount of £107,673.51***
- iii. the remodelling work at Johnstown fire station for the amount of £99,334.03***

## 19) "Informative"

The Chief Fire Officer presented the current issue of the 'Informative' magazine to members. Bethan Davies, the Service's Press and Public Relations Officer, was thanked by the Chairman for her work in compiling an excellent publication. Members:

**Resolved: - to accept the publication**

## 20) Urgent Matters

Already discussed under business item 2.

Members were then informed by the Chairman that it was recommended that the remainder of the business items on the agenda be discussed without the public or the Press present. It was:

**Resolved: - pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 that the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business because it was likely that there would be disclosed to them information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 8, 9 and 10 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972**

## **PART II**

### 21) Office Accommodation in Conwy and Flintshire

The Chief Fire Officer introduced his report (previously circulated) advising the Fire Authority of prospective office accommodation available to lease in Conwy and Flint. Annexed to the report were specifications for both premises under consideration. The Chief Fire Officer informed the Authority that the premises were required in order to complement the new county based structure of the Service. The intention was to house the fire safety functions for both counties in these offices. They would also fulfil the town centre, shop front information centre functions which the Authority was promoting in order to make its services easily accessible to the general public. Assistant Chief Fire Officer Colin Hanks proceeded to give detailed information about each location to members and answered questions raised. He advised that further work was underway regarding finding suitable premises to serve the community safety function for the Wrexham County Borough Council area. The current Divisional Headquarters building for the area would probably have to be vacated within the next few months; it may therefore prove necessary to house the staff for the area, on a temporary basis, possibly at Wrexham Fire Station. Councillor E C George felt that the proximity of Wrexham Fire Station to the town centre made it an ideal location for it to be the permanent site for the county front office. These views were echoed by the Vice-Chairman.

Councillor PC Evans raised concerns about the business implications of disposing of the Authority's York Road, Llandudno asset and the subsequent lease of another building in Conwy for a ten year period. He was of the view that it would be of greater benefit to the Authority to rescind its earlier decision to sell the York Road site and keep hold of a valuable capital asset. He also had doubts about whether the location of the premises under consideration in Conwy was actually suitable. Councillor Evans understood the need to work closely with the local authority but the Conwy County Borough Council departments that would benefit from closer interaction with the fire and rescue service were not based in Conwy itself, they were based in other towns within the county. Councillor Wyn Jones agreed with Councillor Evans' sentiments. Councillor Evans suggested that the feasibility of building an additional floor on top of Llandudno Fire Station to accommodate the staff serving Conwy county area should be explored. The Treasurer advised that the decision to sell the York Road site had already been taken, if the decision was rescinded the valuation amount included in the budget for the site would have to be transferred into the Revenue Budget. The Chief Fire Officer was of the view that the condition of the York Road site left a lot to be desired and was not suitable for the new county based functions. The Chairman informed members that he had visited the premises in Conwy and in his opinion it provided excellent accommodation and had the necessary IT infrastructure in place ready for the Authority to move in immediately.

Councillor D Jones proposed that the Authority should accept the Officers' recommendations and proceed with the proposals to lease both properties. This proposal was seconded by Councillor M Griffith. Councillor P C Evans, seconded by Councillor W Jones, proposed an amendment, that a decision to lease the accommodation detailed in the report in Conwy be deferred and that the York Road, Llandudno site be retained until other more suitable options were found and brought back to the Authority for consideration. On being put to the vote the amendment was defeated. The original recommendation and proposal was then put to the vote and it was:

**Resolved: - to**

- i. approve the lease of the accommodation in Conwy for the period and cost detailed in the report and the subsequent re-location of staff and sale of the York Road site at Llandudno; and***
- ii. approve the lease of the office building in Flint for a minimum three year period lease at a cost per annum as specified in the report with the subsequent re-location of staff from the Maesgwyn Road site at Wrexham***

**22) Former Llanfairfechan Fire Station**

The Chief Fire Officer introduced his report (previously circulated) requesting that the Authority consider the proposal to sell the site of the former Llanfairfechan

Fire Station. He explained that the interested party, to which the Authority had already agreed to lease the site with an option to buy at a later date, had now indicated that it was in a position to buy the site from outset. All the relevant details, including the terms of the original lease were contained in the report and annex. It was:

**Resolved: - to approve the sale of the former Llanfairfechan Fire Station to the Cwmni Penllan Cyf. Development Trust**

### **23) Atal Tân Cymru**

The Chief Fire Officer introduced his report (previously circulated) advising members of an independent review into the work of Atal Tân Cymru. The Chief Fire Officer and the Authority's Chairman were both, by virtue of office, trustees of Atal Tan and the Trust was currently in the process of appointing lay trustees. Members were informed by the Chief Fire Officer that, as the Trust approached the end of its second full year of operation, the three Chief Fire Officers in Wales had commissioned an independent report to examine its performance against the original expectations and with a view to assisting in the determination of the future level of financial support it would require. The consultants report, annexed to the report, was on the whole very balanced. It noted that whilst Atal Tan had performed well in some areas it had not achieved such good progress in other areas. The report also concluded that, contrary to the original expectations which were now deemed to be extremely optimistic, it was unlikely that Atal Tan would become self-financing. A request was therefore being submitted to the three Welsh fire authorities that they continue to financially support Atal Tan Cymru for the next three financial years on a rate comparable to the current level of funding. Following a discussion members:

**Resolved: - to**

- i. note the progress of Atal Tân Cymru and express their support for the continuation and development of the Trust; and***
- ii. to agree to support the Trust financially, at a level comparable with the contribution for 2004/05 for a period of three years, further support being subject to a report by the Chief Fire Officer to the December 2007 meeting of the Authority***

Prior to bringing the meeting to its close the Chairman conveyed the season's good wishes to everyone present.

Meeting concluded at 1.20pm.

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

**Signed:** I Roberts

**Dated:** 21 March, 2005