

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the Executive Panel meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Wednesday 24th January 2007 at Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, St. Asaph. Meeting commenced at 10.30am.

Present:

Councillor

T Roberts (Chairman)
E C George (Vice-Chairman)

J M Vaughan
S Frobisher
J A Smith
D Barratt
E F Evans
E Morgan Jones
G M Craddock
M Williams

Representing

Gwynedd Council
Wrexham County Borough Council

Conwy County Borough Council
Denbighshire County Council
Denbighshire County Council
Flintshire County Council
Flintshire County Council
Gwynedd 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); S Forrest (Accountant, Treasurer's Department, Conwy County Borough Council); C Enness (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); P S Claydon (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Service Delivery); C Hanks (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Service Support); D Docx (Assistant Chief Officer, Finance and Procurement); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); W A Murphy (Senior Operations Manager); K Hughes (Senior Fire Safety Manager); G Brandrick (Service Development Manager); D G Roberts (Retained Duty System Project Manager); L Roberts (Fire Control Manager); R Jones (Chief Officer's Advisory Team Support Manager); G Watson (Corporate Communications Manager) and Rh Evans (Member Liaison Officer).

PART I

1) Apologies

K W Finch

Treasurer to the Authority

2) Notice of Urgent Matters

Members were informed by the Chairman that no items had been submitted to him or the Clerk for consideration.

Members and officers joined the Chairman in congratulating the Chief Fire Officer on being awarded the Queen's Fire Service Medal (QFSM), in recognition of his duty and contribution to the Fire and Rescue Service, in the New Year's Honours List.

3) Minutes

The following minutes were submitted:

- i. Executive Panel meeting held on 12th December 2006
- ii. Senior Salary Review Committee 13th December 2006

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

4) Matters Arising

No matters arose from either set of minutes submitted.

The Chairman welcomed Mr Matthew Edwards, Audit Manager, and Mr Mark Roberts, Principal Auditor, from the Wales Audit Office (WAO) to the meeting to present the four reports prepared by the WAO. In response to a request from Mr Edwards the Chairman permitted the order of business on the meeting's agenda to be varied in order that the item on the Annual Audit Letter could be presented before the other three reports.

5) Annual Audit Letter

Mr Edwards presented Mr Anthony Barrett, the appointed Auditor's, Annual Audit Letter 2005/06 (previously circulated) to members. Mr Edwards explained that the Letter summarised the findings of the other audit reports listed on the current meeting's agenda and various other audit reports published throughout the 2005/06 audit year. He apologised for the delay in furnishing members with the Annual Audit Letter and explained that this had been due to a delay in obtaining the Welsh version of the report from the WAO's external translators. He undertook to resolve the matter for future years. The next Annual Audit Letter should therefore be presented to the Fire and Rescue Authority at its December meeting.

By way of a PowerPoint presentation Mr Edwards informed members of the Letter's key messages and drew their attention to areas which had been identified as requiring further work, or which needed strengthening. He explained that the WAO had issued an unqualified audit opinion on the Authority's accounts for the year ended 31st March 2006. The Auditor was satisfied that the submitted Accounts accurately stated the Authority's financial affairs: they had been prepared and presented in accordance with the relevant legislation, directions, regulations and applicable accounting standards and the Authority's expenditure had been lawful.

In the ISA 260 report "Audit of the Financial Statements – Reporting to Those Charged with Governance", presented to the Authority on 23rd October 2006, the WAO had again highlighted that the Authority's treatment of provisions, amounting to £515k, did not comply with the requirements of Financial Reporting Standard (FRS) 12 and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Statement of Recommended Practice (SoRP). Nevertheless, the approach taken by the Authority for handling these provisions was consistent with the line it had applied since 1996 - North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority was the only fire and rescue authority in Wales who had adopted this approach - and the WAO and constituent authorities were satisfied that this approach was both prudent and transparent. The WAO sympathised with the dilemmas and constraints faced by fire and rescue authorities in not being allowed to hold reserves. The Appointed Auditor was in the process of attempting to resolve this problem with the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG). In his view it would greatly assist fire and rescue authorities with their medium term financial planning if they were permitted to hold reserves.

The Appointed Auditor was satisfied that the Authority had secure systems of internal control in place and, as a result, there were no issues that required to be drawn to members' attention. In addition the Authority continued to apply appropriate governance arrangements. These arrangements, which ensured that it only entered into lawful transactions, had continued to operate effectively. Nonetheless, the Auditor was of the view that there was scope for the Internal Audit Department and the Authority to further develop its internal audit arrangements. In the WAO's view this could be achieved by establishing an agreed Internal Audit Strategy and by the establishment of an Audit Committee.

In relation to the Authority's Performance Management Framework, officers recognised the WAO's findings that the existing Performance Management Framework required strengthening. The Assistant Chief Officer (Finance and Procurement) cautioned members that without sufficient resources the Service would not be in a position to fully implement all plans. Mr Edwards stated that it was pleasing to report that, despite the WAG's delay in producing and publishing the necessary guidance, the Authority had fully complied with the legislative requirements of the Wales Programme for Improvement (WPI) by completing and publishing its Improvement Plan by the due date. The Authority was also continuing to work with, and responding to, the WAG as it prepared the Draft Fire and Rescue WPI for consultation.

In concluding his presentation Mr Edwards advised members that the Appointed Auditor was satisfied with the Authority's arrangements throughout the year. The arrangements that existed properly supported the achievement of its responsibilities to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources during 2005/06.

On the issue of provisions held by the Authority, the Vice-Chairman advised Mr Edwards that a decision had recently been taken to return a substantial amount from the Pension Provision to the constituent authorities. He emphasised that, although the Authority was dependent upon the constituent authorities for its funding, it was itself a stand-alone authority and it would prove extremely useful if the WAG could be persuaded to permit fire and rescue authorities to retain underspends and therefore accrue reserves. Members:

Resolved: - to note the contents of the Annual Audit Letter 2005/06

6) Internal Audit Assessment

Mr Edwards introduced the joint report compiled by him and Mr Mark Roberts (previously circulated) detailing their findings following the annual assessment of the Authority's Internal Audit function. Members were informed that the purpose of the audit was to assess whether, in the WAO's opinion, the Authority's internal financial control arrangements were adequate. The Authority had been assessed against the professional standards as set out in CIPFA's 'Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the United Kingdom'. Following the assessment the auditors had concluded that the Authority had fully complied with 4 out of the 10 CIPFA standards, partly met 5 other standards and had failed to meet 1 of the standards. Hence, the auditors were of the view that there remained scope for Internal Audit, and the Authority, to further develop its arrangements to ensure that in future it fully complied with all 10 standards. The standard which the Authority had failed to meet was the operational standard which required the Internal Audit function to have an audit strategy setting out how its work would be delivered and developed. In the WAO's view the Authority's Annual Internal Audit Report did not fully comply with the guidance contained in the Code of Practice. Consequently the WAO was recommending that the Authority should form a properly constituted Audit Committee in line with the requirements of the recently published 'Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities'. In the Treasurer's absence the Clerk informed members that the Treasurer was of the view, given the size of the organisation, that a separate audit committee was unnecessary. The Treasurer was confident that the functions of an audit committee could be adequately undertaken by the Executive Panel. Members were advised by the Clerk that, if the Panel resolved to accept the Treasurer's advice on this matter, the Authority would need to approve amendments to the Panel's Terms of Reference to include the extended remit. The Vice-Chairman, seconded by Councillor M Williams proposed that the Authority adopt this approach rather than establish a standalone audit committee. Councillor George also requested that a copy of CIPFA's 'Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the United Kingdom' be circulated to all Panel members for reference purposes. It was:

Resolved: - that a report be prepared and presented to the Authority, at its next meeting on 19th March 2007, seeking it to delegate its functions in relation to certain audit matters to the Executive Panel.

7) Financial Accounts – Final Accounts Audit

Mr Mark Roberts introduced his and Mr Edwards' joint report (previously circulated) which detailed the audit work undertaken by the WAO throughout the year in relation to the Authority's financial accounts, culminating in the publication of the Annual Audit Letter. He explained that under the WAO's Code of Audit and Inspection Practice they as auditors were required to provide an opinion on whether the Authority's financial statements presented fairly its financial position, from both an income and expenditure perspective, for the year ended 31st March 2006. Mr Roberts informed Panel members that this audit had been undertaken in two stages. The first of these stages tested whether high level controls were in place in relation to the preparation of financial statements - the presence of such controls would detect and prevent errors arising during the year. The second stage of the process was the actual audit of the Authority's financial statements. Members were advised that, although the Authority's financial services were provided by Conwy County Borough Council, under a Service Level Agreement, the overall responsibility for the accuracy and transparency of its finances lay with the Authority. Following the audit the WAO had concluded that, generally, the Authority had an effective system of internal control in place which in turn minimised the risk of material misstatements to the financial statements. In addition, the Authority's high level financial accounting controls formed an effective basis for the preparation of the financial statements. The Authority's draft accounts had been prepared to a high standard and within the statutory deadlines. As a result, the WAO had been in a position to issue an unqualified opinion on the Accounts on 31st October 2006.

Mr Roberts detailed and explained the seven recommendations listed in the report's Action Plan. He also emphasised that the Authority should take assurances from the current arrangements it had in place. The recommendations related to ensuring that these arrangements were regularly updated and tested to guarantee their continued robustness in the face of legislation and procedural changes.

8) Performance Management Review

Mr Edwards introduced his and Ms Lisa Williams' joint report (previously circulated) detailing their findings following the review they had undertaken of the Authority's progress in relation to the implementation of its performance management system. The WAO had concluded that, although the Authority was making progress in this area, it did need to strengthen its current performance management framework to make it more robust. The advent of the Wales Programme for Improvement (WPI) for fire and rescue authorities would present the Authority with an ideal opportunity to develop and strengthen the current performance management framework. The present reporting framework required enhancing to facilitate the inclusion into one single document of information which gives an overview of all the Authority's key documents, demonstrates the Authority's objectives and how they will be met, and the way in which they link into the Service's budget. The framework should

also provide guidance on preparing monitoring reports in line with agreed timetables and set out officers and members' role and responsibilities.

On the subject of the new performance management system, PB Views, the implementation of which had commenced, members were advised by the Assistant Chief Officer (Finance and Procurement) that officers were of the view that the importance of performance management and reporting methods needed to be properly embedded within the Service before personnel commenced using the PB Views system. In reply to a question from the Vice-Chairman Mr Edwards advised that North Wales Police was an example of a public organisation which had good reporting mechanisms.

The Chairman thanked Mr Edwards and Mr Roberts for attending, presenting their reports and answering members' questions.

9) Presentation on the Risk Reduction Planning Process

The Chairman requested the Panel's view on considering this item of business at the current meeting as he felt that the Risk Reduction Plan (RRP) Working Group's meeting, on 30th January 2007, would present itself as a more appropriate forum for the Presentation. Members were advised that the purpose of the short presentation, that would be given by the Service's Corporate Planning Manager, was to guide members' thoughts towards the process in readiness for the following week's meeting. It was:

Resolved: - to defer this item of business until the Risk Reduction Plan (RRP) Working Group's meeting on 30th January 2007.

10) Draft Race Equality Scheme 2005/08

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer introduced his report and the Service's draft Race Equality Scheme 2005/08 (previously circulated) to members with a view to seeking their approval for the revised draft Scheme. He gave details of the legislative background which had given rise to the Authority, along with other public bodies, being required to produce a Race Equality Scheme and subsequently reviewing it every three years. The Authority's first Scheme had been produced and approved in 2002, therefore the Scheme before the Panel for approval was the Service's reviewed Race Equality Scheme for the period 2005/08. As officers at the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) had not been entirely satisfied with the first draft of the reviewed Scheme, submitted in May 2005, a delay had occurred before the Scheme could be presented to members whilst officers from all three Welsh fire and rescue authorities and the CRE worked together to produce schemes that were satisfactory to both the CRE and to the individual authorities. Members:

Resolved: - to approve and adopt North Wales Fire & Rescue Service's Race Equality Scheme 2005/08.

The Chief Fire Officer enquired why Mr Chris Myant from the CRE had been invited to address the National Assembly's Social Justice and Regeneration Committee meeting on 31st January 2007 on the subject of "Fire Equality Scheme", when it seemed that no Service representative would be present. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that Mr Myant had been unable to attend the meeting at which representatives from the fire and rescue services had given presentations to the Committee on the Race Equality Schemes. Consequently he had been invited to attend the meeting on 31st January to give the CRE's perspective on how they had collaborated with the authorities to produce schemes that were acceptable to all concerned.

11) Complaints Procedure

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Support) introduced his report (previously circulated) informing the Panel of the review which had recently taken place of the Authority's complaints procedure. He reminded members that the Authority, at its meeting on 23rd October 2006, had requested that a review be undertaken of the Authority's current Complaints Procedure to ensure that it complied with the latest guidance issued by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Support) proceeded to detail the report's contents, which included the Ombudsman's general advice, and gave details of the amended North Wales Fire and Rescue Service Complaints Policy which had been examined by the Ombudsman. Replying to members' questions the Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Support) confirmed that the timetable shown in the report for all three stages of the Procedure had received the Ombudsman's approval and that procedures were already in place to ensure continuity of the process in the event of sickness or other unforeseen absences. It was:

Resolved: -

- i to note the contents of the report and in particular the proposed amendments following advice from the Ombudsman; and*
- ii that the amendments to the current policy come into force from 1st April 2007.*

12) Performance Monitoring

The Assistant Chief Officer (Finance and Procurement) introduced her report (previously circulated) providing members with information relating to the Service's performance against the various performance indicators (PIs) during the first two quarters of the 2006/07 reporting year. Prior to the commencement of the meeting a late update sheet was distributed to all present detailing the Authority's performance against the various PIs up to and including 31st December 2006. Members were informed that the intention was to present the performance data in the present format until the end of the current reporting year, but in line with the WAO's recommendations outlined earlier, the presentational format would be changed for the 2007/08 reporting year.

The Assistant Chief Officer (Finance and Procurement) then drew members' attention to a number of PIs listed in the report. It was pleasing to report that the number of accidental fires in dwellings, primary fires and deliberately ignited fires (excluding those started in vehicles) were on the decrease. It was also encouraging to note that the number of injuries sustained in accidental fires in dwellings was also below the set target, and 30% lower than last year's figure. Sadly, it was disappointing and worrying that the number of people who had died as a consequence of accidental fires in dwellings was considerably higher than the previous year. Members were informed by the Chief Fire Officer that, regrettably, the person rescued from a house fire in Deganwy the previous day had passed away that morning. He proceeded to explain that the Task Group, established by him during the autumn in response to the unacceptable increase in the number of fire deaths was about to complete its work and would soon be in a position to report its findings. Another disappointing statistic was the increase in the number of deliberate fires in vehicles. Councillor E C George enquired whether cutbacks in local authorities' environment budgets were having an impact on this particular performance indicator with abandoned vehicles, which were no longer being collected and disposed of by local authorities, being targeted by fire setters.

In relation to false alarms from automated fire alarm (AFA) systems it was disappointing to report that, although work was underway in an attempt to reduce the number of these types of calls, the numbers received to date this year remained above target. The WAO in its reports had highlighted the need for the Authority, in line with other public bodies, to identify efficiencies and demonstrate effectiveness in the use of its resources. This area was a prime example of where valuable resources were being wasted due to under maintained and badly managed fire alarm systems. In response to a question from Councillor J Vaughan the Clerk advised that the Authority had persistently lobbied for fire and rescue authorities to be granted the power to levy a charge for responding to repeated false alarms from AFAs. Despite numerous requests, the latest of which was at the end of last year in response to a consultation exercise by the WAG on proposals to extend the Fire and Rescue Services (Charging) (Wales) Order 2006, this power was yet to be granted. In the meantime, meetings were underway with health authorities' representatives in an attempt to reduce the numbers of these types of calls from their establishments. But, as there were no financial incentives or gains to be realised by the authorities for reducing the number of false alarms from AFAs, the matter would not be high on their list of priorities. The Vice-Chairman undertook to raise the matter of permitting fire and rescue authorities to levy charges for responding to repeated false alarms from AFAs at the Community Fire Safety Committee's (CFSC) next meeting in February.

The Assistant Chief Officer (Finance and Procurement) warned members that the PI relating to the payment of invoices, which was already well below target, would show a further reduction in the number paid in under 30 days in the near future as the recording method for this PI was in the process of being changed to

a more accurate system. In the longer term this change would facilitate better performance in this area.

The Authority's performance in relation to sickness absences, although still above the set targets, was showing an improvement on last year's figures. In reply to a question from Councillor D Barratt on whether there was a PI recording the number of personnel currently on suspension, officers advised that no such indicator existed and that it would be impossible to report information of that nature under Part I business. Members were informed that they could seek this information privately from officers. It was:

Resolved: - *to note the contents of the performance monitoring report and that correspondence be sent to the Welsh Assembly Government seeking it to expedite publishing its decision and its response to the issues raised in the recent consultation on proposals to extend the powers of the Fire and Rescue Services (Charging) (Wales) Order 2006.*

12a) Smoke/Fire Alarms in Dwelling Fires

The Assistant Chief Officer (Finance and Procurement) introduced her report (previously circulated) which provided members with a breakdown of the number of smoke alarms fitted and activated according to the tenure of dwellings where fires had occurred per unitary authority area, as requested by the Panel at its meeting on 21st September 2006. She explained that the report only gave details of properties to which the Service had been mobilised. Unfortunately there was no way of differentiating between owner occupier properties or dwellings that were rented on a private let basis. The Assistant Chief Officer (Finance and Procurement) then proceeded to detail the statistics contained in the report to members. Responding to the information presented the Vice-Chairman expressed his regret and concern that his own local authority, Wrexham County Borough Council, had recorded the highest number of local authority owned dwellings where no working smoke/fire alarms were fitted. According to Councillor George this was particularly disappointing and surprising as he had been assured by local authority officials a few years previously that all Wrexham County Borough Council properties had been fitted with hard-wired alarms. Upon receipt of this information he had contacted council officials with a view to having this unacceptable situation urgently rectified. Councillor George felt that there were lessons to be learnt from the Wrexham scenario for both local authorities and the Service: if similar situations arose in future County Safety Managers should, as a matter of urgency, contact the relevant local authority's housing department and inform them of any such shortcomings. The Vice-Chairman was firmly of the view that multi-agency working had its part to play in ensuring that working alarms were fitted in all domestic properties. Elected members also needed to shoulder their responsibilities in this area and in delivering community fire safety to communities. Councillor George proposed that the Authority should appoint "Community Fire Safety Champions" from amongst its membership, per unitary authority area, to

promote fire safety issues within his/her own local authority and to act as a link between their authority and the Fire and Rescue Authority.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer welcomed the Vice-Chairman's proposal. He was of the view that having advocates operating within each local authority would assist the Service in its attempt to reduce the increasing number of fire fatalities. It would also present the Service with a point of entry into various local government departments, such as Social Services, who could then assist with gaining access to vulnerable individuals and groups. Following a discussion the proposal was seconded and it was:

Resolved: -

- i that Community Fire Safety Champions be appointed from amongst Fire and Rescue Authority members, per unitary Authority area, to promote community fire safety issues within their own local authority and to act as ambassadors on safety issues between the Fire and Rescue Authority and their own local authority and vice-versa;*
- ii that members advise the Chairman of their nominations by 2nd February 2007; and*
- iii that, following confirmation of the nominations, a letter be sent to the constituent authorities informing them of the appointments.*

Members were reminded by the Chief Fire Officer that every Authority member had his/her part to play in community fire safety issues, not only the ones that would be appointed as 'champions'.

13) Extensions of Sick Pay

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer introduced his report (previously circulated) informing members of the decisions taken by the Chief Fire Officer, following consultation with the Chairman, in respect of the granting of extensions of sick pay. He explained that the report, which was a standing agenda item, was self-explanatory and members:

Resolved: - *to note the report*

14) Proposed Visit to the Fire Service College

Following the notice of motion discussed at the Authority's meeting on 18th December 2006 and the subsequent resolution that a one-day visit be arranged for all interested Authority members to the Fire Service College at Moreton-in-Marsh, members were advised by the Member Liaison Officer that 21 members had so far registered an interest, diaries permitting, to participate in a visit. The Service's Development Manager then informed members that he had spoken to the College authorities regarding the arrangements for the visit. They had undertaken to reply to him shortly with proposed dates. He then gave members a summary of the proposed itinerary.

15) Urgent Matters

None.

16) Date(s) of future meetings

Following a discussion members deferred a decision on the date for the Panel's next meeting until the RRP Working Group's meeting on Tuesday 30th January 2007. They felt that it would become clearer at that meeting when the Panel would need to convene in order to formulate its recommendations in relation to proposals for the 2008/09 RRP for submission to the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting on 19th March 2007.

11.50am: the meeting adjourned at this point and reconvened at 12 noon. Councillor M Williams left the meeting at this juncture.

The Chairman informed members that it was recommended that the remaining items of business on the meeting's agenda be discussed without the public or 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 exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 8, 9 and 10 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972.

PART II

17) Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006

Following advice from the Treasurer this item of business had been withdrawn from the current business agenda and would be discussed at a future meeting.

18) Review of Retained Duty System and Part-time Community Fire Safety Practitioners

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer introduced his report (previously circulated) seeking members' approval for proposed changes to the manner in which the Service delivered its Community Fire Safety (CFS) activities and how the proposed changes would impact on the current Retained Duty System (RDS) and part-time CFS Practitioners. He explained that the report included information on the current arrangements, the requirements under the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) for all firefighters to have an involvement in delivering community fire safety and the reasons why officers felt that a change in service delivery methods was required. Listed in the report were three options on how community fire safety activities could be delivered in future. The costs, risks and advantages for each option had been included for members'

information and extensive legal advice in employment law had been sought and received.

Officers answered members' queries in relation to the legal advice received, possible impact of the current local government evaluation exercise and the options detailed in the report. Following a discussion on possible budgetary pressures if one of the options was approved as drafted in the report this option was slightly amended before being proposed and seconded. Officers were also requested to ensure that, if the amended option was carried, sufficient funding would be available within the budget to fully finance this option. Members were also of the view that the final decision on the matter should rest with the Fire and Rescue Authority, therefore the Panel should only make recommendations in relation to the proposals.

An amendment to the above proposal, that discussion on this subject be deferred until the Risk Reduction Plan Working Group's meeting on 30th January 2007, was tabled and seconded. On being put to the vote the amendment was lost. Subsequently the revised recommendation was voted upon and by a majority it was:

Resolved: - *to note the contents of the report and acknowledge that Community Fire Safety is the core responsibility of all firefighters and to recommend to the Fire and Rescue Authority at its meeting on 19th March 2007:*

- i that following the review undertaken of the Retained Duty System and Part-Time Community Fire Safety Practitioners activities that, option 3 should be adopted;*
- ii that, if required, any redundancy payments be paid as per the statutory formula based on actual weekly pay in respect of termination on the grounds of efficiencies; and*
- iii that five full-time personnel be employed under the Green Book Conditions of Service to undertake Home Fire Safety Checks.*

19) Location of Secondary Control

The Chief Fire Officer introduced his confidential report and attachments (previously circulated) seeking the Panel, following consideration of all the information, to determine the future location of the Service's Secondary Control facility. Panel members were informed by the Chief Fire Officer that the report put into context the issues detailed in the comprehensive appendices that were attached to it. The Chief Fire Officer and the Fire Control Manager proceeded to detail the contents of the report and its appendices and both answered members' questions accordingly. The questions raised covered financial issues, current fallback arrangements, joint/collaborative working, resilience and contractual liabilities. During the discussion on this item of business copies of a letter from the WAG's Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration to the Chairman, dated 15th January 2007, reiterating her support and resolve to see a co-located emergency services control room for North Wales were distributed to all present. Following a discussion members:

Resolved: - that

- i work on the Firelink project proceeds on the basis of the primary Control being located at Crud y Dderwen and the secondary Control at the Rhyl site;*
- ii Airwave is notified of this change as soon as is practicable, but in any event before 1st April 2007;*
- iii the Chief Fire Officer continues to pursue the tri-service option as the optimum arrangement for long-term operational efficiency; and*
- iv a letter be sent to all Fire and Rescue Authority members notifying them of these decisions.*

1.10pm Councillor J Vaughan left the meeting at this juncture.

20) Update on Capital Projects

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Support) introduced his customary report (previously circulated) updating members on the Facilities Management Department's capital programme. It was:

Resolved: - to note the contents of the report

Meeting concluded at 1.15pm.