

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held on Monday 17th March 2008 at Bodlondeb, Conwy. Meeting commenced at 10.30am.

Present:

Councillor

T Roberts (Chairman)

P C Evans JP
W E Jones
J A MacLennan
J M Vaughan
G C Evans
S Frobisher
G Williams
D Barratt
D Clayton
E F Evans
R G Hampson
C Shone
M Griffith
E Morgan Jones
W T Owen
G O Williams
G M Craddock
N S Colbourne
M Williams
J A Roberts
W T Roberts

Representing

Gwynedd Council

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
Flintshire County Council
Flintshire County Council
Flintshire 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

Also present:

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); I R Miller (Clerk to the Authority); S Forrest (Accountant, Treasurer's Department, Conwy County Borough Council); C Enness (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); C Hanks (Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Service Support); D Docx (Assistant Chief Officer, Finance and Procurement); W A Murphy (Senior Operations Manager); K Hughes (Senior Fire Safety Manager); G Brandrick (Service Development Manager); R Fairhead (Community Fire Safety Manager); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager) and Rh Evans (Member Liaison Officer).

PART I

1) Apologies

Councillor

Representing

E C George (Vice-Chairman)	Wrexham County Borough Council
J A Smith	Denbighshire County Council
J Ovens	Flintshire County Council
P M Shone	Wrexham County Borough Council
W J Chorlton	Ynys Môn County Council
K W Finch	Treasurer to the Authority
P S Claydon	Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery)

The Chairman extended a welcome to Mr C Bretherton-Watt, Chairman of the Authority's Standards Committee, who was attending the meeting as an observer.

2) Notice of Urgent Matters

The Chairman advised that no items had been submitted to either the Clerk or him for consideration.

3) Announcements

Prior to the Chairman making his announcements the Deputy Chief Fire Officer briefed members on the following matters:

Domestic Fire Safety Legislative Competence Order (LCO): this proposed LCO had moved a step closer lately with the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales' 'Proposed Domestic Fire Safety LCO Committee'. This Committee comprising of five members, three of whom were North Wales AMs, would be responsible for scrutinising and receiving representations in relation the Draft Order recently published by the Privy Council. Ms Ann Jones AM - the LCO's sponsor, the Welsh Fire and Rescue Services and the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) were all scheduled to give their evidence to the Committee on 8th April 2008. According to the current legislative timetable the Committee was expected to conclude its evidence gathering by the end of April. It was then anticipated that the Draft LCO would be presented to a Plenary session of the Assembly before mid June. Once Plenary approved the Draft Order it would pass to the Secretary of State for Wales for presentation to the UK Parliament for it to sanction the necessary transfer of powers. In reply to a question the Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed that all three Welsh fire and rescue authorities were fully committed to the principles of this LCO. However, it had been North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority that had been the lead Authority advising Ms Ann Jones AM on the issues pertinent to the LCO's objectives. If the LCO was

eventually approved and the powers to make the changes to legislation were passed to the National Assembly it would be a landmark achievement for North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority. The Chief Fire Officer paid tribute to the Deputy Chief Fire Officer's assiduous work and his personal commitment to this LCO. If the objectives of this LCO came to fruition Wales would be leading the way by becoming the first area in the UK where the fitting of domestic sprinkler systems in new residential premises was mandatory. The Chairman also thanked the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and his team for all their work and efforts on this project.

Corporate Health Award: the Deputy Chief Fire Officer informed members that following an assessment which took place in February 2008 the Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG's) Silver Standard Corporate Health Award, which the Service had been awarded in February 2007, had been upgraded to a Gold Standard Award. The Corporate Health Standard recognised the contribution made by an organisation to enhance the health and well-being of its personnel. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer explained that nine areas of the Service's work had formed part of the Award's assessment process. Following the assessment, evaluators had recommended that the Service should press ahead with a bid to further upgrade the award to a Platinum Award within twelve months. It had been decided that the Rhyl 1st Project would be used as the foundation for the Service's bid for the Platinum Award. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer thanked the Corporate Health Project Team led by Helen Angel for their hard work in securing the Gold Award.

10.40am: Councillor S Frobisher entered the meeting at this juncture.

Following the above announcements the Chairman invited Mr John Purser, a member of the Operational Intelligence Task Group, to brief members on the work of this recently established Task Group. He explained that the Group had been tasked with gathering information on the risks that exist across the North Wales area. Over the coming weeks the Group would be contacting all unitary authorities requesting information about sites and areas of risks within their locality. Mr Purser explained that the Group may call upon the Community Safety Champions to assist them in this work.

The Chairman:

- i. requested members who had not yet signed the 'Interim Code of Conduct' declaration to do so before leaving the meeting;
- ii. extended the Authority's congratulations to Deputy Chief Fire Officer Chris Enness on being appointed the new Deputy Chief Fire Officer of Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service. He paid tribute to the significant contribution Mr Enness had made to the work of the Service and the Authority in North Wales Fire since his appointment in 2004. Members and officers thanked him for all his efforts and wished him well in his new post;

- iii. congratulated Mr Nigel Roberts, Watch Manager at Corwen, on being awarded the MBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours List;
- iv. congratulated Mr Alyn Edwards, County Safety Manager for Denbighshire, on being presented with an award which recognised his good work in promoting partnership working and making Denbighshire a safer place by Denbighshire Community Safety Partnership (CSP);
- v. congratulated all award recipients honoured at the Service's recent Community Awards Ball;
- vi. conveyed the Authority's best wishes to the Service's Senior Fire Safety Manager, Mr Kevin Hughes, who was due to retire in May. He thanked him for his commitment and loyal service, the majority of which had been served with Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service. He joined North Wales Fire and Rescue Service in May 2003 as the Service's Training and Development Manager. Latterly, he had been the Service's Senior Fire Safety Manager. Members and officers thanked him for his service and wished him and his family health and happiness for the future;
- vii. conveyed the Authority's condolences to Councillors J M Vaughan and G O Williams, both of whom had lost close relatives recently; and
- viii. informed members that an induction day for new and returning Authority members would be held on Wednesday, 11th June 2008 at St. Asaph. The first meeting of the new Authority would be held at 11am on Monday, 16th June 2008 at Bodlondeb, Conwy. A short training session would be held prior to the commencement of this meeting.

4) Minutes

The following minutes were submitted:

- i. Extraordinary Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held on 11th December 2007
- ii. Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held on 17th December 2007

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

The following minutes were submitted for information purposes:

- iii. Executive Panel meeting held on 15th November 2007
- iv. Executive Panel 5th February 2008
- v. Standards Committee 15th February 2008
- vi. Advisory Panel 25th February 2008
- vii. Advisory Panel 3rd March 2008

5) Matters Arising

No items arose from the minutes submitted.

6) Chairman's Report

The Chairman introduced his report (previously circulated) which provided members with a brief update on the meetings and events attended by him in his capacity as Chairman, and in his absence by the Vice-Chairman, since the Authority's last meeting on 17th December 2007. Members were informed that the 'Working Together: Better Industrial Relations for a Better Fire Service' seminar in London and the 'Innovations – Flexible Working in the Fire and Rescue Service' conference at Leicester had both been extremely informative events. The memorial service at Coventry Cathedral to the four Warwickshire firefighters who lost their lives at the Atherstone-on-Stour fire had been a particularly poignant event. Members were informed that it had become apparent during the Wales Fire and Rescue Service Liaison Group (WF&RSLG) meeting on 19th February that the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) did not have any additional funding available to offer fire and rescue authorities. Therefore, the Chair and Vice-Chair had decided not to pursue the Authority's proposed lobby of the WAG for additional funding for 2008/09. However, the WAG's Minister for Social Justice and Local Government had indicated that the WAG would ensure that funding would be available for Community Fire Safety (CFS) work for the next three years. With a view to assisting authorities with their business planning he had given an assurance that the processes for the award and distribution of this funding would be reviewed and improved. The Minister had also given WF&RSLG members a pledge that, if they had a specific project planned which required additional funding, he would be willing to listen to their representations for additional resources.

Members were informed by the Chairman that he had been particularly impressed with the facilities on offer at the venue chosen for this year's Young Firefighters' Association (YFA) Inter-Branch Competition. He also advised members that he would be seeking sponsorship from the Authority towards the costs of medals and trophies for those taking part.

In reply to a question from Councillor S Frobisher, on whether schoolchildren in other local authority areas apart from Denbighshire benefited from road safety roadshows, such as the one staged at Llysfasi on 7th March 2008, officers advised that discussions were already underway with other unitary authorities with a view to establishing similar events across North Wales. Councillor Frobisher requested that the Authority's gratitude to Denbighshire County Safety Office staff for organising and staging this excellent event be recorded and communicated to all those involved with the arrangements. It was:

Resolved: - to note the information contained in the report and that a message be sent to Denbighshire County Safety Office staff congratulating them on another excellent Road Safety Roadshow event and thanking them for all their efforts in organising and staging the demonstrations.

7) Approval of Proposals for Inclusion in the Draft Risk Reduction Plan 2009/10

The Assistant Chief Officer (Finance and Procurement) introduced her report (previously circulated) which presented members with a list of items which the Executive Panel was recommending that the Authority should include in its Risk Reduction Plan (RRP) draft Action Plan for 2009/10. Members were advised by the Assistant Chief Officer (Finance and Procurement) that the RRP Working Group had concluded that the present Authority, ahead of the local authority elections on 1st May 2008, should agree on the proposals to be included in the RRP draft Action Plan 2009/10. These proposals would be incorporated into a draft Action Plan and presented to the 'new' Authority at its meeting on 16th June 2008, for approval to go out for public consultation. Since Christmas the RRP Working Group had met three times to discuss proposals that could be included in the draft Action Plan. On the 6th March 2008 the Executive Panel had received and discussed the Working Group's proposals and formulated a recommendation in relation to the proposals put forward. The Assistant Chief Officer (Finance and Procurement) proceeded to detail the four proposals submitted which were listed in the report. She explained that the final proposal, because it prepared the ground for an all encompassing review of the Service and its ability to respond to current and future risks in North Wales, lay over and above the other three proposals. If approved, this proposal would form the basis of the next full RRP, which the Authority was obliged to produce for 2010/11. No fundamental review of the Service had been undertaken since its establishment in 1996, therefore a wide-ranging review was long overdue. Members:

Resolved: -

- i. to note the contents of the report;***
- ii. to sanction the Executive Panel's recommendation to include the four proposals listed in the report in the draft Action Plan that would be presented to the Authority at its June 2008 meeting for approval to go out to public consultation; and***
- iii. in the meantime, proceed to initiate an informal discussion on the proposals through officials at the Welsh Assembly Government.***

8) Provisional Outturn 2007/08

In the Treasurer's absence the Service's Accountant presented his report (previously circulated) which provided members with the estimated provisional outturn figure for the 2007/08 financial year. She explained that it was predicted, subject to no spate conditions or major incidents before the end of the financial year, that the Authority would incur an underspend of approximately £23,121 against its budget for 2007/08. The Accountant drew members' attention to the 'Variances to Budget' listed in the report and explained the reasons behind these variances. It was:

Resolved: - to note that currently the underspend was estimated to be £23,121 and that any underspend available at the end of the financial year be invested to fund further Community Fire Safety work.

9) Provisional Capital Outturn 2007/08

The Chairman informed members that it had transpired since the publication and circulation of the business agenda that the information contained in this report fell into a category which excluded it from disclosure. Therefore the discussion on the report would take place at the commencement of Part II business under business item 19a.

10) Prudential Indicators, Treasury Management and Minimum Revenue Provision Statement

The Accountant introduced the Treasurer's report and appendices (previously circulated) presenting members with the Authority's Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Strategy for 2008/09 and seeking their approval for the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement. She explained to members that under normal circumstances this report would have been presented to them at the Authority's December meeting, along with the draft budget. However, due to the complexity of the budget setting process for 2008/09 and the consequential constraints on officers' time, the presentation of the report had been delayed until the current meeting. The Accountant drew members' attention to the information in the report and detailed the background to the MRP Statement and the reason why they were being asked to approve the Policy Statement, attached as Appendix C, at the present meeting. Members:

Resolved: - to approve

- i. the Prudential Indicators set out in Appendix A to the report;***
- ii. the Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Plan for 2008/09 set out in Appendix B to the report; and***
- iii. the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy statement in Appendix C to the report.***

11) Annual Report of the Standards Committee

The Clerk introduced his report (previously circulated) which presented the Authority with the Annual Report of its Standards Committee. He explained that, as a matter of good corporate governance, the Standards Committee submitted an annual report to the Authority detailing the business it had transacted during the preceding twelve months. The Clerk proceeded to explain that, as the Chairman of the Standards Committee was present as an observer at the current meeting, paragraph 12 of the report would need to be amended accordingly. It was:

Resolved: - to receive the Standards Committee's Annual Report.

12) Proposed Amendments to Standing Orders

The Clerk introduced his report and annex (previously circulated) which detailed a number of proposed amendments to the Authority's Standing Orders. He explained that the need to revise the Standing Orders stemmed from the Authority's decision to increase the number of independent members serving on its Standards Committee from 3 to 4. Whilst trawling through the Standing Orders it had also become evident that a number of other amendments, primarily to update references to legislation, were also required. For ease of reference the required amendments were listed in the annex to the report. The Clerk thanked the Member Liaison Officer for reading through the Standing Orders and noting the required amendments. He explained that, in accordance with the Standing Orders, if the proposed amendments were moved and seconded at the current meeting, any debate and subsequent vote upon the amendments would stand adjourned until the Authority's next meeting in June.

The Clerk then proceeded to advise members that he had recently looked at whether the membership size of the Authority was actually proportionate to the size of the electorate of each county. An initial analysis suggested that this was not the case. Members were advised that an Authority of 22 members would present a more proportionate reflection of the number of electors in the area. Members were advised that a review of the size of the Authority and consequentially the allocation of seats to each council was a matter which had not been re-examined since the Authority's establishment, and was therefore long overdue. The Clerk informed members that such a review could be initiated at any time. However, he suggested that it may be appropriate to progress the review during 2008 in the context of the Authority's response to the Wales Audit Office's (WAO) report on member engagement and scrutiny arrangements, the publication of which was imminent. He also advised that if the WAO's report concluded that more formal scrutiny arrangements should be established this may involve a review of Standing Order 12 and other Standing Orders. It could also entail a review of the size of the Executive Panel and how seats on the Panel were allocated. Members:

Resolved: -

- i. to note the amendments to the Standing Orders, listed in the annex to the report, and that a debate and vote upon the amendments be adjourned until the Authority's next business meeting in June 2008; and***
- ii. that a review of the size of the Authority, including the allocation of seats to each council, be undertaken during 2008 with any changes required being progressed in conjunction with the recommendations that emanate from the WAO's report on member engagement and scrutiny .***

13) Consultation by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales

The Clerk introduced his report (previously circulated) which informed members of the establishment of the Remuneration Panel for Wales and its implications for fire and rescue authorities. He explained that, although the Panel's powers did not directly extend to determining the level of allowances payable to members of fire and rescue authorities, it had however invited representations from fire and rescue authorities to its initial consultation exercise which would result in the publication of its 'Initial Report'. The Clerk drew members' attention to Appendix 1 of his report which contained a draft response for members' consideration and explained the points raised in the proposed response. Councillor D Barratt enquired whether it would be appropriate to raise the issue of the inequality that presently exists between the level of allowances paid to members of police authorities in comparison to the level of allowances paid to members of fire and rescue authorities, and also the level of allowances paid to chairs of local authority scrutiny committees. The Clerk confirmed that, whilst the regulations that governed police authorities were different to the ones that governed fire and rescue authorities, there was nothing preventing the Authority from raising both matters in its representations to the Panel. Members:

Resolved: -

- i. to note the information provided;***
- ii. to approve the response in Appendix 1 as drafted pending the inclusion of a reference to the disparity that currently exists between the levels of allowances paid to Fire and Rescue Authority members in comparison to allowances paid to members of Police Authorities and seeking the Panel, when formulating its recommendations on the maximum level of allowances for chairs of scrutiny and other committees in councils, to have regard to the level of responsibility and activity of chairs and vice-chairs of Fire Authorities whose maximum allowances are specified by regulations; and***
- iii. that, following the publication of the Independent Remuneration Panel's 'Initial Report' and dependent upon its recommendations, the Authority considers awarding a Co-optee's Allowance to the independent members of its Standards Committee and the level of the allowance payable.***

14) Champions Working Group Update

The Member Liaison Officer introduced her and the Vice-Chairman's customary joint report (previously circulated) which informed members of the work of the Community Safety and Member Support and Development Champions Working Group since the Authority's last meeting. Members were briefed on the report's contents and advised that the Working Group, at its meeting on 16th January 2008, having considered a self-assessment against the Charter's criteria, was recommending that the Authority adopt a statement underlining its commitment to member support and development and also, at the current meeting,

undertake to put itself forward for Charter accreditation by signing the 'Statement of Intent'. Councillor J A MacLennan enquired whether the 'modernised constitutional arrangements' referred to in the 'Statement of Intent' declaration meant that the Authority would need to revise its constitutional arrangements and adopt a new constitution. Officers advised that they interpreted this clause to mean that the Authority, as a matter of course, kept its governance arrangements under regular review. For the purpose of dealing with its business both effectively and efficiently the Authority was continuously reviewing and amending its Standing Orders and the terms of references of its committees as and when the need arose. Members:

Resolved: -

- i. to note the information provided;***
- ii. that North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority is committed to creating an environment of learning and development so as to equip members with the necessary level of skills and understanding to operate efficiently and effectively; and***
- iii. authorised the Chairman to sign the Statement of Intent to apply for the basic level of the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development – an Approach for Fire and Rescue Authorities for submission to the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and that officers proceed to compile the evidence portfolio in readiness for submission to the Association in support of its bid.***

15) Temporary Delegation of Powers Before the Annual Meeting

The Clerk introduced his report (previously circulated) seeking the Authority to delegate its powers from the end of office of the present members of the Fire Authority to the first meeting of the Fire Authority after the elections. He explained that this was the customary report, presented to members every four years at the last meeting before the local authority elections, for the purpose of ensuring that the Authority's work continued in the interregnum between the end of the current Authority and the start of the new Authority. Members:

Resolved: - ***that all the powers of the Fire Authority, its committees and its office holders be delegated to:***

- i. the Chief Fire Officer, in consultation with the Clerk and Treasurer, for the period from 5th May 2008 until either the date on which the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Fire Authority elected in June 2007 are reappointed to the Fire Authority or the first meeting of the Fire Authority on 16th June 2008 if neither of them is so reappointed, whichever date is the earlier;***
- ii. the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Fire Authority if one or both of them are reappointed to the Fire Authority from the date on which they are so reappointed until the first meeting of the Fire Authority on 16 June 2008.***

- iii. these delegations shall apply only so far as such powers relate to decisions that cannot reasonably be delayed until the date of that first meeting.**

16) Arson Reduction Team: School Target Hardening Overview

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer introduced his report (previously circulated) which informed members of the work undertaken by the North Wales Arson Reduction Team (ART) in assisting schools to gain funding from the WAG with a view to safeguarding them from arson attacks. Members of the ART were present at the meeting and were introduced to members. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer detailed the contents of his report, including the process followed in determining which schools should be given priority for the purpose of submitting bids for WAG funding and the outcomes of those bids. Appendix 1 to the report summarised the amounts of funding allocated towards various arson reduction projects in schools across North Wales during the 2007/08 and the type of intervention work this money had funded. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that, as a result of excellent collaborative working on the part of the ART, Service personnel at county level and the local education authorities, the substantial amounts of funding quoted in the report had been secured. Replying to members' questions officers advised that, to date, no money had been allocated towards projects to reduce incidents of school arson on Anglesey as the latest data indicated that this problem was not prevalent on the island. Members were assured that schools which were wholly or partly Private Finance Initiative (PFI) establishments were not treated any differently to local authority establishments when bids for funding were compiled and submitted, and that both fencing and close circuit television (CCTV) were as effective as one another in mitigating the risk of arson. Local circumstances would determine which method would be suitable and most effective for each individual school. Responding to an enquiry on why the amount allocated under this scheme for schools in Gwynedd was not shown, the Clerk advised that this was for confidentiality purposes and with a view to safeguarding the tendering process, hence the reason for showing the overall totals as greater than (>) amounts. Members were advised that the ART personnel would be available at the end of the meeting to answer members' questions. It was:

Resolved: - to note the report.

17) World Firefighter Games 2008

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer introduced his report (previously circulated) informing members of an international event which would, during August and September this year, be hosted by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service. Even though Merseyside would be the host Service, some of the Games' organised activities would be staged in North Wales. Members were briefed on the history of the World Firefighter Games and on the anticipated level of interest in the Games. Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service had invited the Games to Liverpool to form part of the city's celebrations as the European Capital of Culture 2008.

The Games' Kayaking, Sea Angling, Raft Race and Mountain Biking events would be held at various venues across Denbighshire in late August and early September. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer informed members that North Wales Fire and Rescue Service would be supporting Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service with the Games in a number of ways, including providing demonstrations by the Service's Water Rescue and Rope Rescue Teams. In addition, Service personnel would be entering various individual and team competitions. The competitions being staged in North Wales would provide the Service with an excellent opportunity to promote its work and to communicate its key messages to a wide audience. Members were urged by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer to support the Games by attending various events. Members:

Resolved: - to note the information.

18) Informative

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Support) presented members with the latest issue of the 'Informative' magazine. The Chairman thanked officers for another excellent publication. Members:

Resolved: - to accept the publication

19) Urgent Matters

None

The Chairman informed members that it was recommended that the following 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 12 and/or 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972.

PART II

The following report had been excluded from disclosure under paragraph 14 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

19a) Provisional Capital Outturn 2007/08

The Assistant Chief Officer (Finance and Procurement) introduced her report and appendix (previously circulated) advising members of the estimated outturn on capital expenditure in relation to the Authority's estate for the 2007/08 financial year. She explained that the budget allocations for a number of the projects

listed in the report had been set at the end of 2006. However, since then construction costs had increased substantially and the Authority had decided that the installation of sprinkler systems should become mandatory in all refurbishment projects. Consequently, the final cost of a number of these projects would now exceed the original budget allocation and therefore some would need be referred back to the Authority for approval to proceed with the work. At present the work required at Buckley Fire Station fell into this category. Hence, as per Financial Regulation 8.5, the reason the Authority's permission was being sought for resources set-aside for another project, and which would not be required for their original purpose during the current financial year, to be used to offset the additional costs of the Buckley Fire Station Modernisation and Compliance Works. If this request was granted it would enable the necessary work to be completed during the coming financial year.

In relation to the Rhyl 1st Community Fire Station Project members were advised that the Authority had recently received notification from the WAG's Department for the Economy and Transport that it had awarded the project £250K from its Town and Environmental Improvement Grant Scheme. This was £100K more than originally anticipated. In relation to the proposed capital project at Nefyn Fire Station, Councillor M Griffith informed the Authority that Gwynedd Council had recently granted the required planning permission. Members:

Resolved: -

- i. to note the information provided in relation to the projected expenditure on the Authority's capital programme for its estate in 2007/08; and***
- ii. approve that the budget allocation for the work required at Buckley Fire Station be increased by £93K from the monies set-aside for 2007/08 for the Wrexham Fire Station Relocation Project and which would not be required for that purpose in the current financial year.***

The following report had been excluded from disclosure under paragraphs 12 and 14 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

20) Statutory Appointments and Service Level Agreements

Prior to the commencement of this business item Councillor P C Evans requested guidance from the Clerk on whether representatives from the constituent authorities which had interests in the statutory appointments and the various service level agreements should declare those interests. The Clerk advised that those representatives should declare their interests in the relevant appointments and consider withdrawing from the vote on those particular appointments and agreements.

The Chief Fire Officer then proceeded to introduce his report (previously circulated) which provided members with information relating to the review

undertaken by the Executive Panel of the statutory appointments and the service level agreements. He summarised the review process, the outcomes of the reviews and the resulting recommendations which were being presented to the Authority for approval. It was:

Resolved: - to note the information provided in relation to the Statutory Appointments and Service Level Agreements, including the negotiated terms and conditions, and to ratify the Executive Panel's recommendation that for a four year period with effect from 1st April 2008:

- i. the statutory appointment of Treasurer to the Fire Authority and the provision of its Financial Services remain with Conwy County Borough Council;***
- ii. subject to the conclusion of negotiations, that Colin Everett be appointed to the role of Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority;***
- iii. Conwy County Borough Council be charged with the provision of legal services to the Authority; and***
- iv. the service level agreement for the provision of pension services covering the Firefighters Pension Scheme, the New Firefighters Pension Scheme and the Local Government Pension Scheme remains with Flintshire County Council.***

Conwy County Borough Council representatives, Councillors P C Evans, W E Jones, J A MacLennan and J M Vaughan declared an interest in the statutory appointment of Treasurer to the Authority and the service level agreements for the provision of Financial Services and Legal Services to the Authority and withdrew from the discussion and votes on the appointment and the service level agreements. Likewise, Flintshire County Council representatives, Councillors D Barratt, D Clayton, E F Evans, R G Hampson and C Shone, declared an interest in the statutory appointment of Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority and the service level agreement for the provision of Pension Services to the Authority. Accordingly they also did not take part in the discussion and the vote on the appointment and the agreement.

The following report had been excluded from disclosure under paragraph 12 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

21) Appointment of an Independent Member to Serve on the Authority's Standards Committee

The Clerk introduced his report (previously circulated) seeking the Authority to appoint an additional independent member to serve on its Standards Committee. He briefed members on the background to the appointment and on the recruitment process undertaken to fill the vacancy, which was as laid down in the Regulations that govern standards committees. The Clerk explained the advice contained in the report and the recommendation formulated by the Advisory Panel established to carry out the selection and interview processes in relation to the appointment. Members:

Resolved: - to

- i. note the contents of the report and the Advisory Panel's recommendation; and***
- ii. approve the appointment of Mr Samindre Soysa to serve as an independent member on the Authority's Standards Committee for a term of office of five years commencing on 1st April 2008.***

Following the conclusion of the agenda business the Chairman opened the final part of the meeting to the Press and public.

PART I

Prior to drawing the meeting to a close the Chairman wished all members well in the forthcoming local authority elections on 1st May 2008 and thanked everyone for their contribution to the Authority's work over the past four years. He wished those members who would not be seeking re-election all the very best for the future.

The Chairman informed all present that the current meeting marked the end of an era for the Authority as, since its establishment in 1996 and even before then, the Chief Executive and other officers from Denbighshire County Council had been involved with the governance arrangements of the Authority. The 1995 Combination Order which established the Authority actually stipulated that the Chief Executive of Denbighshire County Council would be responsible for convening the first meeting of the Authority. From then until 31st March 2008 the role of Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority had been carried out by the Chief Executive of Denbighshire County Council.

Since 1st February 2002 this position had been held by Mr Ian Miller. Regrettably, he had decided not to apply for re-appointment when his current contract expired on 31st March 2008. Therefore, the current meeting would be the last meeting of the full Fire and Rescue Authority which he would be attending in his role as Clerk and Monitoring Officer. The Chairman thanked Mr Miller for his commitment, dedication and tireless work on behalf of the Authority and on behalf of members throughout the last six years. He paid tribute to his diligent efforts in safeguarding the Authority's interests and in upholding its good reputation at all times. During his period as Clerk both the Authority and the Service had experienced far greater changes than ever before, mainly due to the introduction of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. The Chairman made particular reference to the work Mr Miller had undertaken during the legislative process leading up to enactment of this Act, including raising the Authority's concerns about various aspects of the proposed draft legislation and their impact on the Authority and on North Wales in general. He had corresponded extensively with MPs and Members of the House of Lords, even to the point of preparing briefs and attending meetings of the Grand Committee in the Upper

House. It had since been widely acknowledged that had it not been for North Wales Fire Authority's interest in the legislation, and in particular Mr Miller's efforts on the Authority's behalf, hardly any scrutiny of the proposed legislation and its impact on Wales would have taken place. Members were reminded by the Chairman that, as Clerk, Mr Miller had campaigned vigorously to secure allowances for fire and rescue authority members and that he was continuing to raise the issue of making these allowances pensionable. Mr Miller's work on behalf of the Authority on these and other matters, due to the attention he gave to detail, had gained the admiration and respect of the other Welsh fire and rescue authorities and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGAs). His knowledge, understanding, and his willingness to assist and advise would be greatly missed. The Chairman asked Mr Miller to convey the Authority's gratitude to Mrs Olwen Williams and other staff within his Department for their courteousness and willingness to assist members and officers at all times. Without doubt, a number of friendships had been forged during the past few years.

The Chairman also thanked Ms Jane Kennedy and Mr Ian Hearle, both of whom had deputised as Monitoring Officers when Mr Miller was unavailable. He also asked Ms Kennedy to convey the Authority's gratitude to her team who had provided legal services to the Authority over the past twelve years.

As a token of the Authority's appreciation of his work and efforts the Chairman presented Mr Miller with a gift and Authority mementos. Gifts and mementos were also presented to Ms Kennedy and Mr Hearle. Members and officers joined the Chairman in thanking the three officers for their work and in wishing them health, happiness and every success for the future.

Mr Miller responded by thanking the Chairman for his kind words and for the gifts. He paid special thanks to his two deputy monitoring officers, Ms Jane Kennedy and Mr Ian Hearle, whose association with the Fire and Rescue Authority stretched back to the very beginning in 1996. Mr Miller thanked past and present Authority office holders whom he had served under, the current Principal Officers and their predecessors and the Member Liaison Officer for all their assistance and support. Mr Miller explained that he had greatly enjoyed his time with the Authority, during which there had been some robust and interesting debates and positive steps on the road to modernisation. Although more challenges lay ahead he was confident that, with the team of officers the Authority had, it would continue to make progress in the future. He concluded by wishing the Authority and everyone associated with it every success for the future.

Meeting concluded at 11.50am.