

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the Executive Panel Meeting of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on 19th July 2010 at Rhyl Community Fire Station. Meeting commenced at 2pm.

PRESENT

Cllr S Frobisher (Chair)	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr A M Jones	Anglesey County Council
Cllr L W Davies	Anglesey County Council
Cllr B Dunn	Flintshire County Council
Cllr G C Evans	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr T Evans	Wrexham County Borough Council
Cllr G James	Flintshire County Council
Cllr P Jeffares	Wrexham County Borough Council
Cllr T Roberts	Gwynedd Council
Cllr W P Roberts	Conwy County Borough Council
Cllr M Thomas	Conwy County Borough Council

ALSO PRESENT:

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); D Docx (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); K Finch (Treasurer); B Davies (Monitoring Officer); C Hanks, P Claydon and R Simmons (Assistant Chief Fire Officers); R Fairhead (Senior Fire Safety Manager); G Griffiths (Senior Operations Manager); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); B Millington (Deputy Corporate Communications Manager); G Jones (Executive Support Manager); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer).

Apologies:

Cllr M LI Davies	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr J V Owen	Anglesey County Council
Cllr W T Owen	Gwynedd Council
C Everett	Clerk to the Authority

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1.1 None.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10TH MAY 2010

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 10th May were approved as a true and correct record.

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 8.5 – ALP – the Chief Fire Officer informed Members that a briefing on the ALP issue had been arranged for 3rd September at Headquarters. This was primarily for non-Executive Members but all Members were welcome to attend.

3.2 10.2 – Wrexham Capital Project - ACFO Hanks informed Members that the outline business case for Wrexham tripartite station had been formally approved by the Minister. However, there had been no further developments with purchasing the land.

4 BUDGET PROSPECTS FOR 2011-12

4.1 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer circulated a copy of a letter received from the WLGA about a proposed strategy for next year's budget and it asked for a response from the Fire and Rescue Service. Members felt that it would be appropriate for the Deputy Chief Fire Officer to respond stating that the grants received by the Fire and Rescue Service were not for discretionary services and were used for statutory duties. The Chief Fire Officer explained that the community safety grants are distributed via the Chief Fire Officers' Association in Wales which ensured that the mechanism was not burdensome.

4.2 The Deputy Chief Officer then went on to discuss the Budget Prospects report presented to the Executive Panel.

4.3 The main inflation factor to be determined was the pay inflation which was difficult to predict as the figure had to be estimated in October/November and the pay award is not decided until July of the following year. Other inflation factors to be considered were fuel and energy costs, however given that they form a relatively small part of the budget they should be met from efficiencies within the Service wherever possible.

4.4 As there were so many uncertainties, it is going to be difficult to work up a budget, therefore it was recommended that the Executive Panel establish a small working group comprising of one Member from each Local Authority to meet regularly over the following months to discuss the budget and to receive new information as and when it was received.

4.5 **RESOLVED to**

- (i) note the budget pressures and prospects noted in the report; and**
- (ii) establish a working group, comprising of Cllr Frobisher, Cllr A M Jones, Cllr B Dunn, Cllr T Evans, Cllr T Roberts and Cllr W P Roberts, to meet regularly over the coming months to consider all possible financial and service options.**

5 ANNUAL STATISTICAL RETURNS 2009/10

5.1 Shân Morris gave Members a short presentation on the statistical returns and how they were collated and submitted to the Assembly. There are 90 statistical returns to be completed which cover all areas of the Service. Figures are collected during April and May and are then checked by WAG statisticians. The statutory figures are also checked by KPMG, the external auditors.

5.2 Following completion of the audit, it had been confirmed that the figures presented were correct and therefore no changes were required to the

Improvement Plan. Members congratulated Shân and the team on this achievement.

5.3 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**

6 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

6.1 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented the performance figures for 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2010 for information.

6.2 Of note was the following:

- slight increase in secondary fires
- fires in non-domestic properties have increased – this is being looked at in more detail
- increase in dwelling fires where a smoke alarm had not operated – officers are analysing these results to determine whether it is a statistical comparability issue between the new Incident Recording System (IRS) and its predecessor the Fire Data Report (FDR) or whether they reflect an actual difference in the types of households attended.

6.3 The Chief Fire Officer reminded Members that there had been five deaths since April, primarily due to losing three lives in a fire at Tŷ'n y Gongl. The Chair informed Members that she had visited the scene at Tŷ'n y Gongl and had written a letter to the Chief Fire Officer congratulating all officers in attendance on their professionalism at such a difficult incident. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the letter had been forwarded to the relevant officers.

6.4 Cllr L W Davies asked about the fires that were restricted to one room, and it was confirmed that this was due to people being more aware of how to prevent fires by keeping doors shut, and also properties having a smoke alarm therefore being able to alert the Service earlier which enabled a quicker attendance at incidents.

6.5 Cllr G C Evans asked about controlled fires and fires within the surrounding areas of factories and storage areas. The Senior Fire Safety Manager confirmed that the Legislation Team and Arson Reduction Team worked together to follow up incidents at factories. The Service asks people who want to light a fire in their garden to inform Control and also offers safety advice, however, there is no legislation to cover this area of work.

6.6 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**

7 RHYL COMMUNITY FIRE STATION

7.1 Kevin Davies, Manager of the Community Fire Station, joined the meeting at this point.

7.2 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented the report which informed Members of the progress to date at Rhyl Community Fire Station. Activities within the station were proving to be meeting the needs of the community and have

helped the Service's aims and objectives and satisfied the original business case. Once it had been decided to renovate the station and turn it into a community fire station, an open day had been held and consultation undertaken with local people to see what they wanted from such a facility.

7.3 It had cost approximately £2.5 million, some of which was funded by WAG grants. It had been an efficient use of resources as it gave members of the public an opportunity to use the station and at the same time receive information about fire safety. The income generated had been used to pay for running the facility. The station can be open until 10pm when required and available 7 days a week if necessary.

7.4 There is tangible evidence of its success due to the high number of referrals for home fire safety checks. However, as well as the HFSC referral, people are taking away an important message.

7.5 Cllr P Jeffares congratulated staff on the success of the community fire station and wished them well for the future. The Chair congratulated Kevin Davies on getting groups into the station and promoting it locally.

7.6 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**

8 WELSH LANGUAGE BOARD MONITORING REPORT

8.1 The paper was presented to seek approval for the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service Welsh Language Scheme Monitoring Report for 2009-10 prior to formal submission to the Welsh Language Board.

8.2 ACFO Hanks explained that the monitoring report detailed the Service's progress towards meeting the targets outlined in the Welsh Language Scheme 2006-2009, recently revised for 2010-13.

8.3 A grant had been received from Welsh Language Board to encourage Welsh speaking employees to act as Champions for the language across the Service to raise awareness of the language and to help those who wanted to practice their Welsh and undertake the level 1 and 2 tests. Passing the level 2 was now a requirement for all new starters with the Service as well as those who wanted a promotion within the Service. A grant had also been received to promote and encourage Welsh/bilingual meetings and this had already started in Gwynedd.

8.4 Cllr L W Davies congratulated the Service on promoting the Welsh language and insisting that every new member of staff and those seeking promotion should pass the level 2 test. Cllr G C Evans reiterated the congratulations but found it difficult to believe that only three people had requested Welsh HFSCs in Flintshire and Wrexham areas.

8.5 **RESOLVED to**
(i) note the progress made in relation to the Welsh Language Scheme;
and

(ii) approve the 2009-10 Monitoring Report prior to formal submission to the Welsh Language Board.

- 9 UNWANTED FIRE SIGNALS GENERATED BY AUTOMATIC FIRE DETECTION SYSTEMS
- 9.1 The report was submitted to provide Members with an overview of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service's model on dealing with Unwanted Fire Signals (UFSs) generated by remotely monitored Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) systems.
- 9.2 The Senior Fire Safety Manager explained that whilst the Oxfordshire model had reduced the number of AFA calls, there had been an increase in 999 calls although this issue had been resolved quickly with local management intervention.
- 9.3 In North Wales, the number of AFAs has reduced through working with local general hospitals and university buildings from which the majority of such calls are received. Although the reduction is pleasing to see, AFAs continue to use up valuable resources and hinder attendance at other incidents. Plans are being developed to have a central investigation team identify the worse performers in order to develop a plan to hopefully reduce the number of AFAs.
- 9.4 It was noted that fire safety officers speak to all new students at the Universities to highlight the dangers and explain what they should do in the event of a fire.
- 9.5 The report stated that the Service had attended 1,646 AFA incidents and the Chief Fire Officer informed Members that as a minimum each incident had cost the Service £200. Therefore, although it was pleasing to see the decrease a lot of money was still being wasted attending these incidents.
- 9.6 **RESOLVED to**
- (i) note the improvements achieved over the last five years; and**
 - (ii) that the Service would continue to work towards maintaining the reduction.**