

## NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the Executive Panel Meeting of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2010 at Fire and Rescue Headquarters, St Asaph . Meeting commenced at 2pm.

### PRESENT

Cllr S Frobisher (Chair)	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr M LI Davies	Denbighshire County Council
Cllr G C Evans	Denbighshire 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); G Griffiths (Senior Fire Safety Manager); G Brandrick (Senior Operations Manager); R Fairhead (Senior Development Manager); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); G Jones (Executive Support Manager); S Forrest (Principal Accountant, Conwy County Borough Council); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer).

### Apologies:

Cllr L W Davies	Anglesey County Council
Cllr B Dunn	Flintshire County Council
Cllr T Evans	Wrexham County Borough Council
Cllr G James	Flintshire 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 19<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2010

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> July were approved as a true and correct record.

### 3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 3.1 – ALP – the Chief Fire Officer informed Members that a briefing on the ALP issue had been held in particular for non-Executive Members on 3<sup>rd</sup> September. At the request of a local MP, he had met with the Chief Fire Officer and received the same briefing on the issue. A final decision will be made at the Fire Authority meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> October.

- 3.2 3.2 – Wrexham Capital Project - ACFO Hanks gave Members an update. Two sites were still available. Another piece of land had been offered by Wrexham County Borough Council and was currently being reviewed for its suitability.
- 4 BUDGET PROSPECTS FOR 2011-12
- 4.1 The report advised Members of the current situation in respect of the 2011/12 budget.
- 4.2 The Panel's Budget Development Working Group met on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2010 and had discussed various options to deal with the budget reduction expected over the coming years. Members had requested officers to work up options based on a 6% reduction over 3 years for their next meeting to be held on 8<sup>th</sup> October.
- 4.3 The Treasurer informed Members that the Assembly was planning for a 3% year on year reduction over the next 3 years and that a 6% reduction over the same time frame might not be adequate.
- 4.4 The Chief Fire Officer explained that a 6% reduction would impact on all areas of the Service. He noted his concern about the term 'frontline' and considered every single member of staff to be front line as they all undertake valuable interdependent functions within the Service.
- 4.5 **RESOLVED to note the update provided and that further information will be available at future meetings.**
- 5 OFFICER COVER REVIEW
- 5.1 ACFO Claydon gave Members a presentation on the officer cover review. The purpose of the officer cover review was to review what roles are required to give operational support. Those that do not require operational skills could be converted to green book terms and conditions; as well as being a more effective way of delivering services, there was also a financial saving to be gained.
- 5.2 The review looked at reducing the number of tactical, operational and strategic officers that were required within the Service. Discussions had been held with all officers affected by the review, as well as the representative bodies, and they had all received the presentation. This information was available for all staff on the Service's intranet.
- 5.3 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**
- 6 RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE AUTHORITY'S DRAFT IMPROVEMENT AND RISK REDUCTION OBJECTIVES FOR 2011-12
- 6.1 The report was presented to inform Members of responses received to the consultation on the Authority's draft improvement objectives and risk reduction plan proposals for 2011-12. Members were also asked to recommend the Improvement and Risk Reduction Plan 2009-12 to the full Fire and Rescue Authority at its meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> October.

- 6.2 The consultation document 'Tell us what you think' had been printed and distributed, and e-mails had been sent informing people that the document was also available electronically on the Authority's website. The document had been sent to a wide range of people and organisations such as AMs/MPs, town and community councils, voluntary sector organisations, libraries and a range of organisations that might be interested in this year's specific RRP topics.
- 6.3 23 written responses had been received from across North Wales and they had been collated and attached to the report submitted to the Panel. It was clear that the public had the financial pressures in mind when responding to the document.
- 6.4 The majority of responses received supported the proposed improvement objectives and the arrangements the Authority proposes to put in place to secure continuous improvement. Some responses sought additional clarification and explanation on the proposals, while others offered suggestions for additional or alternative measures. None directly disagreed with the Authority's proposals, although some expressed views about relative priorities if finances were squeezed.
- 6.5 Cllr M Ll Davies was aware of one community council that had looked at the document and felt that they could only answer 'yes' to the questionnaire, Cllr Davies asked whether the questionnaire needed to be revisited. Cllr G C Evans noted that there were a variety of comments around there being a lack of information and whether more information should be given in future documents. The Chief Fire Officer explained that in previous years people had complained that the document had been too detailed and technical, and that it made it difficult to respond hence the decision to create the yes/no questionnaire.
- 6.6 **RESOLVED to**
- (i) note the responses received to the consultation on draft objectives; and**
  - (ii) in light of the responses received, recommend to the full Fire Authority at its next meeting that the proposed improvement and risk reduction objectives form the basis of the Combined Improvement and Risk Reduction Plan in 2011-12.**

## 7 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

- 7.1 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented the performance figures for the first quarter, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2010, for information.
- 7.2 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer highlighted the following:
- Secondary fires - due to the dry spell in April/May there had been a lot of gorse/grass fires, 790 this year compared to 496 last year. This has had a large impact on the budget and £70,000 more had been paid out, per month, during April and May compared to the average monthly payment.
  - Injuries from accidental fires in dwellings had reduced since last year.

- Fires in dwellings where smoke alarms were present - there were concerns last year that the figure was low, however, this is likely to be due to the change to a new system of recording data. It was therefore pleasing to note that they were back to 60%.

7.3 In response to Cllr M Thomas' question about a reduction in level of calls to student halls and other large buildings, it was confirmed that the Service had been working hard with all hospitals as well as the universities in Bangor and Wrexham. The standard of fire systems in new builds has improved and officers are invited to planning meetings of new builds at an earlier stage to provide advice.

7.4 Cllr G C Evans asked about the increase in gorse/grass fires and whether any work was being done with farmers unions and young farmers clubs. It was confirmed that work is being undertaken with the farmers unions, forestry commission and others with such responsibility to ensure that they have the education to enable them to look after their land in an efficient manner. The three Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales have established a joint project to look at the issue in more detail.

7.5 **RESOLVED to note the information.**

## 8 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

8.1 The report gave Members an opportunity to view the audited Statement of Accounts for 2009-10 before it is presented to the Audit Committee for approval.

8.2 The Treasurer informed Members that changes had been made to the statement following discussion with the Auditors and the statement of accounts was now in line with what was required. He thanked Sandra Forrest and the team for their work in preparing the Statement of Accounts. It was also noted that the Authority had received a good ISA260 report 'Audit of Accounting Statements – Report to Those Charged with Governance' - with no recommendations made by the Auditors. Both documents will be presented to the Audit Committee on 27<sup>th</sup> September.

8.3 **RESOLVED to note the Statement of Accounts for 2009-10 and that they will be approved by the Audit Committee.**

## 9 LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES) MEASURE 2010

9.1 The report was presented to note the Welsh Assembly Government's request for written evidence to assist in its scrutiny of the Local Government (Wales) Measure. The Local Government Measure will make changes intended to strengthen the structures and working of local government in Wales at all levels, and to ensure that local councils reach out to and engage with all sectors of the communities they serve.

9.2 The Monitoring Officer informed Members that the Measure was mainly targeted towards constituent authorities; the Fire and Rescue Authorities are not required to do anything specifically but maybe affected by the changes to the constituent authorities.

- 9.3 It was noted that the Minister can provide statutory guidance on collaboration and scrutiny and that all public bodies would have to abide by that guidance.
- 9.4 **RESOLVED to note the report and that the Clerk will provide a written response by 1<sup>st</sup> October commenting on the possible effects of scrutiny and collaboration on the Fire and Rescue Authority.**