

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 18th October 2010 at Council Chamber, Llangefni, Anglesey. Meeting commenced at 10.30am.

PRESENT

Councillor	Representing
S Frobisher (Chair)	Denbighshire County Council
D Barratt	Flintshire County Council
L W Davies	Anglesey County Council
M LI Davies	Denbighshire County Council
B Dunn	Flintshire County Council
G C Evans	Denbighshire County Council
P C Evans	Conwy County Borough Council
P Jeffares	Wrexham County Borough Council
M Griffith	Gwynedd Council
E M Jones	Gwynedd Council
W Knightly	Conwy County Borough Council
A Minshull	Flintshire County Council
J V Owen	Anglesey County Council
T Roberts	Gwynedd Council
W P Roberts	Conwy County Borough Council
M Thomas	Conwy County Borough Council
G O Williams	Gwynedd Council

Also present:

S A Smith (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); C Everett (Clerk to the Authority); K W Finch (Treasurer to the Authority); D Docx (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); C Hanks, P Claydon and R Simmons (Assistant Chief Fire Officers); R Fairhead (Training and Development Manager); G W Griffiths (Senior Fire Safety Manager); G Brandrick (Senior Operations Manager); L Roberts (Control Manager); S Morris (Corporate Planning Manager); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); C Dingle (Finance Manager); S Forrest (Accountant, Treasurer's Department, Conwy County Borough Council); LI G Jones (Human Resources Manager); S Jones (Equalities Adviser); G Jones (Executive Support Manager); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer) and S Jones (Member Liaison Assistant).

APOLOGIES

Councillor	Representing
B Blackmore	Wrexham County Borough Council
T Evans	Wrexham County Borough Council
E C George	Wrexham County Borough Council
G James	Flintshire County Council
N M Jones	Flintshire County Council
D Mackie	Flintshire County Council
A Tansley	Conwy County Borough Council
G Williams	Denbighshire County Council

Prior to the commencement of business the Chair informed Members that it had been a sad time for the Authority and the Service recently with the passing of former Denbighshire councillor David Jones MBE and Firefighter Derrick Williams from Blaenau Ffestiniog. Members and officers stood in silence as a mark of respect for David Jones and Firefighter Williams.

1 NOTICE OF URGENT MATTERS

- 1.1 The Chair advised that no items had been submitted to the Clerk for consideration.

2 VICE-CHAIR'S POSITION

- 2.1 The Clerk gave Members information about the Vice-Chair's position. A M Jones had been suspended from acting as a councillor for a constitutional matter. The case has no direct bearing on the Authority. A M Jones will return, without prejudice, in December following completion of the four month suspension. The Chair and Clerk had agreed that the Chair would undertake duties as usual and that Members would be asked to deputise if the Chair was unavailable.

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

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21ST JUNE 2010

- 3.1 The English version of the minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held on 21st June 2010 were submitted for approval. There was a printing error on the Welsh version of the minutes and these will be submitted to the next meeting of the Authority for approval.

3.2 **RESOLVED to approve the English version of the minutes as a true and correct record of proceedings.**

4 MATTERS ARISING

- 4.1 There were no matters arising.

5 CHAIR'S REPORT

- 5.1 The Chair's report listed meetings and events attended by Cllr S Frobisher and Cllr A M Jones in their capacity as Chair and Vice-Chair between 21st June and 8th October 2010.

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

6 AERIAL LADDER PLATFORMS (ALPs)

- 6.1 The report was presented to seek a decision by the Authority on whether to maintain the attendance standard for ALPs at 20 minutes or change the standard to 30 minutes in line with the Executive Panel's recommendation of the 10th May 2010.

- 6.2 The Service currently has four ALPs located at Bangor, Llandudno, Rhyl and Wrexham to meet a 20 minute attendance standard adopted by the Authority in June 2006 to cover relevant risk areas. The ALP located at Wrexham fire station will reach the end of its serviceable life in 2012.
- 6.3 Following the decision at the Authority meeting in June, all Members had been invited to attend a briefing held on 3rd September which provided extensive information on the use, application and location of the ALPs. It was reiterated that Members were being asked to decide on the attendance standard - not the location of ALPs. It was noted that there is no national standard for the requirement or attendance of an ALP.
- 6.4 With regards to the financing of ALPs, the Deputy Chief Fire Office explained that the £50,000 per annum over 20 years is the cost of borrowing the £600,000 to purchase the appliance. The maintenance costs are additional to that figure.
- 6.5 Members contributed as follows to the discussion:
- 6.6 Cllr M LI Davies reminded Members of the changes in legislation since the issue was last considered. Proprietors are now responsible for ensuring buildings are safe and have suitable fire exits. He felt that the ALP is deployed later than the main appliances and therefore by the time it reaches an incident any persons trapped will have been saved by other means. The Senior Fire Safety Manager confirmed that various Buildings and Fire Regulations do put the onus on owners to maintain buildings.
- 6.7 Cllr Barratt felt that as the ALP was used infrequently, the Authority should not replace the ALP and should locate the remaining ALPs in a suitable manner to cover all areas. Cllr Thomas asked if it was possible to continue using the ALP as it had not been heavily used. Officers confirmed that the ALP is an extremely technical appliance and based on manufacturer's strict guidelines 20 years is the maximum lifetime.
- 6.8 Cllr P C Evans voiced his concerns about the proposal. Although he acknowledged the various fire and building regulations introduced in recent years, he felt that as North Wales was such a big geographical area reducing the number of appliances to three would cause problems especially if one of the ALPs was 'off the run'. The Chief Fire Officer explained that there would be no reduction in performance or service received from the ALP by increasing the attendance time to 30 minutes.
- 6.9 Cllr J V Owen felt that, after receiving extensive information about the ALPs via the Executive Panel meetings and briefings, the money would be better spent ensuring firefighters are able to attend fires in all hamlets and villages, whereas the ALP would not be needed over the vast majority of areas in North Wales.

6.10 Cllr Knightly reported that Llandudno and Colwyn Bay Town Councils had expressed concern about the issue and it had also been discussed at Conwy Principal Scrutiny Committee.

6.11 **RESOLVED, following an in-depth discussion and by a majority vote, to adopt a 30 minute attendance standard for Aerial Ladder Platforms across the Service Area.**

6.12 Three Members voted against the resolution. Cllr P C Evans asked that his dissenting vote be recorded.

7 TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP OF NEW DIMENSION ASSETS

7.1 The report was submitted to seek agreement by the Authority to transfer New Dimensions Assets from the Welsh Assembly Government to North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority at a future date to be agreed.

7.2 The Assets, which have been provided by Government and are strategically located in North Wales, include two Incident Response Units and a High Volume Pump, as well as an inventory of ancillary equipment associated with these vehicles. The value of the assets in North Wales is in excess of £1m. All three Welsh Fire and Rescue Services have the opportunity to transfer similar assets in this way and have co-operated in partnership on this programme.

7.3 Some Members had concerns about whether the imminent Comprehensive Spending Review would affect the Assembly's position and asked whether the decision should be delayed until the next meeting. The Chief Fire Officer explained that the agreement had been subject to extensive negotiations and that it represented the best deal in terms of minimising risk to the Authority. It was also reiterated that the Agreement would not be signed until a later date - Members were only asked to agree to the transfer of the assets at this stage.

7.4 Other Members felt it was essential that the Authority accepted the Agreement especially having received the advice from the Chief Fire Officer. The Clerk also confirmed that there was a lot of protection in the Agreement and that from a legal point of view it was a 'safe' document.

7.5 **RESOLVED to**

- (i) **note the contents of the report;**
- (ii) **agree to the transfer of the New Dimension assets and the following requirements:**
 - **signing the Transfer of Assets Agreement;**
 - **signing the Long Term Capability Management Agreement;**
 - **maintaining the Assets so they are fit for purpose and available for UK deployment;**
 - **ensuring operational personnel are competent in the use of the equipment.**

8 COMBINED IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND RISK REDUCTION PLAN 2009-12

- 8.1 The report was presented to seek Members' approval for the draft Combined Improvement and Risk Reduction Plan 2009-12.
- 8.2 Fire and Rescue Authorities are required to prepare, publicly consult on, and publish annually an RRP/annual action and an Improvement Plan. Following guidance received from the Assembly, these documents had been combined into one document.
- 8.3 The consultation period for the draft improvement/risk reduction objectives had finished in September. The Combined Improvement Plan was now in its third draft and had been amended to reflect the consultation responses received as well as the statistics being updated as and when they became available. The Executive Panel, at its September meeting, had considered the responses received to the consultation and decided to recommend that the Authority approve the content of the Combined Improvement and Risk Reduction Plan for 2011-12 which had been circulated to all Members.
- 8.4 **RESOLVED to approve the third draft of the Combined Improvement and Risk Reduction Plan 2009-12 for adoption and publication before the statutory deadline of 31 October 2010.**

9 JOB EVALUATION

- 9.1 The report was submitted to inform Members of the outcomes and conclusion of the job evaluation project. The process had involved all employees of the Fire and Rescue Authority conditioned to the National Joint Council Green Book. This group includes community fire safety roles such as the Practitioners and Home Safety Support team.
- 9.2 The Service undertook an Equal Pay Audit in 2007 and as part of the early recommendations of the Audit, the Service had been guided by its legal advisers to conduct a re-evaluation of the job evaluation process.
- 9.3 The representative bodies had been involved in the process from the beginning and a Collective Agreement had been secured with the representative bodies incorporating a Job Evaluation and Pay Policy, a new Pay and Grading Structure and an agreed implementation date effective from 1st April 2009. The representative bodies had also participated in the appeals panel which took place in September. The representative bodies had taken advice from their pay and equality advisors and the ballot for union members had been conducted in July and had a positive outcome.
- 9.4 The Executive Panel was informed on 16th November 2009 that an additional provision of £169,125 had been put aside to meet the predicted increases and back pay. Following the conclusion of the process, ACFO Simmons was able to confirm that there was a sufficient amount in the provision to meet current commitments.

9.5 Cllr Griffith asked for information about the number of officers whose salary would be reduced and by how much, and also the number of officers whose salary would be increased and by how much. ACFO Simmons confirmed that this information would be sent to Cllr Griffith following the meeting.

9.6 Cllr M Li Davies congratulated officers on completing the job evaluation and having a collective agreement with the representative bodies.

9.7 **RESOLVED to**

- (i) **acknowledge the extensive process undertaken and the successful outcome; and**
- (ii) **note the financial implications of the exercise, both for the current and future years.**

10 PRELIMINARY CORPORATE ASSESSMENT

10.1 The Chair welcomed Lisa Williams from the Wales Audit Office who had been involved with the corporate assessment.

10.2 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer introduced the report which presented Members with the first Corporate Assessment for information prior to its publication. Following the introduction of the Local Government (Wales) Measure, the Auditor General is now required to undertake an annual Improvement Assessment for each improvement authority in Wales. This is done in the form of an annual forward-looking Corporate Assessment and retrospective Performance Assessment of each Fire and Rescue Authority.

10.3 Cllr M Li Davies asked for clarification about the recommendation about “possible duplication of roles in monitoring performance information by the Executive Panel and Audit Committee”. Lisa Williams confirmed that it had been raised as a potential issue, however, it was also acknowledged that having two different committees monitoring the performance may be a positive point.

10.4 The Clerk felt that the audit committee had embedded well and was settling into a routine of meeting three times a year; he did not consider the duplication of performance monitoring to be an issue. He thanked Sandra Forrest and colleagues from the Audit Department for their input into the committee and for the training provided to Members.

10.5 **RESOLVED to note**

- (i) **the contents of the preliminary corporate assessment;**
- (ii) **that the document will be published by the Wales Audit Office as part of the Annual Improvement Report at the end of November 2010.**

11 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2010-11

11.1 The Treasurer presented the report which provided Members with an estimated provisional outturn for the financial year 2010-2011.

11.2 The estimated underspend is being managed in year and may form part of reserves for 2011/12 to help underpin next year's budget. The Treasurer recommended that Members note the underspend at this point.

11.3 **RESOLVED to note the estimated underspend.**

12 TREASURY MANAGEMENT

12.1 A requirement of the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance is that Prudential Indicators are monitored on a regular basis and any significant changes approved by the Fire Authority. Similarly, under the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management any changes in long term borrowing and changes to the Authority's counterparties need to be reported to the Fire Authority.

12.2 **RESOLVED to**

- (i) **approve the amended Prudential Indicators;**
- (ii) **note the Counterparties;**
- (iii) **note the new loan.**

13 ATAL TÂN PRESENTATION

13.1 The Chair welcomed Helen Prior, Chief Executive of Atal Tân to the meeting to give Members a presentation about "Making best use of scarce resources - how Atal Tân Cymru can support North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority".

13.2 Atal Tân is a charity that works with the Welsh Fire and Rescue Services, whilst also being embedded in the voluntary sector. Atal Tân collects evidence and shares good practice, raises awareness and supports collaborative working.

13.3 Atal Tân's work in the past year has included:

- publication of the Atal Tân's Fire Safety Report, which brings together the findings from its unique Welsh Fire Safety Attitudes Survey with other relevant fire safety research from around the UK and beyond;
- the production of fire safety resources for organisations and their clients, a suite of printed materials including leaflets on how to recognise fire risks, and a handy laminated 'checklist' for clients;
- research with Local MIND Associations and Community Drug & Alcohol Teams throughout Wales, which has enabled Atal Tân to understand, from the organisational and service-user perspective, the best ways to improve fire safety and fire safety intervention for these particular groups;
- A series of regional community events which explored potential solutions for identifying and engaging with those in the community at greatest risk of fire. By bringing together a range of individuals and organisations from a variety of backgrounds, the aim was to exchange information and examples of good practice, and promote shared solutions to shared problems.

13.4 Atal Tân's plans for the future are as follows:

- extension of the research into fire risk and vulnerability;
- further work on the Attitudes Survey to help to create more appropriate and effective strategies for intervention and delivery;
- the development and launch of an online agency referral form to assist the Fire Services in targeting and delivering interventions to those most at risk;
- the continuation of relationship and network building, particularly within the fields of Health and Social Care, BME communities, and children and families;
- further work with and within communities (whether geographical or of interest) to raise awareness, identify needs, and share solutions.

13.5 **RESOLVED to note the presentation.**

14 APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER TO SERVE ON THE AUTHORITY'S STANDARDS COMMITTEE

- 14.1 The Clerk presented the report informing the Authority that an independent Member had been appointed to serve on the Authority's Standards Committee.
- 14.2 Following interviews held on 1st September, it was agreed to appoint David Morris as an independent member on the Standards Committee.

14.3 **RESOLVED to note the information.**

15 NATIONAL BUDGET POSITION - EFFICIENCY AND IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY OF WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT

- 15.1 The Clerk informed Members about the Efficiency and Improvement Strategy of the Welsh Assembly Government. The strategy sets out the context for budget setting but will not impact on the Authority over the coming months, however, its importance will increase in future years.
- 15.2 The Treasurer informed Members of the key dates regarding the budget. The comprehensive spending review will be announced on 20th October, followed by the Assembly's budget announcement on 17th November. Local government settlements' announcement is scheduled for 23rd November. The Assembly is duty-bound to set its budget in January and the final local government settlement will follow soon after.
- 15.3 An extraordinary meeting of the Authority has been arranged for 10th December to discuss the budget prior to the presentation of the draft budget to the Fire Authority meeting on 20th December 2010. A balanced budget will need to be confirmed before the deadline of 15th February 2011.
- 15.4 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**

16 MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE PANEL MEETINGS

- 16.1 The minutes of the Executive Panel meetings held on 19th July and 20th September were submitted for information.
- 16.2 **RESOLVED to note the minutes.**