

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 21st March 2011 at Council Chamber, Bodlondeb, Conwy. Meeting commenced at 10.30am.

PRESENT

Councillor	Representing
S Frobisher (Chair)	Denbighshire County Council
A M Jones (Vice-Chair)	Anglesey County Council
D Barratt	Flintshire County Council
M LI Davies	Denbighshire County Council
R M Davies	Wrexham County Borough Council
B Dunn	Flintshire County Council
G C Evans	Denbighshire County Council
P C Evans	Conwy County Borough Council
E M Jones	Gwynedd Council
W Knightly	Conwy County Borough Council
D Mackie	Flintshire County Council
A Minshull	Flintshire County Council
J V Owen	Anglesey County Council
T Roberts	Gwynedd Council
W P Roberts	Conwy County Borough Council
A Tansley	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); S Roberts (Head of Facilities Department); A Davies (Member Liaison Officer) and S Jones (Member Liaison Assistant).

APOLOGIES

Councillor	Representing
L W Davies	Anglesey County Council
T Evans	Wrexham County Borough Council
E C George	Wrexham County Borough Council
M Griffith	Gwynedd Council
G James	Flintshire County Council
P Jeffares	Wrexham County Borough Council
N M Jones	Flintshire County Council
G Williams	Denbighshire County Council

1 NOTICE OF URGENT MATTERS

1.1 The Chair advised that one item, namely the Authority's Service Level Agreement for financial and treasurer services, had been submitted to the Clerk for consideration. The item would be discussed under part II of the agenda.

1.2 The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that a 31 year old female had died in a house fire in Buckley in the early hours of Saturday 19th March 2011. The Chief Fire Officer reassured Members that the Service is continuing in its efforts to reduce such incidents.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

2.1 The Treasurer declared an interest in the urgent matter and advised that he would leave the room whilst the discussion took place.

3 MINUTES

3.1 The minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held on 20th December 2010 were submitted for approval.

3.2 The minutes of the extraordinary meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held on 10th December 2010 were submitted for approval.

3.3 **RESOLVED to approve both sets of 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 11th December 2010 and 21st March 2011.

5.2 The Chair informed Members of a correction to paragraph 6 of the report, as there had not been a meeting on 17th March 2011.

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

6 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2010-2011

6.1 The Treasurer presented the report which informed Members about the estimated provisional outturn for the financial year 2010-2011.

6.2 The Treasurer noted that the underspend was relatively small which meant it had been well-managed by officers throughout the year. The usual caveat was given that a situation could arise before the end of the financial year which could affect the underspend.

6.3 **RESOLVED to note the estimated underspend and confirm that it will be held as general reserve at the end of the 2010/11 financial year should the current trend in expenditure continue.**

7 PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

7.1 The report presented to Members the Prudential Indicators, Treasury Management Strategy, Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy for 2011/12.

7.2 The report had been presented to the Audit Committee on 31st January 2011 in order for the contents to be reviewed before submission to the Fire and Rescue Authority. The Audit Committee had no major observations nor could they find any major risks in the report and had recommended that it be approved by the Authority.

7.3 **RESOLVED to approve each of the four key elements as follows:**

- (i) Prudential Indicators;**
- (ii) Treasury Management Strategy for 2011/12;**
- (iii) Investment Strategy;**
- (iv) Minimum Revenue Provision Policy.**

8 ANNUAL IMPROVEMENT REPORT

8.1 The Annual Improvement Report was presented to Members together with a copy of the letter of response which had been sent to the Wales Audit Office. Following the introduction of the Local Government Measure 2009, the Auditor General for Wales is now required to produce an Annual Improvement Report about how well public authorities are making provision to improve their services. Fuller assessments of how fire and rescue authorities in Wales are performing will be published in future years. Alan Morris from the Wales Audit Office was in attendance to deal with any queries.

8.2 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer explained that the report had been tabled for discussion at the Executive Panel meeting on 7th February. Members were content with the majority of the report but raised concerns about the recommendation on prioritising road safety activities. The Authority recognised its contributory role to road safety across North Wales but Members felt it was important to note that it was not a statutory duty. The Clerk commented that the Regional Leadership Board has established a Safer Communities Board and part of its remit will be to deal with road safety.

8.3 It is apparent that the Service attends more road traffic collisions (RTC) than the other two Fire and Rescue Services in Wales; this is due to a change in policy which means the Ambulance Service informs the Joint Communications Centre of all RTC incidents which it attends, and the Fire and Rescue Service then attends as a matter of course, therefore delivering more services to the public.

8.4 Alan Morris commented that it was a positive report. The Authority has made sensible preparations for the financial challenges that lie ahead. Clear improvement objectives have been set and although the Authority is working hard to reduce the number of fires, it recognises that more needs to be done

and plans are in place to improve. Alan Morris did not consider the road safety proposal to be a significant issue and noted that the Authority has set itself a target to improve road safety partnership work. He also noted that the Authority had dealt with the recommendations from the Health and Safety report.

8.5 The Chief Fire Officer, Treasurer and Clerk remain satisfied that the Authority's governance arrangements are sound. The Clerk also commented that consideration should be given to how much more the Authority could effectively do to reduce the incidence of fires and when should the onus fall on the community and individuals themselves to be responsible for their own actions. The Chief Fire Officer agreed and said that as a result of the Task Group Report in 2006, the Authority had increased its proactive role in preventing fires and some individuals were still ignoring the fire safety messages.

8.6 **RESOLVED to note the Annual Improvement Report and the letter of response sent to the Auditor General for Wales.**

9 CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

9.1 The report had been submitted to inform Members of amendments to 'The Account and Auditing (Wales) Regulations 2005' and the requirement to include a Governance Statement in the annual accounts.

9.2 The report also sought approval of a Local Code of Governance. This will be used as a standard to measure the Authority's performance in a self assessment exercise carried out at the end of the year which will then form the Annual Governance Statement.

9.3 **RESOLVED to approve the Local Code of Governance, against which the Fire and Rescue Authority can measure its performance for the Annual Governance Statement.**

10 SUMMARY OF IMPROVEMENT AND RISK REDUCTION PLAN AND RESOURCE STRATEGY OBJECTIVES FOR 2011-12

10.1 The report summarised the objectives for 2011-12 that are contained in the Improvement and Risk Reduction Plan 2009-12 together with those contained in the Resource Strategy arising out of the budgetary decisions taken by the Authority.

10.2 Together with the seven objectives previously agreed, a further three resource strategy objectives have been added following the budget setting discussions. Officers will need to continue to work with Members to identify new ways of reducing the budget in future years.

10.3 Cllr M LI Davies asked if the Service was taking any action to stop fires being ignited in historical buildings, schools and farms and was there a way of educating the owners on how to help prevent these fires. The Chief Fire Officer explained that deliberate fires on such premises are a problem, although the Service has an Arson Reduction Team that is constantly working to reduce deliberate fires, resources are scarce and it is a difficult task to

cover all areas. It is unlikely that there will be any further resources from central government or from other emergency service partners to deal with the problems. Cllr Doreen Mackie, referring to the Annual Improvement Report, commented that the number of deliberate fires in North Wales was lower than the Wales average which demonstrated good results for the Authority in terms of crime prevention work.

10.4 **RESOLVED to**

(i) **note the seven Improvement Objectives;**

(ii) **approve the three Resources Strategy Objectives for the year 2011-12 as follows:**

- **objective A - to change aspects of the organisation's structure and ways of operating;**
- **objective B - to review and improve internal business processes;**
- **objective C - to plan and prepare for the 2012-13 budget reduction.**

11 SPECIAL APPLIANCE REVIEW UPDATE

11.1 The report updated Members on the progress and implementation of the Special Appliance Review.

11.2 As part of the Risk Reduction Planning process, a review of the special appliance provision was undertaken in 2003/4 with the long term objective of improving the Service's fleet. This led to a number of significant changes to special appliances and, as a consequence, a review of the design and layout of standard fire appliances has been undertaken resulting in a new narrower design of appliance being purchased for the ongoing replacement programme.

11.3 ACFO Claydon explained that the four emergency tenders had been converted for use as Technical Rescue Units, Incident Support Unit and a combined rope and animal rescue unit. These units had been strategically placed across North Wales.

11.4 Following the Authority's decision to adopt a 30-minute standard for ALPs, a number of options are being formulated to fully explore the future locations for the Service's ALPs. These options will be brought back to the Authority before the end of the operational life of the fourth ALP in 2012.

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

12 MARITIME INCIDENT RESPONSE GROUP (MIRG)

12.1 ACFO Claydon presented the report which sought continued support from the Authority to maintain the Maritime Incident Response Group (MIRG) provision for the next financial year. The report also provided an update on the national picture with regard to continued support by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA).

- 12.2 The MIRG was established to assist with incidents involving fire, chemical hazards and industrial accidents at sea. It should be noted that the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) has a duty to mobilise, organise and task resources to respond to people in distress at sea. Both Mid & West and North Wales Fire and Rescue Services are part of the project and were among a number of FRSs that stated they would find it difficult in the current financial climate to recommend continuation of the MIRG provision if funding from the MCA was withdrawn.
- 12.3 The total cost to the MCA of this function is understood to be approximately £550,000 per annum. Following the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review the MCA has to implement a budget reduction of 22% by March 2015. However, on 16th March 2011, confirmation was received from the MCA that it would continue to fund the MIRG provision in its current format for a period of six months only from April 1st 2011.
- 12.4 The estimated cost of maintaining the provision by an individual service is £40,000 per annum. Having examined the competences of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service's own personnel, and other associated costs, the cost required in North Wales for the next year would be approximately £11,000 exclusive of any contribution made by the MCA. Continuing to fund the capability until the end of the next financial year would allow some time to re-evaluate the position, given the changing national picture.
- 12.5 Noting that Holyhead port is expanding in the near future, Members were unanimous in their decision to continue to support the service. Members agreed to utilise a small proportion of the current financial year's projected underspend as a provision to mitigate the withdrawal of MCA financial support.
- 12.6 **RESOLVED to:**
- (i) **note the contents of the report;**
 - (ii) **continue to support MIRG from the 1st April 2011 utilising money from the 2010/11 financial year, capped at £11,000 until a clearer picture of the future commitment is ascertained;**
 - (iii) **agree that any unspent money from the £11,000 provision be returned to the Authority's reserves; and**
 - (iv) **note that a further report will be brought to the Authority in due course when the national picture has become clearer.**

13 STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

- 13.1 The Standards Committee's annual report provided information about the committee's work programme during 2010-11.
- 13.2 The Committee now had a full complement of independent members and there had been no referrals regarding conduct of Authority Members. The Standards Committee had looked at the Service's Complaints and Whistleblowing policies and had considered the Ombudsman's annual report.

- 13.3 Cllr T Roberts was concerned that the committee was 'looking for work' rather than merely dealing with any relevant issues that arose. He referred to the report and the Clerk's suggestion to have an independent member on the Stage 3 Complaints Panel. The Clerk confirmed that he had made this suggestion and considered it to be good governance and one that would add independency to the panel.
- 13.4 Cllr P C Evans was concerned that this could cause conflict if the complainant submitted the complaint to the Ombudsman who then referred it to the Standards Committee; he did not consider it to be appropriate to involve independent members in operational complaints. In response, the Clerk explained that it was the stage 3 procedure that dealt with maladministration issues and that it was conduct complaints that went to the Ombudsman therefore there would be no conflict.
- 13.5 Members asked for a vote and it was agreed by a majority vote that an independent member should be on the Stage 3 Complaints Panel. Three Members voted against the proposal and there were two abstentions.
- 13.6 **RESOLVED**
(i) to accept the contents of the report; and
(ii) amend the membership for the stage 3 complaints procedure as noted in 13.5.
- 14 NATIONAL BUDGET POSITION - EFFICIENCY AND IMPROVEMENT BOARD OF WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT
- 14.1 The Assembly Government established an Efficiency and Innovation Programme Board in early 2010. The Board has been set up to provide practical leadership and action through an Efficiency and Innovation Programme focusing on delivering efficiencies and service improvements in Wales' public services.
- 14.2 The Clerk suggested that the Authority undertake an assessment to assess the value of the Fire and Rescue Authority being represented on the Board.
- 14.3 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**
- 15 MINUTES FOR INFORMATION
- 15.1 The minutes of the following meetings were submitted for information:
- Audit Committee meeting held on 31st January 2011
 - Executive Panel meeting held on 7th February 2011
 - Standards Committee meeting held on 13th January 2011.
- 15.2 **RESOLVED to note the minutes of meetings.**

PART II REPORTS

16 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2010/11 AND 2011-2014

- 16.1 The report updated Members on the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's capital programme.
- 16.2 The works to modernise and extend the existing fire station and County Safety Office at Llangefni had been completed and the official opening ceremony was held on 14th October 2010.
- 16.3 ACFO Hanks provided an update on the latest developments regarding Wrexham Tripartite Station.
- 16.4 DDA and Equality Compliance Works continued at fire stations and premises that needed to comply with the disability and equality legislation. All the works to the 23 stations should be completed by October 2011.
- 16.5 Work on the Secondary Control Room located in the County Safety Office building at Rhyl had been completed. This will ensure the continuity of the Service's ICT and Secondary Control Room functions.
- 16.6 Money has been allocated towards much needed planned capital maintenance works in the Service's buildings which will be completed before 31st March 2011.
- 16.7 **RESOLVED to note the contents of the report and the proposed budgets figures for capital works during the next 3 financial years, subject to refining the budget figures for 2012/13 and 2013/14.**

URGENT MATTER

17 FINANCIAL SERVICES SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

Ken Finch and Philip Evans left the meeting at this juncture.

- 17.1 The Clerk informed Members that the current SLA with Conwy County Borough Council to provide financial services and the treasurer's service was coming to an end on 31st March 2011. The intention is to continue with Conwy County Borough Council and renew the SLA for a further four years. It was noted that the Authority had received a high level of service from the Council since 1996 and was content to continue with the arrangement.
- 17.2 **RESOLVED to note that the SLA with Conwy County Borough Council will be renewed for a further four years as from 1st April 2011.**