

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Monday 17th December 2012 at Conwy County Borough Council Chamber, Conwy. Meeting commenced at 10.35am.

PRESENT

Councillor	Representing
A Morris Jones (Chair)	Anglesey County Council
M Ll Davies (Deputy Chair)	Denbighshire County Council
A I Dunbar	Flintshire County Council
B Dunn	Flintshire County Council
A Evans	Wrexham County Borough Council
J G Evans	Anglesey County Council
C L Guy-Davies	Denbighshire County Council
J B Hughes	Gwynedd Council
W I Hughes	Anglesey County Council
A Jones	Wrexham County Borough Council
E A Jones	Denbighshire County Council
L A W Jones	Gwynedd Council
P R Lewis	Conwy County Borough Council
G Lowe	Wrexham County Borough Council
D A MacRae	Conwy County Borough Council
H McGuill	Flintshire County Council
D J Miles	Conwy County Borough Council
W R Owen	Gwynedd Council
W T Owen	Gwynedd Council
R E Parry	Conwy County Borough Council
P H Pemberton	Wrexham County Borough Council
W P Shotton	Flintshire County Council
J R Skelland	Wrexham County Borough Council
A Tansley	Conwy County Borough Council

Also present:

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

APOLOGIES

Councillor	Representing
C Hughes	Gwynedd Council
P Owen	Denbighshire County Council
M A Reece	Flintshire County Council
W O Thomas	Flintshire County Council

1 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

1.1 Prior to starting the meeting, the Chair informed Members that he had attended the Emergency Services' Carol Service held at Bangor Cathedral. He said that it had been a special service with officers from all the emergency services taking part. The Chair had written to those officers from NWFRS who had represented the Service.

1.2 The Chair thanked all those involved with the numerous flooding incidents across North Wales during November. He read out the Prime Minister's words as recorded in Hansard on 28th November 2012:

'The pictures of floods in St Asaph were of biblical scenes. The emergency services have performed extraordinary feats to rescue people and to help people at what is a very difficult time.'

1.3 The Chair informed Members that HRH Prince of Wales had visited St Asaph and called at the fire station to express his thanks for all the work undertaken by the Service and the other emergency services. The Chair asked Members to show their appreciation of all the work undertaken by the NWFRS.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

2.1 Members from Wrexham County Borough Council declared a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 19, report on Wrexham fire and ambulance project.

2.2 The Clerk in noting the declared interest informed those present that advice had been given to members from Wrexham in advance. The advice was shared by the Monitoring Officer of Wrexham County Borough Council. Wrexham members were advised that they were able to be present to hear the latest position on the project but, should discussions turn to purchase of land where the Council as a land-owner might have a conflict of interest those Members would be asked to withdraw from the meeting.

2.3 At this juncture, Cllr A Jones asked about the Authority's position on using social media in meetings. The Clerk explained that the Authority did not currently have a social media policy and proposed that a report be brought to the next meeting of the Authority in March on options for the use and control of social media. In the interim, the Chair asked for social media such as 'Twitter' not to be used in meetings.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15TH OCTOBER 2012

3.1 The minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held on 15th October 2012 were submitted for approval.

3.2 It was noted that Cllr G Lowe's name needed to be added to the list of members present and the names of Cllr A Tansley and Cllr L A W Jones to be added to the list of apologies received.

3.3 **RESOLVED to approve the minutes as a true and correct record of proceedings subject to amending the present and apologies lists.**

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 A M Jones and Cllr M LI Davies in their roles of Chair and Deputy Chair of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority between June and December 2012.

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

6 NOVEMBER 2012 FLOODING

6.1 The Chief Fire Officer wished to place on record his appreciation of the work undertaken by NWFRS personnel during all the recent flooding incidents across North Wales in November and in particular St Asaph. He explained that in addition to the visit from HRH Prince of Wales, the First Minister had also visited the area. Other politicians had contacted the Service but had decided not to visit due to work pressures on officers during such a busy period.

6.2 The Chief Fire Officer informed Members about the 'behind the scenes' work that was involved in ensuring appropriate resources and cover were available and that he was extremely proud of everyone who had taken part. The St Asaph incident was dealt with in a professional manner with a magnificent response from all personnel. He wished to pay tribute to, and thank everyone who took part in any way.

7 DRAFT BUDGET 2013-14

7.1 The Treasurer introduced the report on the draft budget for 2013-14 which invited Members to confirm the draft budget for 2013-14.

- 7.2 This was part of the 3-year strategy agreed in December 2010 to evenly spread the savings required over 3 years and 2013-14 will be the third year of the strategy. The Treasurer felt the Service deserved some credit for being on target to save the necessary £2.45million over three years. Although, the Treasurer reminded Members that there would be difficulties in the third year due to inflation and other increased costs, for example fuel and energy prices, which will put pressure on the budget. Regular monitoring reports will be provided to Members at future meetings.
- 7.3 In terms of 2014/15 and 2015/16, budget forecasts were included in the appendix to the report submitted. Known commitments had been factored in to the budget for the 2 years and included increased revenue costs of capital, based on the capital programme. Discussions regarding the strategy for these two years will commence early next year.
- 7.4 It was noted that if it transpired that there would be significant increases to the 2013/14 budget before the final cut-off date of 15th February, a special FRA meeting would be convened.
- 7.5 Cllr Lewis asked about a breakdown of the miscellaneous column and it was agreed to send all Members a list of the items covered by the miscellaneous headings. It was also agreed to include an additional heading on the budget spreadsheet entitled 'termination costs' for clarity.
- 7.6 In terms of the contributions requested from the constituent authorities, the figures were based on the previous census information, and Cllr Parry asked whether there was a financial risk on services due to the ageing population. The CFO explained that the ageing population does present problems, however, this issue had been taken into account following the CFO's Task Group Report 2007 and since then a lot of emphasis has been placed on prevention rather than response. Although it was not immediately apparent, a significant amount of resources were used for preventative work and dealing with people in their own homes, for example, the home fire safety checks which has proved extremely successful with the Authority exceeding its target of 30,000 properties having smoke detectors fitted annually since 2007.
- 7.7 **RESOLVED to**
- (i) approve the draft budget for 2013/14;**
 - (ii) confirm the strategy to be followed to achieve the savings in 2013/14;**
 - (iii) note the budget position for 2014/15 and 2015/16;**
 - (iv) advise the constituent authorities of the provisional contributions required for 2013/14;**
 - (v) approve the draft capital programme and associated methods of financing for 2013/14.**

8 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2012-2013

- 8.1 The Treasurer presented the report which informed Members about the estimated provisional outturn of £363,007 for the 2012-13 financial year. Members were reminded that the figure was provisional and that a significant increase in the number of incidents, for example due to flooding, could decrease the figure rapidly.
- 8.2 Cllr Skelland asked about the Bellwin scheme and if fire and rescue services used it to recover monies in the same way as local authorities. The Treasurer explained that the scheme does provide for the ability for fire and police to charge for services in appropriate circumstances. A copy of the Bellwin scheme which is now known as the Emergency Financial Assistance Scheme for Local Authorities in Wales will be emailed to all Members.
- 8.3 Cllr McGuill asked whether the Authority could charge for attending road traffic collisions, it was confirmed that this was now a statutory duty and therefore charging for attendance was impossible.
- 8.4 Cllr Dunbar asked if it was appropriate for the Authority to be purchasing the Deeside ambulance site in the current economic climate. The CFO confirmed that Deeside fire station was in need of renovation and that if the ambulance section of the shared site was sold to another organisation, it could impact on the Authority's plans for redevelopment. Owning the whole site would allow more flexibility for future developments.
- 8.5 **RESOLVED to**
- (i) note the estimated under-spend of £363,007; and**
 - (ii) agree in principle to set money aside into reserves for:**
 - (a) purchase of Deeside ambulance station (£127k);**
 - (b) incident command courses (£75k);**
 - (c) future liabilities with regards to the RDS firefighters back pay associated with their claim under the Part-Time Worker (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000 and possible pension claim (£300k).**

9 SPECIAL APPLIANCE UPDATE

- 9.1 ACFO Claydon introduced the report which provided information about the current status of the special appliance fleet.
- 9.2 Following a review of special appliance provision undertaken in 2003/04, a number of significant changes to special appliances had been made and a review of the design and layout of standard fire appliances was undertaken and implemented. This was part of the long term objective to improve the Service's fleet.

- 9.3 ACFO Claydon explained that the Service has a number of appliances in addition to the fire engines including water rescue units, aerial ladder platforms, Land Rovers for off-road fire fighting requirements and rescue pumps.
- 9.4 Members were aware that the Authority had decided (in March 2012) to locate the three remaining aerial ladder platforms (ALPs) in Wrexham, Bangor and Rhyl. This was due to an earlier decision made not to replace the fourth ALP which came to the end of its serviceable life in March 2012. It was noted that another of the ALPs will come to the end of its serviceable life in 2014 and procurement of a new ALP was currently underway.
- 9.5 The Chief Fire Officer continues to receive letters from concerned parties regarding the removal of an ALP from Llandudno fire station. Cllr Miles stated that people were concerned that the ALP would not reach an incident in the Llandudno area within sufficient time and questioned whether 30 minutes was a realistically achievable target for the appliance to travel from Rhyl to Llandudno. ACFO Claydon explained that a 30 minute risk parameter had been set and that no one could guarantee attendance of the ALP within 30 minutes on every occasion due to the nature of traffic conditions on North Wales roads. ACFO Claydon explained that the incident in Llandudno, earlier in the year at 2am which had raised concerns, had been dealt with by regular fire appliances and the ALP had not been used.
- 9.6 In response to a question about whether a fourth ALP could be purchased, the Chair explained that the decision to remove the ALP had been based on extensive information provided to the previous Authority about coverage and the number of times the ALP had been used in incidents and that the 3 remaining ALPs had been based in strategic areas to cover the whole of North Wales.
- 9.7 The CFO explained that the ALP was not used for immediate life rescue and its attendance was invariably to provide a water tower or other type of working from height facilities. The CFO explained that the Authority took a decision based on a whole range of factors including risk, use and the number of times it was used. Cllr Dunn reiterated these sentiments and explained that as a member of the previous Authority and the Executive Panel, he could confirm that the decision had not been taken lightly with numerous meetings held to discuss the positives and negatives and consequences of the decision.
- 9.8 Cllr A Jones asked about the Barmouth incident where no ALP would be able to reach within 30 minutes. The location of ALPs had been based on a balance of risk and resources, and the main risk areas have been identified as being on the main corridor of North Wales – A55 and A483. Referring to the Barmouth incident, ACFO Claydon confirmed that the ALP had not been required and that the regular fire appliances had been sufficient to deal with the incident.

9.9 All reports on the ALPs were available on the Authority's website and the report submitted to the March 2012 Authority meeting would be emailed to Members.

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

10 NATIONAL PROCUREMENT SERVICE

10.1 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented the report which asked Members to consider approving that the Authority signs up to the National Procurement Service (NPS) which offered the Welsh public sector a strategic vehicle for the procurement of common categories of goods and services.

10.2 It was confirmed that the NPS would meet the requirements of the National Issues Committee agenda and was the outcome of a Welsh Government commissioned review of procurement in the Welsh public sector. It was confirmed that the fire and rescue services in Wales will continue to procure, on a collaborative basis, on specialist contracts for example personal protective equipment, uniform and light vehicles.

10.3 Cllr Skelland raised concerns about a similar initiative between Flintshire, Wrexham and Denbighshire councils in the past which had proved to be expensive and a liability; he was sceptical of the NPS and felt it should be closely monitored. The Chair confirmed that lessons will be learnt from that experience and that he felt the Authority should sign up to the NPS to demonstrate its commitment to collaborative working.

10.4 The Clerk indicated that there was likely to be a full 'buy-in' to the NPS across the public sector and that it could provide better value for money. He advised that if the fire and rescue authorities were able to procure specialist contracts at better rates themselves it was important to have a caveat of non-compulsion within the NPS entry agreement.

10.5 **RESOLVED to approve the signing up to the NPS with the caveats outlined in the letter attached to report.**

11 WELFARE REFORM

11.1 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer introduced the report which informed Members about the potential impact of the Welfare Reform on the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service.

11.2 Proposals in the welfare reform included replacing the current complex system of 51 different benefits and tax credits with a 'universal life credit' and 'universal work credit'. The UK Government has started to implement phased changes. The transitional effects of the changes were of concern to local authorities, police, health and fire and rescue authorities.

- 11.3 Members were assured that North Wales Fire and Rescue Service is working closely with colleagues in local authorities to ensure the Service plays its part in mitigating risks.
- 11.4 Members had concerns about the Welfare Reform Act and in particular the increased risk around rented accommodation which had been identified as a risk in the CFO Task Group Report. Also, Cllr A Evans highlighted the issue of young people under 25 currently living in standalone accommodation but who will have to find accommodation in houses of multiple occupancy which will pose a "huge" risk.
- 11.5 In response to a question from Cllr L A W Jones on information provided to the Fire and Rescue Service from local authorities about houses in multiple occupation, the Senior Fire Safety Manager explained that the Service worked closely with local authorities and receive regular lists of registered HMOs in their areas. The Service also works closely with the health authority on the agenda to keep people safe in their homes.
- 11.6 **RESOLVED to provide continued support to the preventative work of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, as it works with other community safety partners to mitigate the risks which may arise as a consequence of Welfare Reform.**

12 NATIONAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

- 12.1 The Chief Fire Officer presented the report which gave Members an update on the work being undertaken under the direction of the National Issues Committee (NIC).
- 12.2 The Chair of the NIC had met with the Minister for Local Government and Social Justice, and from the NIC Chair's point of view it had been a positive meeting.
- 12.3 Amongst the issues discussed at the NIC meeting on 20th November 2012 were the progress being made in aligning the procurement contracts of all three Services and direction of work to be undertaken by the training and development project team. Also, the committee had endorsed the community risk reduction proposal for close collaborative working between the three Services. The three FRAs in Wales now had one business fire safety legal services contract which provided the three FRAs with a consistent approach to legal enforcement of the Fire Safety Order (2005).
- 12.4 It was noted that the efficiencies identified to date amounted to £2,345,000 across the three Services over a period of 5 years.
- 12.5 **RESOLVED to note the information provided.**

At this juncture, Cllr R E Parry left the meeting.

13 REGIONAL SAFER COMMUNITIES BOARD AND POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

13.1 The Clerk informed Members that the Regional Safer Communities Board had met twice and was developing its work programme. To date, there were no projects within the programme that would directly impact on the work of the fire and rescue authority.

13.2 Winston Roddick had been elected to the post of Police and Crime Commissioner. The Commissioner will have direct decision making powers over large areas of services that formerly came under the community safety partnership. The Chair had written to Mr Roddick wishing him well in his post and to request a meeting with him in the New Year.

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

14 MEETING DATES 2013

14.1 The report was presented to inform Members of the dates for meetings of the Fire and Rescue Authority, Executive Panel and Audit Committee for 2013.

14.2 **RESOLVED to note dates of meetings as follows:**

Fire and Rescue Authority meetings

Monday 18th March 2013 – Wrexham
Monday 17th June 2013 - Denbighshire
Monday 16th September 2013 – Gwynedd
Monday 16th December 2013 - Flintshire

Executive Panel meetings to be held 2pm at Fire and Rescue Headquarters

Monday 4th February 2013
Monday 13th May 2013
Monday 15th July 2013
Monday 28th October 2013

Audit Committee meetings to be held 2pm at Fire and Rescue Headquarters

Monday 28th January 2013
Monday 3rd June 2013
Monday 23rd September 2013

15 MINUTES OF MEETINGS

15.1 Minutes of the Executive Panel meeting held on 19th November were presented to Members for information.

15.2 **RESOLVED to note the minutes and that they will be approved at the next meeting of the Executive Panel in February 2013.**

Members were invited to move the meeting to part II for discussion of two items.

Cllr Arfon Jones objected to item 18, Senior Salary Review, being discussed under part II. He felt that under the Localism Act the salaries are public information and should therefore be discussed in public. The Clerk explained that salaries are published and have to be made individually known, however, it was appropriate to discuss the issue under part II as the salaries were being reviewed and also due to the fact that there was a vacant post in the current structure.

RESOLVED to move to part II of the agenda and exclude the press and the public from this part of the meeting.

PART II

16 WREXHAM FIRE AND AMBULANCE PROJECT

16.1 The Clerk repeated the earlier advice for Wrexham members declaring an interest in the Wrexham fire and ambulance station project. The reason for needing to declare a personal and prejudicial interest was a potential land transaction between Wrexham County Borough Council and the Fire and Rescue Authority and thereby a conflict of interest. Members were entitled to be present for an update and would have to leave the meeting if potential land transactions were discussed. ,

At this juncture, Councillors A Jones, G Lowe, P Pemberton and A Evans left the meeting due to other commitments.

16.2 ACFO Claydon led Members through the report explaining the background, the costs involved since the project began and the flooding issues with the current site on Croesnewydd Road.

16.3 The Chair confirmed that he and the Deputy Chair had received regular briefings as had their predecessors. The Chair asked Members to refer the issue to the Executive Panel to consider ways forward with the project.

16.4 The Clerk asked that it be noted that Cllr Skelland was still present when ACFO Claydon had raised the issue of land transactions in brief but that no discussion had taken place. Cllr Skelland had not therefore been asked to leave the meeting.

16.5 **RESOLVED to note**

- (i) the cost to develop a site to the requirements of TAN 15, (Welsh Government Technical Advice Note: Development and Flood Risk (2004)) had resulted in a significant investment of funding into the infrastructure to facilitate the construction of the station on this site;**
- (ii) in order to deliver the project in collaboration with WAST, a significant increase in the previously approved budget would be required;**
- (iii) costs for the buildings had been minimised to save money, potentially resulting in an aesthetically unappealing structure, but one which would fulfil operational need.**

Cllr W I Hughes left the meeting at this juncture.

All Officers apart from the Chief Fire Officer, Clerk, Treasurer and the Member Liaison Officer left the meeting prior to discussing the next report.

17 SENIOR SALARY REVIEW

- 17.1 The Clerk presented the report which informed Members that the periodic senior salary review had been commissioned according to Authority policy.
- 17.2 Under an agreement by the National Joint Council for Brigade Managers of Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services (NJC) a national pay award is negotiated annually to reflect inflation. It was good employment practice to maintain salary levels through periodic comparison and review.
- 17.3 It had been agreed in 2006 to hold three-yearly reviews, the last review had been undertaken in 2009 and therefore the review was now overdue. The Clerk explained that he had commissioned a review to be undertaken by the same external assessor who had undertaken the previous reviews.
- 17.4 Members were invited to establish a remuneration panel to consider the findings and recommendations of the external assessor. The panel will comprise the Chair, Deputy Chair and Chair of Audit Committee and the three additional Members will represent the three remaining local authorities.
- 17.5 Each constituent authority was invited to nominate its own representative. Conwy Members nominated Cllr Peter Lewis, Conwy and Gwynedd Members nominated Cllr Tudor Owen, Gwynedd. The representative from Flintshire County Council will be confirmed subsequent to the meeting.
- 17.6 **RESOLVED to**
- (i) **note that the periodic Senior Salary Review has been commissioned in line with previous agreement of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority;**
 - (ii) **agree to the establishment and composition of a Remuneration Panel to comprise of Councillors Peter Lewis, Conwy and Tudor Owen, Gwynedd in addition to the Chair, Deputy Chair and Chair of Audit Committee. Noted that Flintshire representative will be confirmed early in 2013.**